

Good Morning.

15 April 2025

I am here today on behalf of the Masterton Ratepayers and Residents Association. We strongly oppose the proposed demolition of the Masterton Town Hall and Municipal Buildings. We advocate for responsible governance, fiscal accountability, and the preservation of our community's heritage.

The ongoing debate over the Town Hall has been marked by controversy, complaints, protests, frustration alongside errors and anomalies. It has stirred strong emotions and divided our community. But this issue is not merely about bricks and mortar—it is about the spirit of Masterton: our shared identity, history, and the legacy we pass to future generations.

Once these buildings are gone, they are lost forever. No modern structure or architectural drawing can replicate their historical value or the deep connection they provide to those who came before us. These buildings are not just physical landmarks—they are symbols of our collective past.

We are asking for a more measured cautious approach—not just because of the financial costs on ratepayers, but because of the potential loss of identity, history, and public trust. Demolition is irreversible. Once it is gone, there is no turning back.

Background

In June 2021, over 1,000 residents linked hands around the Town Hall in protest at the last Council who proposed to build a new town hall on another site at a cost upwards of \$70m. This powerful demonstration led to the formation of our Association and a clear message to decision-makers: the community values its heritage; wants a voice in its preservation, balanced with affordability.

Yet here we are again fighting to protect a building that holds significant historic and community value, at a time of economic uncertainty, with many ratepayers struggling to afford to put food on the table.

In 2016, staff were ordered to vacate the Municipal Building within 24 hours due to its attachment to the Town Hall, which was deemed an earthquake risk by LGE Structural Engineers. This was a precautionary move based on their

September 2016 assessment. Both buildings were subsequently closed, and around 70 staff were relocated.

However, in 2017, Structural Concepts peer-reviewed the LGE report and identified anomalies. More recently, Stephen Butcher, in Memo No. 5 (7 April 2025), questioned the accuracy of the “earthquake-prone” classification, stating outright that it was incorrect.

This is why demolition must not be granted until the Government completes its current review of the earthquake-prone building standards.

We are not advocating for inaction—we are calling for smarter, better-informed decisions.

There are Viable Alternatives

Many cities have successfully transformed heritage buildings into vibrant cultural and commercial hubs that both preserve history and generate revenue. Why has our Council not pursued similar opportunities for the Municipal or Civil Defence Buildings?

Even retaining the façade of the Municipal Building has been shown to be a feasible, cost-effective alternative—less expensive than demolition.

Demolition is not necessary for public safety. There is no imminent danger. Alternatives do exist that are both financially comparable and more culturally respectful. So why is demolition being pursued so urgently? Proceeding without a firm plan for what comes next is simply poor leadership.

The Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan discourages full demolition of listed heritage structures unless no reasonable alternative exists. This application is therefore inconsistent with policies HH-P2 and HH-P9 of the Plan because there are alternatives.

The 2017 Tonkin & Taylor seismic report also concluded that the site posed a low risk from known fault lines. The original 24-hour evacuation order was a precaution—not a response to an immediate life-threatening situation. Yet staff have never returned. Why not?

We again emphasise: with the national building standards under review and remediation deadlines extended to 2030, there is no legal or safety-based urgency to proceed with demolition now.

Financial Concerns

The Council approved an arbitrary \$25 million figure for a new development back in June last year—without a completed business case, without a final design, or any secured fundraising to ease the burden on ratepayers. This isn't just about capital costs; it's about long-term operating costs and debt servicing and the strain this imposes on ratepayers over 25 years.

Meanwhile, the cost of retaining the façade was estimated at just under \$2m. If we can preserve our history at half the cost of erasing it, why is demolition being pursued so aggressively?

Masterton ratepayers—many who are already under huge financial stress—will shoulder the full cost of the proposed new facility, even though the benefits will extend to the wider Wairarapa region.

According to the NZ Deprivation Index, Masterton's urban population rank among the most economically deprived in the country. In contrast our rural areas generally include some of the wealthiest.

Masterton District Council plans to implement its new water services policy shortly, and it is urban ratepayers who will bear the full cost—both for the water rates and the ongoing operating expenses of the new build. That's not fair or equitable.

