TAWA COMMUNITY BOARD
11 OCTOBER 2012

REPORT 7
(1215/12/IM)

RATIFICATION OF BOARD SUBMISSION TO "FUTURE WELLINGTON – AN ISSUES PAPER ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IN THE WELLINGTON REGION"

1. Purpose of Report

To enable Community Board members to approve the Boards submission to "Future Wellington – An Issues Paper on Local Government reform in the Wellington Region".

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Tawa Community Board:

1. *Receive the information.*

2. *Approve the submission of the Tawa Community Board to "Future Wellington – An Issues Paper on Local Government reform in the Wellington Region" attached as appendix 1.*

Tawa Community Board response to the Issues Paper on Local Government reform in the Wellington Region

The Tawa Community Board (TCB) would like to thank the members of the Review Panel for their meeting with the Board, and the opportunities at other meetings for an exchange of views.

Whilst the Tawa Community Board has previously indicated that the 'shared services or collaborative model' is our preferred option for the future of the Wellington region, and that no change to existing boundaries should take place, we accept that there are advantages in some form of amalgamation between the Wellington, Porirua and Hutt Councils, along with the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC), and possibly Kapiti, but feel that these may be outweighed by the disadvantages of full-scale amalgamation.

There does appear to be popular support for greater reform by local councils not just discussing, but actually having, a separate body, looking after a lot of the services that are duplicated - this not only includes water, but waste, rubbish removal, sewerage, waterways, parks and gardens, roads etc, perhaps giving greater savings instead of duplication.

Our overriding concern is that the voice of local '**communities of interest'** could be lost in whatever amalgamation takes place. The more widespread the amalgamation, the greater the danger of the voice of given communities disappearing and being replaced by one centralised behemoth out of touch with the many smaller parts which make up the whole. There is also the fear that councils will become even more politicised, and that party politics will prevail! This will definitely be to the detriment of local 'communities of interest'! In the current format, for example, the Tawa Community Board plays an effective part in 'looking after' a community of around 15,000 residents. In an amalgamated city of 300-400,000 people, there is real possibility that there would be local boards or community boards responsible for 40-70,000 people each, and Tawa would be swallowed up by a larger board covering a far greater geographical area and not nearly as connected to its residents as is the current board.

There is already confusion as Tawa is represented by three MPs in parliament - Peter Dunne (Ohariu), Kris Faafoi (Mana), Tariana Turia (Te Tai Hauauru) - from three different political parties, plus other list MPs representing us! With the Greater Wellington Regional Council, we are in the Porirua–Tawa Constituency (with 2 members) whereas the rest of Wellington is in the Wellington Constituency (with 5 members). We are in the Kapiti-Mana Police area whereas the rest of Wellington is in Wellington Area. And yet we are part Wellington City and not Porirua! Being tossed in all directions by outside 'decision-makers', it is no wonder the local populace counts on the community board to ensure some sort of stability for our community. It should also be remembered that **'The wisdom of the community always exceeds the knowledge of the experts',** (Harold Flaming).

Regardless of the outcome, we believe that there are benefits and savings to be had with:

- Focusing on the panel's preferred framework for examining the governance issues based upon local democracy, effectiveness and efficiency.
- Harmonisation of bye-laws, especially with reference to levels of service, fines and charges.
- Shared services. CCOs. NB Councillors are not necessarily the best people to be appointed to these organisations.
- Better use of council officers' expertise over the entire area.
- Increased focus on the essentials, road, stormwater, wastewater, water supply, and transportation, recreation, playing fields and parks, et al.
    - NB We believe that councils are involved in too many areas, which would be better left to Government (eg housing) or the private sector.
    - Local communities should have a greater say in the policy/running of community centres, as to be blunt, they know more about the local community than council officers and policy makers!
- Harmony of rating systems.
    - WCC has a downtown levy, do the other councils?
- Targeted rates to meet local requirements.

Other areas of consideration must be:

- The appropriate structure of Local Government.
- Spatial planning by area. NB Infill housing may not be the priority for some/many 'communities of interest'.
- A uniform regulatory authority and consistent approach to regulation.

The comment has been made that if an existing board works well in a given community, why do away with it? We very much agree with that and are most concerned that the inevitable result of across-the-board amalgamation will be the disappearance of such boards. Many communities, including our own, would be worse off in terms of local democracy if that was to happen. We sincerely hope it doesn't.

Tawa Community Board
Malcolm Sparrow (Chair)
Graeme Hansen
Margaret Lucas
Christopher Reading
Alistair Sutton
Robert Tredger