

Tauranga Domain stadium proposal: Council denies 10 requests to speak at meeting

By

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An artist impression of what a proposed stadium at Tauranga Domain could look like.
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People wanting to air their views about a proposed \$220.2 million stadium at Tauranga Domain have been denied permission to speak at a city council meeting.

A controversial proposal to build the new stadium at the domain is may progress to the next step in a Tauranga City Council meeting on Monday.

City commissioners will decide whether to include a staged implementation plan, recommended by council staff, for the Tauranga Community Stadium in the draft 2024/34 Long-Term Plan, which will go out for public consultation.

If the staged approach was approved, work on the first stage was expected to begin in 2029/30, with rates-funded loans to contribute \$40m of \$70m in capital expenditure and the other \$30m coming from other sources, according to a report in the meeting agenda. The rest of the cost would go beyond the period of the Long-Term Plan.

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Operating costs were put at \$1m a year, “plus appropriate debt servicing and depreciation allocations”.

Developing and costing the staged implementation plan itself was estimated to cost up to \$900,000 in unbudgeted spending in 2023/24.

In response to ***Bay of Plenty Times Weekend*** questions, the council confirmed that as of Tuesday, it had turned down 10 requests from people who wanted to give their views on the stadium proposal in the public forum section of the meeting.

A council spokeswoman said this was because if the decision was made to include the stadium plans in the Long-Term Plan consultation process, “everyone will have an opportunity to express their views then, before any decisions about the proposal are made”.

The council’s Standing Orders define the public forum as “a defined period of time, usually at the start of a meeting, which, at the discretion of a meeting, is put aside for the purpose of public input”.

“Public forums are designed to enable members of the public to bring matters, not necessarily on the meeting’s agenda, to the attention of the local authority.”

If built, the stadium was expected to displace the Tauranga Croquet and Tauranga Bowling Clubs.

The domain’s all-weather athletics track would be demolished - although the meeting report said the staged approach would delay stadium construction until the track was expected to be due for replacement.

Concerned domain users formed the Hands off Tauranga Domain Alliance and have campaigned against the proposal, including [a protest march](#) and a petition.

Alliance representative Garth Mathieson said he was one of those turned down to speak at Monday’s meeting.

He applied on August 6 and was told on August 14 the request had been denied.

He said he knew of nine people who were turned down and all were opposed to the stadium.

He said he was still encouraging alliance supporters to attend the meeting as spectators.



Between 300 and 400 people attended the protest at the Tauranga Domain earlier this year.
Photo / Maryana Garcia

The report for Monday's meeting included findings from two surveys about the potential stadium.

A demographically representative market research survey by Key Research Limited received responses from 1198 people randomly selected from the electoral roll.

More respondents (49 per cent) supported the proposal in general, than those who opposed it (43 per cent). The rest picked neither.

However, when asked about a proportion of funding for the project coming from rates, more respondents (57 per cent) opposed this than those who supported it (30 per cent).

A separate council-run, online survey, which was open to anyone, attracted 3318 respondents, of whom 89 per cent indicated they lived in Tauranga.

The survey found 63 per cent of the respondents opposed the stadium compared to 35 per cent in favour.

Both surveys found men and younger people tended to be more supportive of the stadium than women and older people.

The Key survey margin of error was +/-2.8 per cent, and the report said the self-select survey's margin was "inherently higher".

It stated the council also received letters of support via Priority One “from a number of Bay of Plenty Rugby partners” including several local businesses and the Urban Task Force, as well as from other sporting organisations and potential stadium users.

Te Whatu Ora-Health NZ objected to the domain as a location due to noise risks.

Priority One is Western Bay of Plenty’s economic development agency and has led the development of the stadium project since 2018.

In April this year, it released a [preliminary business case](#) with details of the stadium, which was expected to seat 7000 - with an allowance of 8000 additional temporary seats.

It would also have a proposed exhibition centre, a community multi-use facility, a function centre and a sports science/physiotherapy space on site.

In May this year, a poll on the stadium by the Tauranga Ratepayers Alliance, which indicated [a majority of respondents opposed the stadium plans](#), was dismissed by commission chairwoman Anne Tolley as negatively-slanted and “meaningless”.

The new report showed that in the Key market research survey, people were asked about what, if any economic and community or social wellbeing benefits the proposed stadium could bring to Tauranga.

Of the 885 respondents, increased tourism was the most picked positive economic benefit with 19 per cent. The same proportion said there would be no economic benefits.

One respondent commented: “The loss of the existing facilities needs to be considered, they bring benefits which could be lost plus the cost to relocate them adds to the future rates or funding.”

On social benefits, 23 per cent of the 776 respondents said there would be none. Fifteen per cent said it would be a place for social groups to meet, social events and bringing the community together.

Another respondent said: “It wouldn’t benefit the majority of families struggling to cover mortgages and rates. Seniors will be losing their clubs and schools their athletic track.”

The report stated the council was already committed to significant community amenity upgrades via the Te Manawataki o Te Papa project, improving its aquatic and indoor sport networks, and its active reserves through the master planning work.

“The proposed community stadium complements all of these developments but imposes additional costs on council and ultimately the ratepayer.”

It also referred to a stadium preliminary business case that identified that about \$15m a year would need to be rates-funded to ensure debt servicing and depreciation costs for the stadium could be met.

The stadium was expected to cost \$220m (based on construction in 2025/26 and 2026/27), not including a suggested risk allowance fund of between \$9 and \$28m to allow for potential ground stabilisation work.

Total relocation costs of the existing facilities at the domain were expected to be \$32.15m, with \$14.88 of that dedicated to moving the athletics track and building associated infrastructure.

Commissioners will be expected to choose between the staged implementation plan, a single-stage construction, or a single-stage construction with a deferred date for inclusion in the draft Long-Term Plan, or to take no further action at this stage.

The meeting will begin at 9.30am at Regional House and be livestreamed.

- Additional reporting by Samantha Motion