

Continued air quality issues result in Clean Air Bylaw

Air quality in Tokoroa needs to improve. The level of dirty air is too high, particularly during winter when we use our woodburners. It exceeds national standards and we need to get it under control.

Dirty air is caused by old fires and what we put in them to burn. This nasty smoke is harming us all. In fact the health status of people living in Tokoroa is

the poorest in the entire region.

“In addition, if we don’t clean up our dirty air, new businesses or industry may not be able to set up in Tokoroa,” said Mr Hall. “There is a real possibility that our district will lose new business opportunities, which means losing out on new jobs, growth and development.”

Council appreciates that a bylaw governing what kind of heating

appliances we can use may cause concern to residents. However, we have put everything else in place and our air quality has not improved enough, so this bylaw is the necessary next step.

“We have had education programmes in place since 2004 and subsidies, including free insulation and assistance schemes, since 2005,” continued Mr Hall. “Over the past eight years over a million of dollars has been spent in Tokoroa on cleaning up our air.”

In simple terms if you have an

old woodburner (over 15 years old), a chippie, an open fire or a fire that can burn multi-fuels like coal you need to replace this appliance with a new government approved heating appliance. Options available are new wood burners, pellet burners and heat pumps.

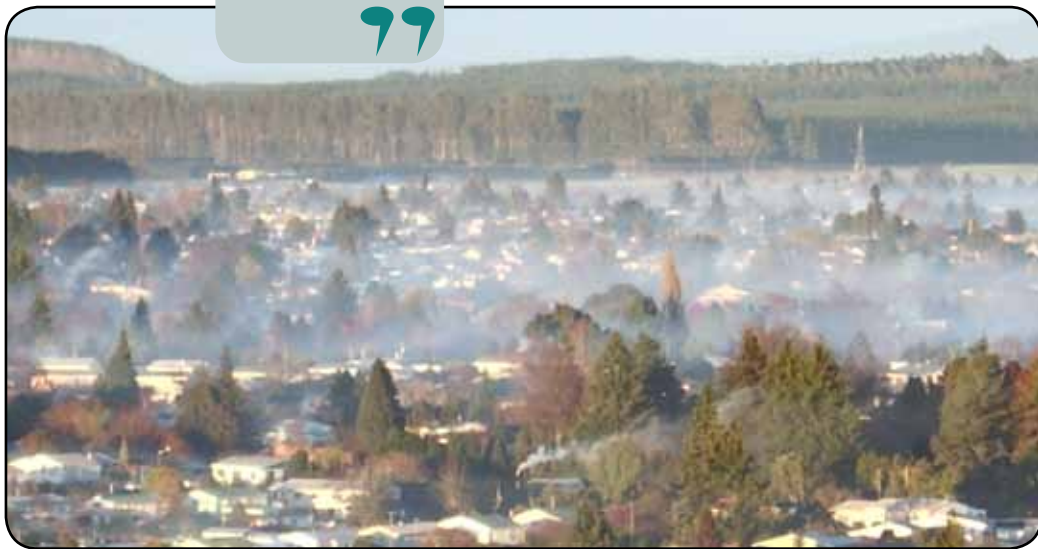
“We appreciate that there are a number of people who will be worried about not being able to afford to make this change and of course the costs will vary depending on circumstances,” continued Mr Hall. “Residents must remember that there are a number of schemes in place to help you, ranging from Council’s own programmes to central government funding.”

The deadline for change under the proposed bylaw is only in a year’s time. Act now so we can help you through the process.

The proposed new Clean Air Bylaw will be open for public consultation in October/ November. Council will advertise the details closer to the time.

The smoky haze hanging over Tokoroa in this photograph is not fog or mist. It is dirty air that we are breathing. Old inefficient wood burners and our bad burning habits are to blame.

“Our key concerns are the health of our community and future economic development”



IN brief

- Over the next three years, over \$1 billion from the National Land Transport Fund will be invested in the Waikato’s regional transport system.
- All three culverts damaged during the heavy rains in early August have been replaced and the roads, while still under speed restriction, have been opened to traffic.
- The bus and car parks at the swing bridge in Arapuni are marked.

