

# Whakatane and Ohope community boards may merge

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Staff reporter

THE Whakatane and Ohope Community Boards may be combined under a representation review under way.

Whakatane District Council is required to review its representation requirements every six years, including the number of electoral wards, ward names and boundaries, the number of councillors and how they are elected, and the structure of community boards.

Most councillors support the status quo of 10 councillors elected from four

wards – one urban ward and three rural – but want to see the community boards reduced to three by combining the Whakatane and Ohope boards.

The community board chairmen have indicated they can see some value in a combined board, although the possibility has yet to be discussed with board members or the community.

In a report to the council's policy committee last Thursday, various options were presented, including having just one urban ward and one rural ward, and changing the ward structure through increasing or reducing the number of councillors.

Options for the community boards



**Mike Naude,**  
Whakatane  
Community Board  
chairman



**Gerard Casey,**  
Ohope Community  
Board chairman

include retaining the status quo, abolishing the boards, combining the boards and increasing or reducing the number of members from the current six.

In a pre-consultation exercise the policy committee invited community board chairs to share their personal views and for Whakatane Community Board chairman Mike Naude, Ohope chairman Gerard Casey and Taneatua deputy chairman Luke Ruiterman abolishment was not an option.

"We believe boards do play an importance function in the community," Mr Naude said. "We believe that we are the link between the community and the council and I think we also have worked very closely with council staff on the installation of a number of projects.

"Without the support of the community board and funding from the dis-

cretionary fund the projects would not have happened or been as successful."

He could see value in combining the Whakatane and Ohope boards, and Mr Casey said he could "maybe" support a combined board with a 60/40 split of members. However, decisions on Ohope applications to the discretionary fund would have to be made by Ohope members.

Most councillors were happy with the current 10 councillors, made up of five from the Whakatane-Ohope ward, three from the Rangitaiki ward and one each from the Taneatua-Waimana and Galatea-Murupara wards.

However, Mayor Tony Bonne said he

felt the number in the urban ward was excessive for the population and suggested four urban councillors and four rural councillors.

Councillor Gerard van Beek Gerard could also see increased efficiency with fewer councillors, noting that a modest corporation the same size as the council could be led by four to six directors.

Fellow Rangitaiki ward councillor Russell Orr thought it important to retain the existing "fine balance" between rural and urban.

"That's why this council works so well. If you tilt that balance either way you will get disenfranchisement."