

## The Boat Ramp Forum

The Mapua and District Community Association preceded its December monthly meeting with a well attended public forum in an effort to find a replacement location for the Mapua Wharf Boat Ramp. The forum was convened so that residents and community groups could constructively engage with Council and staff towards identifying and progressing a replacement boat ramp.

The meeting was chaired by Elena Meredith. It was well run, restrained and at times entertaining as a variety of speakers took the floor. It was also one of the biggest meetings in the village for some time with over 120 people attending.

The old boat ramp at Mapua Wharf has limited access due to increasing public use of the Wharf and the growth of the commercial area. Although the Boat Club had representation on the Waterfront Advisory Forum, members had felt that their message was not getting across to Council. Cr. Brian Ensor, chairperson of the Forum, described the membership and process of this group. It includes representation from the Boat Club, Business Association, Wharf businesses and land-owners both Council and private, as well neighbours and the Community Association. He said the group had established a constructive and positive process to help manage the growth of the Wharf in the changing scene of increasing tourism, the Great Taste Trail, boat access changes and the Ferry. Council had invested many hundreds of thousand dollars over the last few years, and they recognize the Boat Club as a very important element in the Wharf story. TDC were supportive of a new or improved ramp for the district and he was confident that there would be a positive outcome.

Gene Cooper, TDC commercial manager, explained the present situation for boat users. Under the current rules the ramp is open for public use before 10am and after 7pm, 7 days a week and 365 days per annum. The dinghy rack would be reinstated near the ramp so boats in the stream could be tendered. He said that some inaccuracies had emerged in the reports and views. He said that the Wharf ramp has been actually seldom used because of the difficulties both in access and risks involved in boating by the Wharf and the jetty. It was a dangerous launch. He agreed there was a real issue for the community in where to launch from, the question was what to do from here.

Martyn Barlow read a prepared submission from the Boat Club. He articulated the displeasure felt by many at being left out of the development plans for Mapua. He advocated for an alternative ramp site and said that the Boat Club felt that a new Boat Ramp on the Waterfront Park offered the best solution.

Many other speakers had the opportunity to speak and a range of views were heard. Some criticized the Council's lack of responsible planning, others criticized the lack of constructive approach in the submissions. There was some opposition to using the Waterfront Park for a boat ramp and Cr. Norriss indicated that although he had earlier suggested it he now accepted that this was unlikely. He offered to form a working group to work with the Council specifically to find a ramp solution in light of the obvious level of concern. The proposed group should have representatives from the Boat Club and the Community Association as well as sea scouts and Council. Geoff Rowling and Justin Hall were nominated from outside of the Boat Club and Community Association. Gary Clark, TDC transportation manager, indicated he would be happy to assist and convene.

On behalf of the Boat Club, Martyn Barlow accepted Cr. Norriss's proposal. Elena Meredith ended the meeting by thanking all participants. The Community Association anticipates this constructive working group will get underway soon in 2016 to look into options and opportunities for a new ramp.

The next Mapua and District Community Association meeting will be held at 7pm on February 8th. This will be in the Bill Marris Room at the Mapua Hall. All are welcome to our lively community discussions. We have a public forum at the beginning for brief and open comments from the public - your choice of topic.

Graeme Stradling ph 540 2050 for more information