IN side

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IN house

Produced in-house for the South Waikato community by the South Waikato District Council.

Editorial: Kerry Fabrie, Communications Manager, 07 885 0720

Print: Chaucer

Local Government Reform... where's amalgamation at?

In the last issue of In Touch we spoke a little about the Government's proposed amendments to the Local Government Act 2002. And we voiced our serious concerns about the amalgamation provisions of this amendment.

Amalgamation

The legislation has yet to be passed; however we feel it is important that our community is aware that there are a number of conversations occurring regarding possible amalgamations within the Waikato Region.

For example one of the most advanced schemes proposes that Putaruru and Tirau be included within a larger 'Greater Waikato Council' and Tokoroa, Taupo and other more southern areas will form a proposed 'Central North Island Plateau Council'.

It is likely that this proposal, and probably others, will be presented to the Local

Government Commission once the amended legislation has been enacted by Parliament.

Now before our community becomes unnecessarily alarmed at the prospect of effectively splitting our district in two, Council does caution that a lot more work will be required before any scheme we are aware of would satisfy the Act's criteria for a formal proposal. However, given that the legislation is only at Select Committee stage with possibly over a year to go before being passed in any form, there is still a lot of time for this proposal - and others - to be further refined.

Commissioners

Another element in the proposed Reform Bill that has resulted in some comments from disconcerted and frankly worried residents is the question of Commissioners.

It is unlikely that our Council will have Commissioners appointed; we are too well managed and financially stable; despite recent

reports in the media. Our Council's prudent financial management, ability to set realistic rates and sound accounting is of a high standard.

Just by way of example, some residents may be aware that the Minister of Local Government has recently appointed Commissioners to govern the Kaipara District Council. The appointment of Commissioners was recommended by a Review Team the Government had created to investigate rate issues in Kaipara - Kaipara's Long Term Plan had signalled a 31% rate increase for the current year. By comparison our Council had a 5.95% rate increase. We really do have a handle on this!

The Bill in general

The Reform Bill argues that rates, labour costs, capital spending and debt have grown too much.

There have been some instances of poor fiscal management; Kaipara and Waitomo District Councils and Hamilton's V8

saga are testament to that. However the data from the last 10 to 20 years suggests that the local government sector as a whole has not been fiscally irresponsible.

A recent report from the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) shows that rates and spending have increased. But the increases are not startling relative to property values or GDP. At an aggregate level, investment and borrowing also cannot be said to be irresponsibly high.

On the whole data indicates that local government manage their fiscal affairs well.

A full report commissioned by Local Government New Zealand can be found at www.nzier.org.nz.

Council wishes to assure you that we are keeping a very close eye on the progress of the Reform Bill and the changes that could result once the Bill is passed.

Splash into the summer pools, opening soon!

The summer pools in Putaruru and Tirau will be opening at noon on Saturday 10 November and entry is FREE! Come and have a splash! The district's outdoor summer pools are perfect for a family picnic day in the summer sun; well we hope to see some summer sun this year at any rate! The pools are manned by trained staff. We have little swimmers available for babies. And there is always some fun pool equipment available like inflatables, the octonaut and an obstacle course.

The outdoor pools tend to start out a bit on the nippy side,

ranging in temperature from 23 degrees to 27 degrees at the height of summer. Let's hope for a hot summer and cool dips!

Both pools are only closed on Christmas Day so all other days during the summer school holidays it is a perfect place to bring the kids and spend time with visiting family in a relaxing and enjoyable setting.

Putaruru Pool

- Features a 25m pool, leisure pool and toddler pool with picnic surrounds.
- Available outside of normal opening hours for private hire, please enquire.

- Concession cards (pay for 10, get one free) are available.
- Hours - 11.30am to 1pm and 3pm to 6pm (Mon to Fri); and 12noon to 6pm (Sat, Sun, public holidays and school holidays).
- Costs - adults \$2.50, children /senior citizens \$1.50, spectators/pre-schoolers .50, family \$6.50 and babies under one, free.

