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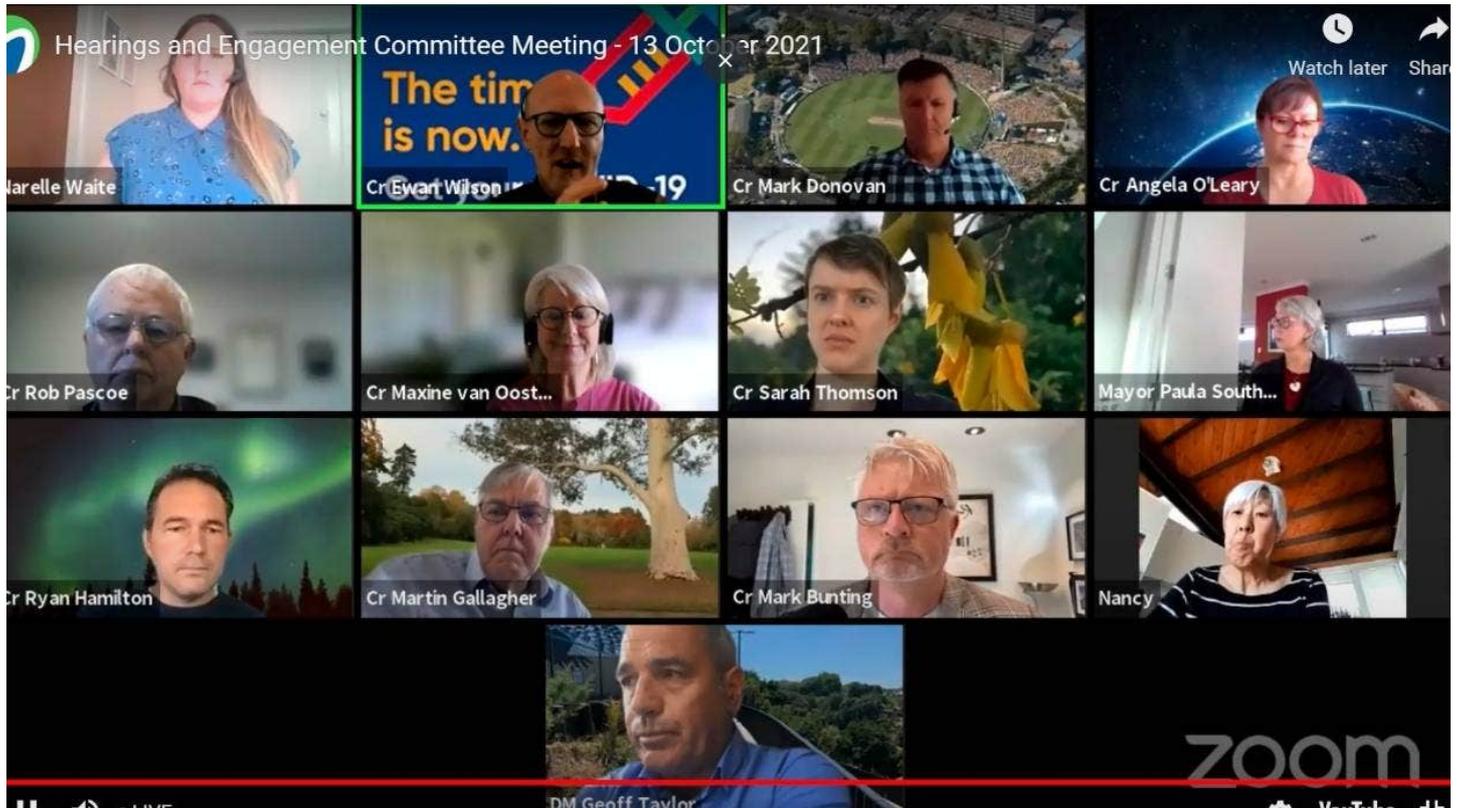
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AD



Community boards floated for Hamilton as council considers shape of political lineup

Aaron Leaman · 12:13, Oct 14 2021



SUPPLIED

Community boards weren't recommended in Hamilton City Council's representation review proposal, but councillors heard from several submitters who thought they should be.

Hamilton could introduce another layer of council bureaucracy if city politicians heed the pleas of submitters to a representation review.

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the east and west wards as well as introducing two Māori ward councillors elected from one city-wide ward.

The council received 429 public submissions, with 11 submitters addressing councillors during an online hearing on Wednesday.

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Several suggested the city get community boards, though it's not recommended in the council's proposal.

Submitters were evenly divided on whether council should add two more councillors, and two-thirds of submitters wanted to keep east and west wards instead of having one city-wide general ward.

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Submitter Nancy Caiger addresses elected members during an online hearing on Wednesday.

Submitter Nancy Caiger told the hearing she's baffled by the council's two-ward system given councillors are asked to represent the entire city.

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Submitter David Masters also addressed the ward system but wanted 12, based on communities of interest.

SUPPLIED

David Masters wants the Hamilton City Council to increase the number of wards from two to 12.

Having elected members accountable to smaller groups would make them more accessible. It would also reduce the number of candidates in future by-elections.

Conducting a council meeting online can be challenging on the best of days as elected members grapple with dodgy internet speeds and computer mute buttons. During Wednesday's hearing, several submitters fell victim to IT gremlins.

Forty-two individuals or groups were interested in speaking but 11 presenters successfully fronted.

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SUPPLIED

Community Waikato chief executive Holly Snape was one of several submitters who spoke in favour of community boards at Wednesday's online hearing.

"A lot of people have found the move from the chamber to online challenging, so we've had a lot of cancellations," the hearing's chair, councillor Ewan Wilson, said.

Submitter Raymond Mudford needed two attempts to log onto the hearing, after computer problems initially gave his voice an unnaturally high pitch.

"I think there's a chipmunk in here," one councillor exclaimed.

On community boards, Mudford said they would allow residents to provide early feedback to council proposals and could help avoid "fiascos" such as the [Innovating Streets experiment](#) on Ward and Rostrevor streets.

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Similarly, Community Waikato chief executive Holly Snape said community boards could provide a greater connection.

"Community boards can ... promote participation in local democratic processes, such as voting and submissions, and provide ... deep connections into local communities," she said.