

Report from Lionel Petersen

By way of a report for the August meeting I really only have one concern. This concern is the future of OTCB. We are rapidly approaching election time and I have concluded that it is about our place in the District. We need to have an election so that OTCB has the best people on it. We can only have an election if we have enough candidates. WDC doesn't like Community Boards and our distance from the Council offices mean that our Board has to be more proactive. The danger is that Council will dilute the Boards authority more and more, to the point where they have evidence that the Board serves no useful purpose. They will reduce it to Community Committee status and more and more we will have to come to terms with being administered from afar by remote control. I worry for the OTCB future.

Being administered by remote control isn't working. This is demonstrated by Chairman Bruce's comments about the Glen Murray road. Waiting years for road repairs (no matter how difficult they may be) is simply inexcusable. Bruce's commented that the road will have to collapse completely before it gets attention. I'll make another suggestion – It will take a fatality to get something done. I believe now that the negligence is criminal and it is opening Council up to legal action if someone dies.

Another example is the town car parks and the dump station. The Board has decided that it wants the two car parks re-configured to improve parking and to accommodate more cars. This exercise was coupled with the new toilets and the relocation of the dump station. The Board settled on putting the toilets back in the St Stephens car park and it wanted the dump station out of the CBD. It considered the dumps station as not a good fit with a shopping centre. It nominated a new site in Bollard Road as it could be connected to the sewer line serving the industrial area. The Boards recommendations were ignored and a Council officer decides the dump station should be moved to the West St car park.

The question here is WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS? Do the locals on the Board have any say any more? I wonder whether we are in the right Council. Maybe we would be better off in Auckland. Our water is Auckland, Our wastewater is Auckland., If our transport issues were in Auckland would we have the same trouble getting the rail service extended to Tuakau & Pokeno? We have Auckland buses. Are we in the wrong Council?

I have been in local government for 28 years. Much of that time as a Councillor but through all of it I have been either an elected or appointed member of OTCB. I came into local government when Tuakau was absorbed into Franklin District. It was a learning time as nobody knew where Community Boards fitted. Over time the role under Franklin improved. Then we found ourselves in the Waikato District. Unfortunately, in my opinion, it has been a disaster for the old Franklin area. Waikato never wanted us and it took us back to the battle for a place in the scheme of things.