



Quality Candidates Sought For City's Make Or Break Moment

TAURANGA, Friday 19 April 2024: As Tauranga's pivotal local government election draws closer, those invested in the city's growth are urging more "strong and capable" candidates to come forward as tensions increase about who could be in charge from July 20.

Tauranga's Urban Task Force (UTF) Chair Scott Adams says it's vital the city doesn't lose momentum and that ratepayers elect candidates with strong governance skills and business acumen to ensure the progress made in recent years is not lost.

"We support calls for a Crown Observer to be appointed to ensure a smooth transition from Commissioners to elected members, and we were pleased to see Rangapū Mana Whenua o Tauranga Moana offered up their support for a Crown Observer also.

"What we really need is for community members with the right skillsets to come forward and help lead our city into the future."

Adams says voters must learn from past mistakes and vote in the right people to ensure the council's bitter history of in-fighting and under-investment does not repeat itself. But good quality candidates must first put their hand up and have the courage to stand.

"We need people who can work as a team and continue the progress being made to bring our city up to a level we are all proud to live, work and play in."

UTF represents Tauranga's property owners, developers and business communities and advocates for positive progress and smart decisions that will support the city's growth and encourage collaboration. Land supply, housing, community facilities and transport infrastructure are key areas that UTF is working hard to improve.

Tauranga City Council's current Commissioners have come under fire for writing to Local Government Minister Simeon Brown last December and suggesting a hybrid model be imposed which would see four commissioners and five elected councillors run the city to begin with, instead of a fully-elected council.

The request was ignored and Commissioners have since asked for a Crown Observer to be appointed to keep an eye on the newly elected council. The observer would have no power or influence over elected members, but would regularly report back to the Government so they have confidence the newly elected members are functioning well together – for the good of Tauranga.

The observer could also act as the conduit between the new Tauranga City Mayor & councillors and Government Ministers to continue relationships with Parliament for the benefit of our city.

Adams says when the newly elected members demonstrate they are an effective and co-operative governance group, you would not expect that any potential observer would be required for long.

The Commissioners have emphasised that “the stakes are incredibly high” and a high-functioning governance team is crucial.

Adams agrees with that assessment, saying the city council election on July 20 will be a make or break moment.

“Tauranga has undeniably made considerable progress in recent years, transforming into a city with a promising and future-oriented outlook. We are starting to address the long-term issues around better infrastructure, housing and fit-for-purpose amenities. But we need to work together to keep that success coming. We cannot afford to have the current momentum derailed by electing councillors who do not share this vision of growth or have the right skills or business nous to deliver.”

UTF supports the democratic process and would love to see a strong list of candidates put themselves forward for contention. Nominations open on April 26 and close on May 24.

“We are looking forward to working with the newly elected council and mayor later this year to continue the progress being made, and to help tackle the big issues like transport and land supply that continue to hold Tauranga back. Now is the time for people who are passionate about this city’s future to come forward.”

For more information about the Urban Task Force see: <https://urbantaskforce.co.nz>