Tirau Pool

- Features a 25m pool and a toddlers pool with picnic surrounds. There is also a playground and tennis courts next door.

- Seasonal pass available.
- Hours - 3pm to 6pm (Mon, Tues, Wed and Fri); Thursday is swim club night and the pool is closed to the public; 12noon to 6pm (Sat, Sun, public holidays and school holidays).
- Available outside of normal opening hours for private hire, please enquire.
- Costs - adults \$2.50, children /senior citizens \$1.50, spectators/pre-schoolers .50, family \$6.50 and babies under one, free.



So many positives

... by Mayor Neil Sinclair

We are getting some positive feedback about our community newsletter In Touch. Thank you to those who have let us know that you are enjoying the articles and finding the newsletter informative.

We are finding that limiting In Touch to four pages is just not covering all the positive good news stories that are happening in our community so you will notice that this issue is eight pages. And we plan to continue this.

It is important to Council that our community feel safe living here and indeed statistics indicate that our district is actually fairly safe by comparison to other areas; despite what often features in local and national media. Have you noticed? It's always the bad things that make the headlines isn't it? Well time for some good news stuff.

Council has a close working relationship with the local police and we are pleased they will be writing a column for each issue regarding public safety, crime and some statistics. Keep an eye out for this regular column.

But it's not just safety that's important to our community.

We live, work and play here. Play involves getting out and enjoying all that our district has to offer. And what a fantastic number of activities we have! Over the coming issues we hope you enjoy the leisure activity features we will be running starting this issue with a feature on the Waikato River Trails.

We will also be running a second regular column from The Plaza in Putaruru. This performing arts centre hosts some fantastic shows and performances on a regular basis. So as well as taking to our many beautiful trails and tracks around the district, why not try a little cultural enrichment too? The Plaza hosts a wide range of shows, catering for varied interests, age groups and genres.

Talking safety with our Police



Prevention First is the national operating strategy for the New Zealand Police for 2011–2015, and places prevention and people at the forefront of our organisation. The strategy aims to reduce reported crime by 13% by 2014/2015 and reduce the number of cases referred to court by 19% by 2014/2015.

Crime can't survive in communities that care and Police can't act on something we don't know about. If you suspect something, RING 111. Remember: "If in doubt - give the Police a shout."

Reducing burglaries can be as simple as reporting suspicious behaviour, locking your doors and not leaving windows open; simple quick steps you can take. Sometimes people may have information about a crime in their neighbourhood but they don't want to speak to the Police directly. In those cases the CrimeStoppers confidential crime line is available toll free on 0800 555111.



Statistics show a 29% and 37% decrease in burglaries in Tokoroa and Putaruru respectively over the period January to September 2012, when compared to the same period in 2011.

In the same way there has been a 31% and 39% decrease in theft from (and of) motor vehicles. That's great news!

Talking tagging

Tagging is vandalism and wilful damage. Wilful damage is a crime.

Tagging is a signal crime - if left unattended it displays a lack of guardianship of the property and the area as a whole. This attracts low level offending which develops over time to more serious problems. If your property is tagged, call 0800 NO TAGS so that it can be removed as quickly as possible.



Brand new centre taking bookings from 1 November

Construction of the South Waikato Sport and Events Centre is now complete with final fit out and landscaping due to be finished in time for first events from 1 November.

With events including sports leagues, preschool fun days, secondary school activities, awards ceremonies, meetings and a national touring clairvoyant already booked in November, the booking calendar is filling fast and groups and individuals are urged to get in fast to secure a spot.

"Locals are as excited as the staff, about the opening of the new long awaited facility," said Manager Heather Gaby. "A steady stream of enquiries and bookings have been received."

"This facility has been built for the people of the South Waikato and it is great to see all the positive feedback we are getting about the building during the construction," continued Heather. "We hope to get even more positive feedback once it opens; so come on in, kick a ball around, it's your facility!"

This top class facility includes two function rooms, a two court arena, flat floor area, kitchen and changing rooms.

The official opening will be held on 1 December as part of Tokoroa's Big Weekend Out, with group displays and the Centre dressed for showcasing.