The Mayor says, "It's only \$5 a week—the price of a coffee on Queen Street." But for many, \$5 is the price of a loaf of bread. Without butter. This community has the lowest per capita income in the Wairarapa, and the highest proportion of over-65s living on fixed incomes. Financial hardship here is not theoretical—it is a daily reality.

Our Heritage

The Town Hall is part of a designated heritage precinct, surrounded by architectural anchors like the Public Trust and Times-Age offices. If these buildings are demolished, a new town hall risks becoming architecturally

meaningless—defined only by fast food outlets on an exposed Lincoln Rd corner. Is that the future we want for Masterton?

There is no legal urgency: the Government has extended earthquake remediation deadlines to 2030. It is also reviewing water infrastructure legislation under the “Local Water Done Well” framework, which may shift significant responsibilities and assets—up to 40%—to a new regional entity. This could render any expansion of Waiata House unnecessary, freeing up \$8.5 million to reinvest in the Municipal Building.

So again, we ask: why the rush?

The Council claims “it will never be cheaper”. But this is a statement, not an evidence-based argument. Without inflation projections, a designed detail plan, or financial modelling, it’s an empty justification that undermines public trust. The only reason they need to demolish is for the purpose of constructing a new building. A new building where there are no plans, and unlikely to come in under \$25m.

Public Engagement

The Section 42A report downplays opposition by pointing to low submission numbers. But low engagement is not evidence of consent. The community was led to believe demolition was inevitable once the Council instructed staff to proceed in June last year.

Democracy thrives on information participation, yet the consultation process has been anything but inclusive. Conducted over the holiday period with rigid submission requirements, this process has discouraged community engagement rather than fostered it. Contrast this with previous consultations that included forums, surveys, and broad public outreach. So why, on such a contentious issue as demolition of a building with significant heritage value to our community, has the Council opted for the bare minimum? This is not responsible governance it is a deliberate manoeuvre to limit public discourse.

Despite this, nearly half of submissions on this current resource consent opposed demolition and supported preserving heritage elements. Expert assessments by WSP and Richard Knott confirm the Town Hall’s high heritage

value. Expert evaluations such as these heritage reports should carry more weight than the number of submissions.

The Long Term Plan offered three options—but all included demolition. That is not a choice or genuine consultation. Just because fewer people submitted, doesn't mean they don't care. Silence is not consent - it's often resignation.

Many in our town feel unheard, ignored, overwhelmed by the process, and silenced by a consultation process that discouraged public participation. Many in our community lead a life of quiet desperation and are still feeling the impact of the worst recession in decades. Many remain cynical and untrustworthy of Councillors who were elected on the promise of preserving these buildings. We must hold them accountable to that commitment in this year's local body elections.

Our Request

We are not asking to halt progress. We are asking to **pause**, to **protect options**, and to **act responsibly**. Declining the consent to demolish these buildings would allow time to reassess without losing everything.

This is more than a decision about a building. It is a test of leadership, community values, and long-term thinking.

We respectfully request the Commissioner to **decline** the demolition consent.

However, if demolition is to be considered, we ask that the following conditions be attached:

1. **No demolition before** the Government's Earthquake-Prone Building System Review is completed and any resulting changes to the Building Act take effect.
2. **No demolition before** confirmation that the project can be delivered within the \$25 million budget, and clear plans for offsetting ratepayer costs through fundraising.
3. **Allow public access** to these buildings for one or two weekends before the end of September 2025. That way we give the community a meaningful opportunity to connect with what's being lost and say goodbye. This simple act of respect ensures that the people of

Masterton can make an informed, heartfelt decision when they head to the polls in October—giving them the final say on the future of their town.

Let us not be remembered as the generation that erased Masterton's heart.

Let us be the generation that had the courage to pause, that took time to reflect, ask the right questions, and explored all the options with care, respect, and shared values.

Because heritage is not just about old buildings—it defines who we are, where we've come from and what we value.

In the race for "bigger", "better" and "brighter" we risk losing the very soul of our community.

If we protect it, we can build a future with meaning and integrity.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.

Lyn Riley
President, MRRA



Constitution of the Masterton Ratepayers' and Residents' Association Incorporated

1. Name

The Name of the Society shall be the Masterton Ratepayers' & Residents' Association Incorporated.

