

Social and community issues – what matters to our Tauranga City Council Mayoral and Ward Candidates?

SocialLink¹ asked all mayoral and ward candidates five questions from a social and community sector perspective. They could leave out any questions they did not want to respond to.

Mauao/Mt Maunganui General Ward

There are seven people standing for the Mauao/Mt Maunganui ward. Four candidates provided the following verbatim unedited answers.

Heidi Hughes

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

I am currently the unpaid chair of PiPS Garden in Schools charitable Trust, and a member of Clear The Air advocacy group for Mount Maunganui, I'm also on the board of The New Zealand Tango dancing festival! A random collection of unpaid work that reflects my values of kaitiakitanga and enjoyment of all things that make you smile.

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

Our community groups, small trusts and organisations are all in existence generally due to a small number of incredibly dedicated and committed people who have a fire in the hearts to make a difference. I think we need a better system in council to capture the needs of their groups and the communities these people work with, and ensure that they are being translated into actions. There is a lot of consulting, and it takes up precious time and resources, but no real measure or feedback loop of whether the council have actually responded with the actions that result in the outcomes that are most important.

¹ SocialLink is a registered charity managing and based at The Collective in 17th Avenue, a not-for-profit co-working space enabling collaboration. SocialLink is the umbrella peak body for the social and community sector in the Western Bay of Plenty. www.sociallink.org.nz

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

The most vulnerable people are also the most invisible, we will never be as effective or authentic as the people already working in this space are. So I think we need to be able to capture the needs much more effectively from our leaders on the ground (as above), often it is in the design of our community spaces, eg showers, free warm places to go, access to facilities. But one of the most important and crucial issues is housing. If we can collaborate with the housing providers and developers to bring more affordable housing, social housing, and better housing choice close to amenities we will be helping to resolve so many social issues that stem from housing insecurity.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

Absolutely! I personally believe (and evidence confirms) that the more interesting and vibrant streets we create, the less we are likely to prioritise cars and the more we are likely to prioritise people. We have so few public expressions of culture and diversity in our city!

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

I'm excited by the opportunities that this presents for creating a more informed, tolerant and proud city that has a sound sense of identity. I'm not sure what it looks like in practice but it'll be a journey I will embrace.

Teresa Nicols

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

Thank you to all of the people who take the time to volunteer/donate expertise. Unofficially, I continue to provide pro bono confidential crisis intervention counselling.

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

Diversity and inclusion is essential to our community and must be continued to be supported via outreach, education, availability of community resources and events that encourage a broad engagement.

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

There are a variety of "vulnerable communities" which require different types and levels of support. Some require direct intervention with supportive services while others require mentoring and access to a pathway of transition etc. It is essential that resources are available and accessible. NZ's double dip recession and high inflation is exasperating the situation and elevating the need for more resources of all types. It is essential that council makes an effort to see, hear and include all of our community.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

As a life-time ally of the LGBTQIAS+ community I deeply understand the importance of recognition, representation and celebration of the community. My friends. My family. Div

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

As an American expat from the world's melting-pot, I deeply understand the significance of inclusion and representation in good faith of all parties involved in a community. I bring to council a depth of frontline experience in inclusion and community building. I spent over a decade serving a 50,000+ student body population in which 25% identified as an ethnic minority. I know that governing a diverse population in a fair and just manner creates a community that thrives together.

Michael O'Neill

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

I Chair the Local Child youth Mortality Review Group that reviews deaths of those under 21 post Coroner and make local and national recommendations.

I am the current Chairperson of the local Mount Ratepayers Association.

I am a Justice of the peace (over 30 years).

I have a lifetime commitment to Surf Lifesaving and still active as a Carnival Judge.

2.What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

There are an abundance of willing and Competent locals looking to serve their community across wide ranging fields and activities who essentially don't look for or need support they commit to their chosen activities as a commitment to the wellbeing of our community. That said annual acknowledgements and recognition events sponsored by Council is most appropriate.

3.What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

The scope of this question is very wide ranging and crosses many volunteer organizations and activities that Council can support and sponsor. Much of this work is the responsibility of Central Government and not essentially the Rate payers.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

Whilst working for NZTA as a behavior change analyst and responsible for funding road safety campaigns I was aware of critical studies that supported the need for consistency of messaging and the normalization of roading signage and messaging. To have an inconsistent road crossing sits outside that research adding safety features that deviate from the norm is unsafe practise.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

I have lived the Whanau life, I have family members in senior roles in Te Puna Kokiri who keep me informed and up to date, additionally I have studies and university papers with Mason Dury (Massey University). I consider myself well informed.

Jacqueline Pointon

1.We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

The voluntary roles that I have been involved in have significantly contributed to our community. This includes mentoring youth through local educational programmes, participating in environmental clean-up initiatives, contributing service hours at the Habitat for Human Restore, and providing pro bono advice to community groups on strategy and operations. I have supported events focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusivity,

such as organising workshops and community gatherings. These experiences have allowed me to foster community connections and address community needs.

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

Tauranga is blessed with a vibrant and diverse community, which includes strong cultural heritage, active civic engagement, and a commitment to environmental stewardship. Our community's strengths lie in the diverse community voices, active sports and recreational clubs, and dedicated local businesses. The Council can support these assets with funding for community initiatives, facilitating better communication and collaboration between different groups, and providing resources for cultural and environmental programmes. Public-private partnerships should be leveraged to amplify the impact of these community strengths, ensuring that they continue to thrive and benefit all residents.

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

The Council plays an important role in ensuring the wellbeing of our vulnerable community members. This includes providing accessible and comprehensive social services, such as affordable housing, healthcare, and mental health support. The Council should collaborate closely with community organisations to identify and address the needs of these individuals. Implementing inclusive policies, ensuring equitable access to resources, and creating safe public spaces are key priorities moving forward. The Council must advocate for and represent vulnerable groups in its decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are met.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

I would vote in favour of the motion. Celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity through Roadway Art is a powerful statement of inclusivity and acceptance. It not only honours the contributions of the LGBTQIA+ community but also promotes a message of unity and respect for diversity in Tauranga Moana. Public art serves as a visible commitment to our values of equality and diversity, which are important for a cohesive and thriving community.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

If elected, I would be committed to integrating Te Ao Māori principles into our governance systems and processes (i.e. Māori impact statements). This involves actively consulting with Māori leaders and communities, ensuring their perspectives and knowledge shape our

policies and initiatives. I will advocate for the inclusion of Māori values in our decision-making processes, promoting sustainability, respect for the environment, and community wellbeing. My goal is to contribute to a Council that genuinely reflects the bicultural foundation of our country, leading to more equitable and inclusive outcomes for everyone in Tauranga Moana.