To book your event or discuss how the facility can accommodate your group or individual requirements, phone Heather on 8850340 or head to the Tokoroa Memorial Sportsground to have a look around this great, new district facility.

Council's application to the New Zealand Community Trust for \$50,000 towards the South Waikato Sport and Events Centre was successful. Yay!

The NZ Community Trust is a gaming charitable trust that focuses on giving back to amateur sport and the communities in which they operate. The trust's passion is helping Kiwis enjoy and participate in sport so our Sport and Events Centre was an ideal project for them to support.



Public safety drives Dog Control

Some people are 'dog' people and some people aren't; some people have dogs, some don't; but one thing that ALL people want is safe streets for walking and safe parks for playing; safe from roaming and potentially aggressive dogs.

Legislation

And for this reason there is a Dog Control Act. This legislation is made by central government and enforced by local government, your Council.

Under the law Council requires all dogs to be registered; and all dog owners to be responsible for their dogs not being a nuisance to other people, not causing other people (or other animals) harm, and providing for any damage caused by dogs.

Protecting public safety is the key driver behind the Animal Control Service.

1. The outdoor exercise area is a favourite for most dogs. Tummy tickling is not in the officers' job descriptions but it is hard to resist...

2. The pound is cleaned out twice a day to ensure a safe and hygienic environment.

3. Thank you to 'Sky' for pretending to be a roaming dog. Off to the pound for you.

The 24/7 and daytime services

The five-strong team deal with what we call urgent complaints 24/7. These include dog aggression and attacks and stock on roads.

During working hours the team patrol for wandering dogs, visit properties as part of their door to door registration check, care for the dogs in the pound, attend dog attacks or rushing complaints from the public; and respond to barking complaints (during working hours and up to 10pm on Thursday and Friday nights).

Dealing with dogs, dog owners and non-dog owners is often emotional. Council officers are skilled at negotiating through these emotional situations.

On an almost daily basis Council officers facilitate meetings between dog owners and complainants to try to reach a workable solution. A large number of cases are successfully dealt with in this way.

Rehoming

Council has an active dog re-homing programme. This is when the team tries to find a new home for dogs that have been impounded and are either not micro-chipped (so there is no way of tracking the owner) or that have been willingly handed over by their owner.

These dogs are assessed for temperament and if suitable are put up for adoption. The dog type is taken into consideration so that the best possible dog-owner match can be found. All properties are inspected for suitability prior to re-homing to ensure that the public remains safe and that the dog is cared for and doesn't end up back in the pound.

"Quite often people bring their dogs to us to be re-homed," said Council's Senior Animal Control Officer, Kerry Beckett.

"This can often be quite emotional as in many cases the owner doesn't want to give their dog up. Often the reasons are more out of their concern for their dog's welfare than anything else," continued Kerry. "Sometimes their circumstances have changed and they don't have enough time to spend with the dog; or the dog is constantly escaping the confines of the property and they are struggling to keep up with the costs associated with re-fencing and infringement fees."

"But there is a positive side," she continued, "We are often able to find loving, more suitable homes for these dogs and they continue to live long and happy lives."

A typical day

The team work shifts so handing over active cases is important. They all have a comprehensive knowledge of many of the dogs, and dog owners, in the district. On a daily basis:

- The team tend to the administration side of the job, by dealing with any unsolved complaints that might have arisen during the night, previous day or on-going investigations, and updating the National Dog Database on issues like dogs that have moved elsewhere with their owner; something that dog owners are required by law to do. The National Dog Database tracks dogs and maintains their history.
- Officers facilitate disputes between owners and non-owners regarding issues like



1



2



3



barking, rushing, roaming and damage to property.

- While not as common as dog issues, the team also respond to situations where stock has broken out of a paddock and is on roads, causing a potential traffic hazard.
- The team also conduct parking inspections and issue infringements when necessary; like infringing people who have parked in a mobility parking space for instance.
- The officers thoroughly wash and disinfect the pound twice a day to ensure it is clean and hygienic. They feed and water the dogs twice a day; and rotate dogs into the outdoor exercise enclosures to get some fresh air, sun and a bit of a play. Sociable dogs are often buddied up in the enclosures and they respond positively to the company.