2. Definitions and Interpretation

In this document:

- **Masterton** means all that area encompassed by the legal boundaries of the Masterton District Council.
- **Association** means the Masterton Ratepayers' and Residents' Association Incorporated.
- **Member/Members** means those persons who have completed the Association Member Application Form on joining and who have paid the current year's subscription.
- **AGM** means Annual General Meeting.
- **SGM** means Special General Meeting.
- **Written** means communication by post, electronic means (including email, social media, and website posting), advertisement in local papers, or a combination of these methods.

3. Objectives

3.1 To promote and advance the interests of Masterton ratepayers and residents generally through proactive consultation and collaborative engagement on community issues.

3.2 To promote transparency and accountability by local government and associated authorities affecting ratepayers and residents within Masterton.

3.3 To act as advocate on behalf of its membership and provide a forum where members can express their views on issues affecting local government within Masterton.

3.4 To liaise with the Masterton District Council and ratepayers and residents when discussion and/or negotiation may be required.

3.5 To foster the democratic process in local government and public bodies by encouraging full engagement and participation in decision making and election of representatives.

3.6 To use the funds of the Association as the Association considers necessary and proper in payment of the costs and expenses of furthering the objectives of the Association.

3.7 To join, become affiliated to, or cooperate with any other organisation[s] (whether incorporated or not) whose objectives are similar to those of this Association.

3.8 The Association may raise funds by any legal means to cover operating expenses for furthering the objectives of the Association.

4. Membership

4.1 Membership is open to any ratepayer or resident of Masterton on completion and submission of a Membership Application Form (as approved by the Committee from time to time) either in written format or electronically and the **payment of the annual subscription fee** applicable at the time of application, and subsequent annual subscriptions. (Refer Cl 8) In completing and signing the Application Form and paying the current annual subscription the member acknowledges he/she has read the Constitution, and agrees to comply with the Constitution of the Association.

4.2 The membership year (subscription year) commences on 1 July each year and finishes on 30 June in the following year. (Refer Cl 8) Members' annual subscriptions for the membership year become due on the commencement date of 1 July each year.

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midship
members*

4.3 Any member shall cease to be a member when deemed by the Executive Committee to have failed to comply with the requirements of the Constitution, subject to the provisions of the Complaints/Disputes process outlined in Clause 12.

4.4 Any member may resign verbally or in written form from membership. Resignations become effective from the date of receipt by the Secretary. Verbal resignations will be confirmed by letter or by email by the Secretary.

4.5 Any member not paying their subscription within three months of the due date will be considered to have resigned their membership.

5. General Meetings of Members

5A. Ordinary Meetings

5A.1 An Ordinary Meeting may be called by the Executive Committee at any time with appropriate notice if there is a requirement to hold a general discussion or to conduct any ordinary business that by its nature does not require voting, approval, or prior notice. Notification will include the venue, date and time and subject matter of the meeting. Any Committee member or a member nominated by the Committee may facilitate the meeting.

5B. Special General Meetings

5B.1 A Special General Meeting (SGM) may be called by the Executive Committee or following a written request, stating the purpose of the meeting, from five (5) members of the Association.

5B.2 Such SGM shall be held within twenty-eight (28) days of the Executive Committee decision to call a SGM or receipt by the Secretary of a request by five (5) members. The Secretary shall give at least fourteen (14) days public Notice to all members of the date, time and the place of the SGM and state the business of the meeting, in accordance with the requirements of the Notice for the AGM (Cl 5C.2).

5B.3 The conduct of a SGM shall be in accordance with the procedures for the AGM outlined in Clause 5C.4 through to Clause 5C.8 inclusive.

5C. Annual General Meeting

5C.1 The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association shall be held within ninety (90) days of the end of the financial year of the Association, unless exceptional

circumstances prevent this. In such circumstances the AGM shall be held at the earliest practicable time following the expiry of the ninety (90) day period.

5C.2 At least twenty-eight (28) days' notice of the AGM shall be provided to members. Such notice to include the date, time and place, and business of the meeting. Notice of the AGM shall be by advertisement in the local paper and to members directly by way of email and other digital/social media means.

