

## Richard Young – Paekākāriki-Raumati Ward

### Economic Development

- 1. What is your understanding of the Kotahitanga Board and the role that they play? Should they be independent?** I'm going to play the 'newbie' card here – not being an existing councillor and having only recently started my own business in Kāpiti my understanding of the Kotahitanga Board is restricted to Google-ing for answers – so I'm going to try and not just recraft words that others have written! My understand is that the Kotahitanga Board consists of a group established as an independent advisory board under the 2020 - 2023 Economic Development Strategy with a focus on oversight of that strategy, they have identified the importance of training and development. The role of any advisory board - like non-exec directors - is to provide impartial, objective guidance to the funding organisation. As the Kotahitanga Board is KCDC funded, to continue to provide genuine advice it should remain independent.
- 2. Kāpiti Chamber values town centres as vital contributors to our local economic system. What examples of benefits have you seen from town centres?** In Kāpiti we have such a range of town centres, but from Paekākāriki and Raumati through Paraparaumu and Waikanae to Ōtaki I see empty buildings standing beside vibrant shops and cafes. Town centres are undoubtedly changing – we see that across the globe. Town centres that are thriving are the ones where people can safely and freely live, move and work. Having a pristine town centre with immaculate walkways and shopfronts but no people is a recipe for failure. The delivery of effective town centres requires the integration of a range of business, housing and transport options woven around a sustainable environment that allows people of all ages to get to and get around.
- 3. How do you plan to support and grow town centres, and their relationship to the economic development team and wider business community?** I will focus on the Paekākāriki-Raumati Ward where I am standing. I have reached out to many businesses in these small (but vibrant) centres and many owners have sat with me to share their thoughts and concerns. It is clear that maintaining a safe and inviting environment for staff and customers is a priority, whether that be protection from ram-raids, poorly located parking, better public transport and safer roads and crossings. These are all within the ability of KCDC to take action on in three years. Yes, they are small practical steps, but ones that I'm happy to commit on advocating for within council. During that period I would work within the two Community Boards to refine and develop the longer term plans with local business and community groups.
- 4. What is your understanding of the purpose of the Tourist Advisory Board and their relationship with Wellington NZ and KCDC?** I'm involved in one of Kāpiti's most visited attractions and I was unaware that the Tourist Advisory Board was established in 2022 – does that say something?

The bulk of WellingtonNZ is Wellington funded – none from KCDC – no surprise it is Wellington focused, with tourism spend in Kāpiti only 10% of the capital our tourism industry can best be described as boutique. But boutique should not mean unimportant - Māoriland is a beacon of how Kāpiti based iwi-led attractions can attract both national and international attention and Kāpiti Island is ideally placed to showcase both environmental commitment and rich cultural heritage – albeit for a limited numbers of visitors. So coming back to the Tourist Advisory Board, within a few months, people will pass through Kāpiti in thirty minutes, we cannot rely on passing trade. If elected I would be seeking the Tourist Advisory Board to deliver a plan to encourage day visits from Wellington, short breaks from around Aotearoa and specialised activities for international visitors

- 5. What are the opportunities around tourism in Kāpiti?** Tourism thrives when day visitors return, or others stay longer. Kāpiti provides something that is unique in our region, family friendly holidays on beautiful beaches and stunning walking and cycling tracks. Growing this type of sustainable low impact tourism requires numerous small, locally managed offerings that cater to that need – Kāpiti Island is a flagship for this. I believe that large hotels aren't the key to increasing tourism – we live in the AirBnB age – putting money directly into the community. I have the privilege of volunteering at one of the district's busiest tourist attractions – the iconic 'little trains' in Raumati's Marine Gardens. Around half of our passengers have travelled to Kāpiti to ride on the trains, but they are spending at least a day here, spending locally and we need to provide safe and enticing connections from our beaches and tracks to the awesome village cafes, shops and boutique artisan offerings.

## **Better Infrastructure**

- 6. What role do you think KCDC plays in the Peka Peka Interchange?** As a Chartered Civil Engineer, I led NZTA's Waikato Expressway team for four years - interchanges are emotive, and I've fronted at many meetings where people want direct two-way access. Unlike Poplar Avenue, Raumati, adding south-facing ramps at Peka Peka is feasible - but is the district ready for the changes that would bring? Yes, it would be convenient for local residents to travel south but it could bring immense pressure for large new residential housing around Peka Peka. KCDC's needs to work with the community and agree what Peka Peka should look like in fifteen years; only when that is agreed can KCDC advocate, or not, for adding the ramps and source funding. However, I would definitely be on NZTA's case to complete the missing SH59 link north of Paekākāriki and also return Centennial Highway to a low speed, safe route or walkers, cyclists and local traffic – trucks need to use Transmission Gully
- 7. KCDC has been making strategic housing purchases. What are your thoughts on KCDC as a housing provider or facilitator? What does intensification mean to you, and how do you think it could change Kāpiti?** KCDC as a housing provider – My view is KCDC needs to focus on delivering the key services it has the skills to provide and facilitate the delivery of other services. I do not believe it is in the ratepayers, or

communities, best interests for KCDC to become a major provider of housing. However, I would support KCDC facilitating and working with dedicated housing providers to deliver affordable housing options. Intensification – Let's be clear, the 14-storey tower in Paraparaumu should never have been permitted – that is not intensification. To provide affordable, sustainable accommodation the careful development of two or three storey apartment properties around key transport hubs makes sense. By enabling this provision, we add vibrancy into our town centres and can retain some of the younger residents who now move out of the area.