The team is available 24/7 to respond to

calls from the community across the district on any number of issues like wandering dogs, lost dogs, aggression, attacks on people or other animals, among others.

Like Council's rehoming programme, the door-to-door programme is one of the team's success stories. The team visit properties where previously registered dogs were, but that have not been registered for the current year to find out why.

The team have years of experience on dogs, behaviour and temperament and often advise dog owners on a number of behaviour issues like barking, jumping, aggression, digging, walking and general care and animal health. The team have anti-barking collars available for hire; and dog traps which are free of charge.

What can the community do to help?

The Animal Control team can't be everywhere all the time, so the team relies on people reporting incidents. If you

Stats, facts and trends

	2010	2011	2012 (current)
Registered dogs	3,399	3,359	3,464
Total owners	2,532	2,449	2,495

The team responds to around 160 jobs each month (on average). These include rushing and attacks; but also SOP inspections, following up barking, dealing with stock on roads, finding owners, facilitating meetings, among other things.

On average, Council impounds almost 500 dogs each year, euthanizing about 200 and re-homing 126. Many dogs are returned to owners once the necessary fines have been paid and issues solved (like fixing fences).

We have around four voluntary handovers each month, largely due to behavioural issues where people recognise their dog could pose a risk to the community and they want to take responsibility and action before something bad happens.

see a roaming dog, report it **at once** so the team can attend to it. Our district is fairly large and sometimes it takes a while for officers to get there, so if the dog is friendly and it is safe to do so, it is a great help if you are able to tie it up for us; as they sometimes wander off, and then we can't find them to pick them up.

If you are attacked or bitten by a dog let the team know **as soon as possible** so that they can follow it up immediately.

Often we are faced with situations where dogs have

displayed aggression towards family members, but they won't make a statement or formal complaint; so there is nothing we can do about it. Unfortunately these dogs can sometimes go on to cause other problems, which could have been avoided.

It is important that the community understands that the legislation regarding dog attacks is very clear. For Council to act on a rushing or attack complaint, one of two things needs to happen. Officers have to observe aggressive behaviour and/or the complainant has to be willing to make a statement.

We can't do this by ourselves.

Animal Control can be contacted on 885 0774.



These trails are made for walking... and biking...

Less than one year after the Waikato River Trail's grand opening in November last year the benefits it brings to our community are already noticeable.

Developing our district's natural assets of the Waikato River and Lakes Karapiro, Arapuni and Whakamaru into a cycle and walkway, involved laying 100 kilometres of track from Atiamuri in the south, to the Pokaiwhenua Bridge carpark on the shores of Lake Karapiro in the north.

Bottom: Keen cyclists take advantage of the Waikato River Trails bike van.

Below: the Waikato River at its tranquil best.



Community involvement in the project has been immense with local schools and business planting over 13,000 native trees to date.

Patronage of the Trails has also exceeded expectations. Counters for eight months last summer/autumn measured 18,000 passersby. A survey found many users were South Waikato locals and most tourists are from the upper half of the North Island. Of these, 80% were cyclists.

Businesses in the South Waikato are noticing increased patronage due to Trail users, but accommodation providers say there could be more.

Tracy Thompson of the Putaruru Hotel says advertising is the key to them from making the most of the Trail's potential.

"I can't see why it can't be huge. We just have to make people aware of it and give them a reason to come here."

To that end, a group of like-minded businesses are meeting monthly and pooling funds to produce a brochure. Anyone interested is welcome to join.

Construction of the Trail contributed to Louise Samuel's decision to open the Rhubarb Café in Arapuni. And her husband Bryan attributes some 20 to 25 per cent of their business to Trail users.

"The Trail has had a huge effect on Arapuni village," said Bryan. "Not only is it good for business but it has brought in people who have ended up buying houses. The Trail's great and it's only going to get busier and busier."