5C.3 The business to be conducted at the AGM shall be:

- Presentation of the Annual Report of the Executive Committee
- Presentation of the Annual Financial Statements
- Election of the Executive Committee
- Notices of Motion **
- General Business

** Members wishing to submit formal Notices of Motion for consideration at an AGM must have these in the hands of the Secretary twenty-one (21) days prior to the date of the AGM.

The formal agenda for an AGM including any Notices of Motion will be distributed to members by the Secretary (by email or post) no less than seven (7) days prior to the meeting. The Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements may accompany the Agenda or can be made available on request to members at any time within the seven (7) days prior to the date of the AGM.

5C.4 The quorum for the AGM and a SGM shall consist of a minimum of **twenty-five (25)** members of the Association.

5C.5 The AGM and a SGM shall be chaired by the President of the Association or in that person's absence the Vice President, or should neither the President or Vice President be available then a member authorised by the Executive Committee shall take the Chair.

5C.6 For each matter to be voted on each member present shall be entitled to one vote cast by voice, show of hand, or as otherwise determined by the Chairperson. Any member present may request that a vote be carried out by secret ballot.

5C.7 All resolutions shall be passed by a simple majority of votes cast, with the exceptions of voting pertinent to Clause 7 (Constitutional changes) and Clause 11 (Winding Up). In the event of equality of votes the Chairperson shall have a casting vote. Such casting vote should normally favour the status quo.

5C.8 A member unable to attend an AGM or a SGM may appoint a proxy as their representative. The Proxy Form specific to that meeting must be in the hands of the Chairperson prior to the commencement of the meeting. The Proxy Form for an AGM or a SGM shall be available from the Secretary at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting. The Proxy Form may give the member holding the Proxy either specific direction or no direction as to how the member holding the Proxy may vote on behalf of the person appointing that member as Proxy.

6. Officers and Executive Committee

6.1 The Executive Committee including the Officers (Cl 6.2) will comprise not less than six (6) and not more than ten (10) members elected at the AGM.

6.2 The Executive Committee shall be elected in accordance with –

- all members are eligible to stand for the Executive Committee subject to conforming to the qualification requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022;
- all members standing will sign a formal nomination form consenting to their nomination;
- each nomination form will be endorsed by two members of the Association;
- nominations will be called for by notice to the membership at the time the formal Notice of the AGM is published; with Nominations to be received by the Secretary no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the AGM;
- detail of all nominations received are to be distributed to the membership with the formal Agenda at least seven (7) days prior to the AGM;
- should there be less nominations than positions available seven (7) days prior to the AGM then further nominations may be called for at the AGM.

6.3 Subsequent to the AGM, the elected members of the Executive Committee will appoint four (4) Officers: being a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, at its first meeting which shall be held no later than fourteen (14) days after the AGM. Members standing for election as Officers are required to consent in writing to their appointment, and to be formally endorsed by two members of the Executive Committee at the meeting. Should an election be required this will be carried out by secret ballot.

6.4 The duties of the President shall be to act as Chairperson at all meetings and to ensure that the requirements of the Constitution are followed. In the absence of the President the Vice President shall take the Chair at meetings. In the absence of the President and Vice President another member of the Executive Committee may be appointed as Chairperson for that meeting. The Chairperson of all Executive Committee meetings shall have a deliberative as well as a casting vote.

6.5 The duties of the Secretary shall be to keep written minutes of all meetings; to attend to all correspondence; to provide notices of meetings and a list of business to be transacted at all meetings; to keep the Common Seal of the Association secure and to facilitate the general operation of the Association.

6.6 The duties of the Treasurer shall be to keep proper financial records; bank all monies received by the Association; pay all accounts following approval by the Executive Committee; prepare or have prepared the annual Financial Reports in accordance with current accounting standards; and to file the annual Financial Reports with the Registrar of Incorporated Societies. The Treasurer shall ensure that an accurate list of members of the Association and their contact numbers, Masterton address and email address is maintained.

6.7 Officers shall hold office following election until the first Executive Committee meeting held following the next Annual General Meeting (Cl. 6.2) or earlier through resignation or retirement. Officers are eligible for re-election.

6.8 If for any reason whatsoever the number of Executive Committee members has vacancies at any time, the Executive Committee shall have the discretion to appoint a member of the Association to fill any such vacancy [or vacancies] on the Executive Committee (notwithstanding that there must always be a minimum of six Executive Committee members) and any person so appointed shall hold office until the first Executive Committee meeting following the next AGM.

