



Report 03.483
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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Application for Remission of Consent Processing Charges

1. Purpose

To obtain a Committee decision on an application for remission of consent processing charges made by the Riversdale Ratepayers Association Inc.

2. Background

For several years the Riversdale Ratepayers Association has been keen to improve the water quality of both the main Riversdale lagoon and the backwater tributary that extends behind Camp Anderson. The main lagoon can become unsuitable for bathing during the summer and the backwater tributary had a long history of contamination.

Greater Wellington commissioned an independent study of the hydraulics of the system and specifically sought comment on measures that could improve the water quality of the main lagoon.

On the basis of that report, the backwater tributary was cleaned successfully with the work funded jointly between Masterton District Council and Greater Wellington.

The consultant's report did not support any work in relation to water quality in the main lagoon noting that the water was typical of that naturally occurring in small blocked estuaries during the summer. It also saw no advantages in direct cutting the outlet of the lagoon to the sea.

As part of its decision RSW 250 of 22 June 2001, the Committee resolved:

“That involvement in beach cutting, cleaning and other works associated with the main lagoon be declined.”

3. Works in the Main Lagoon

The Ratepayers Association has maintained a strong desire to “clean up” the main lagoon on the basis that it’s bed contained contaminated sediments. Sequential aerial photos demonstrate that the lagoon has progressively narrowed over the decades. The Association also wished to widen the lagoon for recreational purposes.

There was an earlier request in February 2002 for Greater Wellington to obtain the resource consent for the work, but this was declined in the light of the above Committee resolution.

Greater Wellington staff then provided considerable assistance to the Association to prepare their AEE and consent application. The application was eventually submitted on 20 December 2002 and was of a high standard.

The proposed work was in the Coastal Marine Area, partly in a public reserve, and in an area important to Iwi. Three consents were required and these were processed non- notified because the sign off of all parties who may have been adversely affected was obtained and the effects were considered to be minor.

The works have proceeded at the Residents Association cost although excavation of the bed did not demonstrate the contamination that was expected by the applicant.

4. Consent Processing Costs

Costs of processing the three consents were \$1295.00 plus GST. This comprised 18.5 hours of officer time after 4 hours were remitted.

A letter was sent to the applicant advising of the basis for costs exceeding the initial \$420 application fee paid by the applicants. (Attachment 1) The earlier estimate had been based on one consent being required, not three.

The Association’s letter (Attachment 2) asks “...is there some allocation of funds for the area available that these consent costs could come under?”

5. Discussion

The Council’s Resource Management Charging Policy – July 2001 sets out the basis for charging for consent processing. It provides for objection and appeal where additional charges are considered to be unreasonable.

The Association’s letter does not dispute the basis of the processing charges. It should be more properly viewed as a retrospective application for a grant towards the costs of the lagoon project.

The Association was advised of the June 2001 decision not to be involved with work in the main lagoon. No reasons have been advanced as to why this decision should not stand. To revoke this decision, formal actions need to be followed as set out in the Council’s Standing Orders.

Previous consultant advice was given that the lagoon bed was not grossly polluted and the excavation has borne this out. Even if this were so, the pollution could not be attributed to the Council or its predecessors.

The Committee should also consider matters of precedent in relation to meeting resource consent processing charges, as it is important that such charges are applied equitably on all applications.

Although not directly related to the main lagoon, there are two Care Groups currently operating at Riversdale. One of these groups is involved with riparian planting in the Motuwaireka Stream catchment and the other with the dunes at the beach. Both of these Care Groups are receiving the normal Regional Council contribution of \$19,000 over four years.

6. Communications

No additional communications are proposed on this matter.

7. Recommendation

That the Committee uphold its previous decision in this matter and advise the Riversdale Ratepayers Association Inc accordingly.

Report prepared by:

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