"We get some retired people doing the trail during the week, but it is mostly family groups on the weekend", said Bryan. "We have a bike rack that takes 40 bikes and it is often full. We are currently putting in french doors and outside shelter so we can expand our seating capacity in time for summer."

The Waikato River Trail Trust (WRTT) secures funding (\$225,000 per year from SWDC and almost the same again from sponsors) to maintain the track and provide services to Trail users. They currently employ four people.

This includes dropping off and picking people up so they can do any section of the track one way, providing bikes for hire of all shapes and sizes (\$50 per day), through to arranging food and accommodation packages for those who would like to spend four days exploring the entire length of the Trail.

Glyn Wooller, General Manager of WRTT says feedback so far has been extremely positive with users enjoying the stunning scenery, appreciating the value

for money and commenting on the hospitality of the locals met en route.

And on 10 November 2012, the Taniwha will utilise the Waikato River Trail to its full extent.

A one-day event that already has nearly three hundred registered entrants, The Taniwha is capitalising on the varied terrain the Trail has to offer. With everything from an easy seven kilometre walk alongside Lake Whakamaru to an 80 kilometre bike challenge from Little Waipa, there is something for everyone with all stages finishing at Whakamaru. Plans are that this will become an annual event putting the Waikato River Trail and the South Waikato firmly on the adventure map.

Have you done it yet?

Pick up a brochure at the information centre or look online at www.waikatorivertrails.com to find the piece of trail that is right for you.

From gentle Lake Karapiro to the challenging Waipapa section, there is a reason to get out and explore our river this summer.





ShakeOut!

We did it, did you?



Over 5,500 people in the South Waikato participated in the first nation wide earthquake drill held on 26 September at 9.26am.

had a few people who were injured so that our first aiders could put their skills to the test.

We joined the 1.3 million people country wide who did the DROP COVER HOLD exercise! Wow, that's pretty amazing.

We trust that schools, pre-schools, other organisations, families and individuals enjoyed the exercise and learnt some good tips in the process.

It was down tools at Council for the duration of the 'earthquake' when everyone, from librarians to customer service officers ducked below their desks.

Council continued with a full evacuation of all its work sites. And we would like to thank our library visitors and pool patrons who were with us at the time for their enthusiastic participation.

Council also thought it would be a good idea to pretend we



Above: Trailers can enjoy stunning views of the Waikato River as it gushes through the Arapuni gorge.

Below: The trails meander along the Waikato River taking in breathtaking views of the river, lush farmland and native forest. Trails are suitable for walking and biking.



The Taniwha
Waikato River Trails

THE TANIWHA
Saturday 10th November, 2012
Waikato River Trails

Courses:
Mountain Bike 21km / 42km / 58km / 80km
Trail Run 7km / 14km / 21km / 42km / 58km
Trail Walk 7km / 14km / 21km

www.thetaniwha.co.nz

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IN brief continued...

- During the first seven months of this year Council costs covering vandalism have topped \$160,000. Council considers vandalism to include the wilful damage or removal (ie theft) of trees/plants, damage to buildings, damage to parks and reserves, tagging, theft/ damage of street signs and costs associated with Biff it in the Bin (dumping and littering). We think there area better ways to spend this money. What do you think?
- To date there have been no fatalities, but 13 serious injuries in the South Waikato, compared to four fatalities and 17 serious injuries by in the district by the same time last year.
- The speed indication device was deployed on O'Sullivan Drive for two weeks as a result of concerns raised regarding high speeds. The average speed recorded was 30kph and the maximum speed was 75kph recorded on a Saturday evening. Only 22 vehicles went above the 50kph speed limit and only one was over the 60kph limit. The speed indicator device will next be deployed in Dalmeny Stret.

IN the know

... Council operates four urban and two rural water supply networks. These networks include more than 200km of pipeline and five water treatment plants. Most of our water is taken from high quality underground sources.

The IN the know column features a snippet about Council. Got a question, drop an email to kerry.fabrie@southwaikato.govt.nz.

IN view

If you would like to receive this newsletter in electronic format please email kerry.fabrie@southwaikato.govt.nz.

If you are a ratepayer, you will still receive a hard copy

What's on at The Plaza?

