

The following was prepared as a submission to Waimate News and Views following the Waimate District Council's response to Project Waimate's press release on the status of Quinn's Arcade. Project Waimate was informed that due to the length of the submission, it was not compliant with the editorial policy of News and Views and it was subsequently not published. Consequently, we are releasing the submission via our own Facebook Page and social media.

Notwithstanding our disappointment with WDC's position we encourage the public to have their say on where we go next. To prompt your thinking, some ideas we have received are:

- Keep pressing for the Library and Learning Centre
- Sell the property and use the funds to establish a trust fund for the community
- Develop the building as a facility for exhibitions and displays

Have your say, and let us know what you think here on social media

Pro-ject Waimate – Response to Council Position on Quinn's Arcade

In issue 271 (9th November) of this publication, the Waimate District Council (WDC) responded to Project Waimate's (PJW) recent media release concerning the status of Quinn's Arcade. I wish to address the issues raised by WDC.

The first paragraph of WDC's response outlines the process adopted to review the PJW proposal. Reference is made to PJW cancelling a meeting with the Council Community Services Development Committee "due to other commitments" In fact, I cancelled my attendance at two scheduled meetings with WDC. The first, the General Council Meeting on August 22 was rescheduled to the second on September 12 with the Community Services and Development Committee which I also subsequently was unable to attend. Cancelling these was not something undertaken lightly and deserves explanation. In my day job I am employed by a multinational engineering company. In mid-August our US Gulf Coast staff and clients were impacted severely by Hurricane Harvey with some of them losing their homes. I was directly involved in the crisis response and recovery process which required me to travel internationally for an extended period. I believe the prioritisation of my time was appropriate. Given my role in the development of the Quinn's proposal, my committee colleagues decided I should be present at any engagement with council. The WDC CEO, should, quite rightly, be concerned with demonstrating due process has been followed. This may or may not be the case, but is not something we wish to challenge given the significance of other issues I will raise subsequently.

Moving on to the specific points raised by WDC in justifying their decision to decline our proposal:

- Points 1, 2, 3: Each of these are tactical, project execution line items. They clearly have to be addressed, but I suggest (based on my not insignificant experience of complex engineering projects) they are hardly show stoppers. Taking them in order: 1) On-costs - These can be further defined based on the detailed project specification and negotiation, 2) ICT – Off-the-shelf technology solutions exist to address security and can be specified. 3) Future use of the existing library space - Surely a planning optimisation opportunity to be addressed by WDC?
- Point 4: Library Service costs - An important item. There is cost. Both WDC and PJW have estimated costs predicated on the basic concept and chosen commercial model. There is also value. This is represented by the vision for the modern learning

environment we present in the proposal. I suggest that the cost/value equation has a solution that both parties can work together to agree.

- Point 5: Long Term Plan budgeted capex of \$1.5M – Another important point. The Quinn’s proposal provides an additional dimension to consider in the deployment of rate-payer funds. If PJW can leverage council’s “support of concept” to access up to \$3.6 million of capital funding this can certainly further leverage WDC’s \$1.5 million and be accretive to both the Quinn’s project and any council building “refresh.”
- Point 6: Two year “sunset clause”: I believe WDC misinterpreted the intent of this clause. This clause allows council to walk away without any ongoing liabilities from the agreement, if after 2 years PJW fails to secure the necessary capital funds required to commence the restoration (ie. all bets are off).
- Point 7: Relocation costs - again another tactical project line item that PJW can negotiate with WDC. There are best practices for business continuity that can be utilised.

My final point is the most important. In April of this year PJW provided WDC with a vision, not just for the restoration of a historic building, but for a modern learning hub that compliments the district’s other facilities. We detailed the significance of such a facility, strategically for our district as it relates to the socio-economic development of the region and its people. We feel strongly, that we have taken a leadership stance on a matter that has the potential to enrich all our lives. We have proposed a commercial model and engineering design basis to accompany the vision. On providing this proposal to council I personally invited feedback and input from the mayor and councillors – none was received. In the time that has elapsed since submission we have convened an AGM to which we invited key elected representatives and the CEO – none attended. After I chose to cancel my attendance at the meetings described in point 1, I offered to speak with councillors at a time of their convenience at any time during the week commencing 4 September - no staff or elected officers took up that offer. We realise people are busy and have other commitments (as I can personally attest!). We also realise this project is not the most important issue for the district. However, it is not insignificant either. WDC has stated publically that it “supports PJW in its endeavour to breathe life back into the Quinn’s building” and that the building has “significant historical value.” WDC heritage policies also define what can, and cannot, be done to the building. By default WDC are a stakeholder in the fate of Quinn’s.

At the conceptual level, I believe WDC and PJW share the same values and objectives. The social media traffic this week clearly indicates there is a strong community desire to see Quinn’s repurposed and used for the community. I too can find 101 issues that will potentially trip the project up, that’s the easy bit. The challenge of leadership is to focus on the prize and to find the corresponding 101 solutions that will deliver a successful outcome.

If WDC truly believes in the significance of Quinn’s and its support of PJW, I challenge our elected representatives to demonstrate leadership and engage and partner with us to explore how those statements can be translated into action.

I believe it is fair to say that the time has come for Quinn’s Arcade where “doing nothing” is no longer an option.

Andy Saunders-Tack
On Behalf of the Pro-ject Waimate Committee