- 8. As it stands, KCDC has funding to move forward with Te Uruhi. This has been a big talking point in our business community and membership. Assuming it goes ahead, what impact do you foresee the gateway having on business and community wellbeing in the Kāpiti region?** As a new candidate I have not been party to the secret council meetings, so I have spent time contacting key stakeholders around Te Uruhi/Gateway. Progressing it is not a foregone conclusion; on the evidence I've seen there is no compelling reason to continue with it. Why – the environmental protection requirements are already catered for, and the tourism operator(s) say they don't need it. We therefore have a building on the fragile seafront that has no core purpose. I've just visited the Gateway site, the display panel shows the new building complete with a huge 'viewing window' towards Kāpiti Island – if we need a window to see this jewel then we have lost the plot. I fully support iwi's desire to tell their, and our, story but to limit that inside a building fails. Let's develop compelling story telling for the visitors who mainly come in the summer (raumati) - Kāpiti is renowned for sunshine so why not make this an outdoor story.
- 9. What do you think are the opportunities for business if the Kāpiti Airport stays an airport, or if it gets developed?** I've taken time to talk with and visit key stakeholders at our airport. There is no doubt that the potential social and financial value of repurposing the airport far exceeds any value that the airport could deliver. I understand that significant sums may be required to maintain the airport and it may have further flying restrictions placed on it. So, I believe that the airport will, in the next three years, become redundant. At that time there needs to be a twenty-first century conversation about ownership rights with the Crown taking a significant role in redressing errors made in the 1990's. Irrespective of that outcome, I foresee significant environmental remediation, education, training, business, and potential health provision opportunities as well as the opportunity to deliver a range of housing that is needed in the community. Like many I will also be sad to see 'our' airport close, it has served us well.

## Future thinking

- 10. What actions should KCDC be taking to support businesses to become climate friendly?** We are affecting our climate – the council, the country, the world, and also individuals need to take practical steps to reduce the harm we are causing. I will turn this question around – as a business what are your customers expecting for you to do? My business has purchased its last internal-combustion-engined vehicle – if a

suitable EV was available, we'd have brought that. The world is changing faster than at any time in history and I don't see it as local council's prime role to support businesses to adapt – those that don't adapt will be displaced by those that do change and as we are seeing, new environmentally sustainable businesses are emerging that have different and successful models. Where I do see a role for KCDC is to ensure that Kāpiti businesses are not being required to comply with more onerous restrictions than other areas whilst we should showcase exemplar climate friendly companies.

- 11. How do you envision the relationship between local iwi and KCDC operating in the future?** I was honoured to receive my New Zealand citizenship on Raukawa Marae in Ōtaki, especially as it was in the presence of my partner who whakapapa's to the three iwi. When I declared that I was running for council one person commented that they were "*not sure the KCDC needs another mature white male*". They also helpfully pointed out that they weren't being "*ageist or rude*". Why is this relevant? My years working at NZTA in partnership with Waikato-Tainui instilled a mantra of never coming to a meeting with pre-determined outcomes – instead come early, share concerns and aspirations and work together to find mutually beneficial solutions. As a new councillor I would apply that same approach to growing our relationship with iwi - so I will politely decline to offer a *mature white male's* pre-conceived ideas. To do so would be disrespectful to iwi and go against my principles.
- 12. Summarise your understanding of the following reforms: Three Waters Reform and Local Government Reform. How do you plan to keep Kāpiti's voice strong throughout these changes and advocate for our business community?** Three Waters Reform is an attempt to standardise water quality and service across Aotearoa. Kāpiti has above average water infrastructure, so I'm concerned that combining assets from Tasman to Gisborne would place an unreasonable burden on us. Consolidating water infrastructure into larger areas offers advantages, but this needs to occur at the 'high-tide' mark, regions should only join when their infrastructure reaches that 'high-tide' mark - this requires government funding. Local Government Reform is coming, the purpose of any government is to represent all people, not just the majority. The September 2021 report is long in aspirations but short on proposals. In the next three years I would seek to influence reforms to provide a fair and equitable environment for all, in particular consideration of mana whenau's unique position in Aotearoa. I am conscious that in New Zealand's history everyone made a choice to arrive here – we all share a unique voyaging heritage – I believe what brings us together is stronger than what divides us.
- 13. What is your vision for Kāpiti, and how do you intend to implement it? Name three visionary actions you aspire to implement?** In the next 30 years Kāpiti's population will increase by a half and we are likely to be faced with the everyday challenges around health provision, housing affordability and supply, and aging infrastructure. Overlying these are changes resulting from climate instability and rising sea level. My vision is for the district to face these challenges head-on with pragmatic evidence-based decision making that is focused on providing a safe and tolerant society which values all residents and respects the unique place of mana whenua. As for visionary aspirations:

- a. To see all safe and appropriate housing options for all Kāpiti residents by 2030.
- b. To see a local health care facility within 20 years that is appropriate for a population of 80,000.
- c. By 2035 to see Kāpiti be the national example for carbon neutral transport and power usage.

**14. How do you plan on being a visible and accessible leader for our council and**

**community?** Anyone who has been following this election will see that I am committed to making myself accessible, I place meaningful conversations above media-grabbing megaphone advocacy. Should the voters of Paekākāriki and Raumati choose me to represent them, then my commitment is to be available to them in person and through as many social media formats that I can understand – so maybe not TikTok. More than ever, we live in a village, and I for one am committed to remain an active volunteer and advocate with the Ward. Although I live in Raumati I will ensure that I am regularly in Paekākāriki – possibly more often than some people may want – but that’s what representation is all about. My commitment is to use the skills honed from close to 40 years in engineering and working with communities to present the voices of Paekākāriki and Raumati at council and advocate for our awesome Kāpiti District.