... by Plaza Manager, Nicola Warrington

The Plaza Theatre has been very busy in recent weeks with a multitude of events from training courses, surplus broker auctions, and performing arts, including Michael Houstoun.

Just under 400 patrons were treated to the hilarious Men in Tutus, the professional male ballet dancers from thirteen nations. Pop Opera trio Lyrica performed combining the soul and grace of the classical world with the power and energy of today's popular music. The Feelers came to Plaza as part of their No Need To Worry small towns tour and delivered a colourful energetic evening to just over 400 patrons.

The next few months will be just as busy with a superb piece of musical theatre on 11 November at 4pm - Home is written and directed by Jacqueline Coats and features Stuart Coats and Rowena Simpson. Since the first contact between Māori and Pākehā, blankets have played a central role in our lives. In Home, blankets provide the backdrop to the story of Maggie and Johnny, two Scottish immigrants who meet and marry just before WWI, and Johnny's departure for the Front.

On 24 November we will host OPERA BRAVA – An Evening of Opera. Don't miss your chance to witness an evening of arias, duets, trios and quartets by Beethoven, Bizet, Delibes, Dvorak, Lehar, Mozart, Mascagni, Puccini, Rossini and Verdi. The show features Pamela Wallace and Elaine Wogan (sopranos), Chase Douglas (tenor), John Drummond (baritone) and Francis Cowan (accompanist).

Tickets are available from all usual outlets and online with EventFinder. Visit www.plaza.org.nz for more information.



Councillor Column

Brenda Watkins

Being a councillor is about making good decisions; and sometimes our decisions have mixed support. The new Sport and Events Centre is one such decision. Looking at this fine facility now I think we can all agree it is very exciting. As part of the fund raising committee, I find many donations are being generated by this excitement so thank you. I know some rate payers had concerns about the cost. As a member of the Treasury Management Committee I took these concerns seriously.

Tokoroa is fortunate to have investment funds which put us in a better position than many councils. I believe that investments like this great facility are for current and future generations, and is what these funds are for.

As some budget problems demonstrate we must be vigilant, but as a long-standing Tokoroa resident and two time councillor, my greatest fear is that amalgamation will be forced on us and our money will pay another district's debt.

The future of services is at the heart of our decisions.

Recently health worker representatives, following the work of many dedicated people, made the crucial decision to retain our hospital and upgrade it to attract additional doctors.

Submissions during the Long Term Plan proved how strongly residents feel about making our district an even better place. As Chair of the Grants Committee I was impressed with the work done by volunteer organisations who requested funds. Tough decisions due to budget constraints meant not every wish was granted but it was a privilege to hear from people who are so passionate about our districts future.

When making decisions, the scrutiny on councillors can be intense but given the importance of our decisions your informed comments are always listened to.

In touch

Mayor Neil Sinclair
Phone: 027 446 8422
Email: neil.sinclair@southwaikato.govt.nz



TOKOROA

Jenny Shattock (Deputy Mayor)
Phone: 027 441 6230 or 886 8120 (evenings)
Email: Shattock1@xtra.co.nz



Alan Blair
Phone: 027 294 3106 or 886 9537
Email: alan_blair@xtra.co.nz



Barrie Herlihy
Phone: 886 5405
Email: barrieherlihy9@gmail.com



Brenda Watkins
Phone: 027 242 4625 or 886 5969
Email: b.b.watkins@xtra.co.nz



Lyn Corban
Phone: 027 414 4949 or 886 8900
Email: lyn.corban@xtra.co.nz



Mike Gubb
Phone: 027 476 6221
Email: mike@planetcomputers.co.nz



PUTARURU

Adrienne Bell
Phone: 027 471 2404
Email: adriennejb@yahoo.co.nz



Anne Edmeades
Phone: 021 0818 4710
Email: anneandroyce@xtra.co.nz



Herman van Rooijen
Phone: 027 246 6601
Email: vanrooijen@xtra.co.nz



TIRAU

Warren Lee
Phone: 021 104 0430 or 883 1227
Email: warren.lee@xtra.co.nz

