

AVERAGE RATES INCREASE LESS THAN 3%

The average rates rise for the Whakatāne District for the 2014/15 year will be less than three percent. At an extraordinary meeting of the Whakatāne District Council on Tuesday, Councillors approved additional Annual Plan spending in some key areas, including stormwater improvements and increased unsealed road maintenance, but the increased costs were largely offset by a reduction in debt servicing costs.

Mayor Tony Bonne says the Annual Plan process has seen some particularly positive outcomes for the community.

"Councillors considered the submissions to the draft plan very carefully and while we were determined to keep the average rates rise as close as possible to the 2.91 percent increase originally proposed, there were clearly a number of areas where some additional spending was required," he says. "That has largely been balanced by savings in other activities though and I think we can be very satisfied with the overall outcome."

Significant changes from the activity and project costs signalled in the draft Annual Plan include:

- A reduction in solid waste income, with a resulting negative rating impact of \$230,000;
- A \$75,000 increase in roading, parks and reserves and corporate property contact costs;
- An increase in unsealed road maintenance costs (to allow additional road metalling), with a net cost after subsidy funding of \$76,500; and
- Additional interest costs of \$34,700, as a result of stormwater works planned for 2015/16 in the Apanui catchment and Ōhope being undertaken ahead of schedule.

Offsetting those factors were:

- A \$52,000 reduction in the net cost of liquor and gambling licencing activities;
- A saving of more than \$11,000 in interest costs arising from a change in the funding of the Ocean Road extension at Port Ōhope;
- An expected \$20,000 revenue increase for the collection of Regional Council rates;
- A \$10,000 saving in public convenience contract costs;
- A \$50,000 reduction in digitisation project costs;
- A \$50,000 saving in insurance costs;
- An expected \$73,000 saving in budgeted consultants costs;
- A reduction of \$40,000 for electricity and other contract costs for Council properties; and
- Updated borrowing analysis indicating a decrease in interest and principal repayment costs of \$101,000.

The Council will consider further minor adjustments based on the forecast rating position for this financial year when it adopts the 2014/15 Annual Plan on 26 June. However, it is anticipated that those adjustments will see the rate increase remain under 3 percent.

"Two key decisions were the acceleration of planned stormwater projects for the Apanui catchment in Whakatāne and flood-prone areas in Ōhope," Mayor Bonne adds. "The Easter storm showed that we are still vulnerable to flooding from extreme weather events and Councillors were very supportive of a move to bring forward projects which will provide greater protection against future events."

"The increase in our road metalling budget also shows that the Council has listened to the concerns of residents living in our more remote rural areas and the additional maintenance work this will allow should help deliver an improved level of service on our unsealed roads."

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

The work of award-winning local photographer Troy Baker will be showcased in an exhibition opening to the public on Saturday 7 June in the Whakatāne Community Board Gallery at Te Kōputu a te Whanga a Toi.



The collection of portraits is entitled "The darkness of mere being", a line drawn from a quote by philosopher Carl Jung.

Also on display, in the Sheaff Family Gallery is the travelling exhibition 'The Square and Compass' which explores Freemasonry in New Zealand. The exhibition coincides with the centenary celebrations of the Whakatāne Masonic Lodge 198 and will include some local objects and photographs.



PARKING WARDEN'S CAMERAS A SUCCESS

The body-worn cameras used by Whakatāne's parking wardens, initially introduced for training purposes, have proven to be a great success. A marked change in attitude is beginning to be registered amongst the public, and Whakatāne District Council's Community Regulations Manager Graeme Lewer says that though there was some initial resistance to the concept, the cameras have more than proven themselves over the past few months.



Senior Sergeant Yvonne Parker with Whakatāne's parking wardens.

"We had two recent incidents regarding threatening behaviour by members of the public towards the wardens that were considered so serious that they were referred to police," Mr Lewer said. "Police agreed they were unacceptable, and because of the cameras we now have the means to follow up these incidents with police."

The town's parking wardens began patrolling the town centre and Kopeopeo some 20 years ago and were originally enlisted to ensure fair and orderly parking. In recent years their role has come to include a wider public safety focus, and Senior Sergeant Yvonne Parker of the Whakatāne Police says they are doing an important job.

"Threats of violence, intimidation and abuse will not be tolerated, be it at work or in the home. The evidence that these video cameras provide is very difficult to refute in court. They are better than an eye witness and viewable instantaneously" she says.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Are you a member of a club or sports group? Are you fundraising to attend an event or competition, or for new facilities? The Eastern Bay Road Safety Programme is seeking volunteers to help with events, promotions and distribution, and in return, a donation/koha will be provided. This funding is available for groups only, so individuals cannot apply.

