



Minutes of Newtown Residents Association Meeting
Newtown Salvation Army Worship & Community Centre , 4 Normanby Street
Monday 20 July 2026 at 7.30pm - 9pm

Present: Merio Marsters (Chair), Rhona Carson (Secretary), Steve Cosgrove (Minutes), Sam Somers (Treasurer), Cr Matthew Reweti, John Sheenhan, Margaret Franken, Kim Young, Wendy Blue, Daphne Pilaar, Keith Powell, Cr Laurie Foon, Martyn Pinckard, Kassie McLuskie, Jane Patterson, Carol Comber, Léonie Walker, Kath O'Shaughnessy, Lainey Cowan, Geoff Richards, Andrew Wilson, Stephen Pritchard, Kathiy Benseman, Sam Chandler, Laura Zhong, Fiona Robertson, David Cook, Don McDonald, Hilary Watson, David Jenkins, Leah & Gareth Price, Nicholas Grove, Diane Woods, Kerry Finnigan, Michelle Wolland, Graeme Carroll, Warwick Taylor, Cr Nureddin Abdurahman

Apologies: Steve Dunn, Chrissy Cook, Jan Gould, MP Julie Anne Genter, Matt Lawry

Guest Speaker: Mayor Andrew Little

Note - Approval of the June minutes and other local updates were deferred until after we had heard from the Mayor.

Merio Marsters welcomed Mayor Andrew Little to the meeting.

Council Amalgamation:

A discussion with Mayor Andrew Little about the amalgamation proposal and other Wellington issues. Mayor Little acknowledged Councillors Matthew Reweti, Nureddin Abdurahman and Laurie Foon who were also at the meeting.

- Outlined the process to get this far.
- Initial proposal to abolish the Regional Council and work from there to bring a demand that we come up with a Unitary Council plan.
 - Wairarapa said they would go alone, but are now concerned that their region is not big enough to sustain their district.
 - This indicates that there is a cross-subsidy where Wellington ratepayers help pay the costs of the Wairarapa area.
 - The four 'metro' Councils (Upper Hutt, Lower Hutt, Porirua, Wellington) agree their residents intermingle in various ways so a merger looks sensible.
 - Kāpiti is looking toward the north, but is still considering options.
 - Horowhenua was keen to join the metro Councils, but that makes no sense if Kapiti doesn't.
- General Questions
 - Can we save money by doing this?
 - How can we retain representation in a much bigger Council?
- There are different views about things should go
 - There are services that are common to all Councils, so can logically be administered together.
 - Other services need to be considered carefully to ensure equitable access.
- What is being considered ...
 - Community Councils - learning from Auckland local boards.
 - Need to improve local representation and devolution of power.
 - Perhaps Community Councils could be based around current cities.
- What is happening:
 - Public hearings next week
 - Public survey open until 20 July
- Central Government position:
 - Headstart - tell us what you want
 - Backstop - what you get if you don't submit a plan or we don't like your plan
 - The deadline is the 9th of August - but there is flexibility.

Questions and Answers –

What authority does the Government have to require councils to amalgamate?

- The Government is not doing this under any statutory authority.
- The Mayor wants to have a referendum.

Will amalgamation mean rates won't go up?

- In Auckland rates didn't go up as much as they might have.

Mixture of structural questions.

- Noted that a mayor speaking for 500,000 people will have more clout
- The general view is that we will retain Māori representation with elected and iwi selected members
- No discussion yet on the voting system. STV has worked for us.
- A ward-based system seems likely. No discussion of this yet. Likely to be a ward system.

Wairarapa - why would we want to pay the costs of that district?

- We have some economic links

What if the Government changes?

- Labour has not said anything to suggest they would abandon the idea.
- They would likely change the structure.

The Mayor was asked about the slow WCC response to LGOIMA questions, he commented:

- Council is generally honest
- Email subject lines cover a range of possible content.
- Responses to Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) requests - could be done quicker sometimes.

Council Staffing levels

- Each Council CE is thinking about this. There has been a slowdown in appointments.
- Wellington can't cope with more swathes of job cuts.

Population head count

- Head counts - people with multiple houses are currently not counted twice

Government Timetable

- September - Government announces which proposals will be accepted
- March 2027 - All accepted plans need to be confirmed before the 2028 election
- Not clear whether it is expected for 2028 elections, new structures.
- Not clear whether a referendum will be allowed.

What consideration has been given to alternatives?

- The government set a directive.
- No real chance to do otherwise

Kāpiti is linked by the railway and health services?

- Analysis of labour markets too suggests Kāpiti has much stronger links to Wellington than Horowhenua. There are strong links, transport.

What happens if Wairarapa wants to join but metros don't agree?

- Currently looks like these extremities will be flexible

Referendums will be expensive to the cities.

We are paying twice for transport and housing. Should that be taken up by central Government

- Most of the transport subsidies

Form follows Function argument.

- Democratic local government is mainly about representation.

- We were told to do it this way - it is not a good approach. Auckland took from 2007 to 2010 to get this plan.

Mayor opened up to other matters:

Arlington Development

- If Arlington is changed from high-needs to other tenants then Council expects the Government to provide more support for high-needs.

Cost of rates.

- There is no provision for charging income-based rates.
- Council is looking at a shift to land-based rates.
- Looking at alternative income sources, such as bed tax. We are putting together an AirBandB rate more in line with

Government doesn't pay rates - Council requires the Mayor to push the Government on this issue.

Mayor Little was thanked enthusiastically for his input. He left the meeting at this stage.

Other Business resumed -

Approval of Minutes from the June meeting: Anyone present from last June meeting to approve our minutes.

- 1st: Sam Somers
- 2nd: Rhona Carson

Carried

Newtown Resilience

- Open Day at Newtown School Hall Saturday 25 July introducing the Community Emergency Hub. Newtown Residents' Association will be one of several community groups represented.
- Warwick said there was good representation at the Clean-up event on 19 July. There is a Lyall Bay cleanup on 3 August - details will be circulated. There was a big mess to clean up at the Urban Masala site.

Community celebrations - Saturday 1st August

- Opening of the Carrara Park toilets, 1pm till 3pm. Sausage sizzle.
- Newtown Park Flats fair after 3pm.

Meet the candidates

- Tuesday 13 October 7pm to 9pm
- MC suggestions

Heritage Festival week

- During August / September Rhona will be seeking people who have ideas to contribute to Newtown History resources.

Newtown Matters

- Safety and street community work is proceeding.
- Steve / Carol / Merio came to a meeting including St Toms and Salvation Army, and the Green electorate office to discuss safety and the street community.
- There will be another meeting near the end of August which Mark Mitchell will endeavour to attend.
- There was an incident on the weekend where a person unhappy with the New World music contributed to what could have been a serious incident.
- It was noted that the Government has cut back in most support areas. There have been numerous submissions to the Moving On Bill suggesting that support services is a better solution.
- Andrew outlined how Police and the community can work together to help. Move-on orders are not a solution.

Meeting closed at 9:02pm