For more information or to register your group or club's interest, phone Erena Brew, (07) 306 0500 or email sharetheroad@whakatane.govt.nz



Sarah Clarke (right) and Nicola Olding of the Whakatāne District Aquatic and Fitness Centre.

AQUATIC CENTRE SCOOPS AWARDS

The Whakatāne District Aquatic and Fitness Centre's Swim School has been awarded two honours at the annual Swim Coaches and Teachers of New Zealand Awards. Aquatics and Recreation Manager Sarah Clarke and Learn to Swim Co-ordinator Nicola Olding attended the awards in Wellington and picked up commendations for Outstanding Swim School and Swim School Promotion.



The awards recognised the school for its customer service practices, staff training and development, health and safety, learn to swim programme content and promotional activities. Ms Clarke attributes the accolades to the great work put in by her team, supported by the wider operational changes and development that the Swim School and Aquatic Centre have achieved over the past 18 months.

"A lot of hard work has gone into providing a quality swim programme for our community and the Swim School team really deserve this recognition," she says. "We were up against some very good schools, so it's great to have this independent recognition that we offer an acclaimed service here in Whakatāne."

The Swim School provides learn-to-swim and water safety skills lessons for pupils from six months old to adults, as well as swim programmes for local schools and community groups.

UPGRADES TO CCTV COVERAGE PROPOSED

Upgrades to the town's CCTV security system are being considered by the Whakatāne District Council. Existing sites at the Strand, Information Centre and Main Wharf will be retained as is, while sites at the Skate Park and in Kopeopeo and Awatapu are set for equipment upgrades.

In addition, CCTV coverage is being considered for two sites in Kopeopeo (Stewart Street and the Landing Road/King Street service area), two sites in The Strand West (Boon Street and Richardson Street), two sites in Commerce Street (near Law Signs and the Fire Station), a site in the new Strand Plaza, and possible mobile sites at Rex Morpeth Park/ the Aquatic Centre and the Gorge Road/Bird Walk car park.

Whakatāne District Council Community Services Manager Paula Chapman says the upgrades were recommended by Whakatāne's Community Safety Group, which drew on statistics provided by NZ Police. "These upgrades would deliver important improvements to security in the designated areas," Ms Chapman says.

Outside funding is being sought to support the upgrades. If funding can be secured, it is expected that the upgrades could be in place later this year.

DOG REGISTRATIONS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE



Annual dog registration renewals are due soon, and invoices will be mailed out over the coming weeks. Whakatāne District residents now have a new way to pay for their dog registrations: online via the District Council website. After going to www.whakatane.govt.nz/pay-dogs, you can use your Visa or MasterCard to pay your annual dog registration fee. Enter the Dog ID and Owner ID printed on your invoice, review your dog's information, then proceed to payment.

This new service gives dog owners a faster and more convenient way to pay their registration fees. More information is available at www.whakatane.govt.nz/dog-registration.

CITY SOUTH WASTEWATER PROJECT PROGRESSING

Work is progressing on the upgrading of a wastewater pump station that serves more than 1,100 properties in the southern part of the Whakatāne township.

The works involve three components: upgrading the Sullivan Lake pump station capacity by almost 50 percent, the installation of an additional gravity main into the pump station, and increasing the diameter of the pumping main from 150mm to 300mm.

Once completed, the works will greatly reduce the possibility of wastewater overflows, which have occurred in southern parts of Whakatāne during heavy rainfall events. The work will address this issue by increasing the pumping capacity at the pump station and increasing the capacity of the upstream network.

The contract for the work has been awarded to Waitohi Contractors, who are currently upgrading the Sullivan Lake pump station and locating existing services along Valley Road prior to pipe-laying. The work is expected to be completed by mid-July.



Contractors at work on the Sullivan Lake pump station.

CIVIL DEFENCE SCHOOL COMPETITION OPENS

School students from around the Eastern Bay of Plenty are being encouraged to enter a Civil Defence competition to help us prepare for an emergency. Eastern Bay of Plenty Civil Defence has organised the competition for schools in the Whakatāne, Ōpōtiki and Kawerau Districts with a focus on increasing awareness of the Bay's four main natural hazards: tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption and flooding.

There are three categories – primary, intermediate and senior – and prizes include a helicopter flight for an adult and two children around Ōhope Beach or Whale Island with Frontier helicopters and a trip to White Island with Peejays White Island Tours.

Full information packs have been sent to Eastern Bay of Plenty schools and further details are available on the Bay of Plenty Civil Defence website: www.bopcivildefence.govt.nz