6.9 The Executive Committee shall have the power to fill an Officer vacancy by appointing a Member from the Executive Committee subject to following the appointment process specified in Cl. 6.2.

6.10 Executive Committee members shall declare any potential conflict of interest to which clause 9.3 would apply.

6.11.a A minimum of six (6) meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held annually, when deemed necessary by the President or Secretary. At least seven (7) days' notice shall be given of such meetings.

b Executive Committee Meetings will generally be held with members attending in person but where circumstances prevent this Executive Committee meetings may be held by internet video means.

c In circumstances of urgency or where time prevents a meeting attended in person a specific business item of the Executive Committee may be conducted by email subject to such discussion being resolved by a formal Motion being carried with such Motion being ratified at the Executive Committee meeting immediately following.

6.12 The Executive Committee may set up subcommittees and for such purposes may co-opt other members, or other persons with special expertise, provided that any subcommittee must have as its Chair a member of the Executive Committee.

6.13 At all meetings of the Executive Committee the attendance of more than 50% of Executive Committee members shall constitute a quorum.

6.14 Resolutions of the Executive Committee require a simple majority of votes of those Executive Committee members attending the meeting to be passed.

6.15 In the event of an equality of votes the Chairperson shall have an additional casting vote. Such a casting vote should normally favour the status quo.

6.16 Any member of the Association shall be entitled to attend any Executive Meeting, and may be granted speaking rights but shall not be granted any voting rights.

7. Altering the Constitution

7.1 The Constitution shall be amended only by vote at an AGM, or a SGM constituted for that purpose.

7.2 Proposed alterations to the Constitution shall be notified to all members in writing twenty-eight (28) days prior to the date of the AGM or SGM at which such alterations are to be voted upon.

7.3 Alterations to the Constitution shall require a majority approval of at least 75% of those attending the meeting.

7.4 No addition or alteration of the Objectives, Personal Benefit or the Winding Up clauses shall be made which affect the non-profit status with the Inland Revenue Department. The provisions and effect of this sub-clause shall not be removed from this document and shall be included and implied into any document replacing this document.

8. Financial

8.1 The Annual Subscription shall be set at each AGM for the next membership year (refer Cl. 4). Once paid such a subscription is not refundable. Subscriptions are due for payment within three months of the commencement of the membership year (refer Cl. 4.2) or at the time of joining in the case of a new member.

8.2 The Financial Year of the Association's activities shall run from 1 April to 31 March in the subsequent year.

8.3 The Executive Committee shall present to the AGM a comprehensive financial report (Statement of Financial Performance and Statement of Financial Position) for the previous Financial Year in accordance with current accounting standards together with a written Review report by a suitably qualified person, appointed by the Executive Committee but who shall not be a member of the Executive Committee.

8.4 The Executive Committee shall operate a bank account at one of the four main trading banks. Each year at its first meeting following the AGM the Executive Committee will appoint the Treasurer and two other members to act as signatories to the bank account. Payments from the bank account must be subject to prior approval by an Executive Committee meeting and must be signed by two signatories. All funds received by the Association must be deposited into the bank account.

8.5 The Association shall not have the power to borrow money.

8.6 To pursue the Objectives in Clause 3 the Executive Committee reserves the right to apply for funding from appropriate sources.

9. Personal Benefit

9.1 Any income, benefit or advantage received by the Association shall be applied to the objectives of the Association.

9.2 No member or associated person may derive any income, benefit or advantage from the Association except where that income or benefit is for the provision of services to the Association rendered in the normal course of business and charged at no more than accepted market rates for such services.

9.3 No member of the Association or any person associated with a member shall participate in or materially influence any decision made by the Executive Committee regarding the payment of any income, benefit, or advantage, to or on behalf of that member or associated person. Any such income shall be reasonable and relative to that which would be paid in an arms-length transaction (being open market value).

9.4 The provisions and effect of this Clause shall not be removed from this document and shall be included or implied into any document replacing this document.

10. Registered Office

10.1 The Registered Office of the Association shall be at the address of the Secretary. The Common Seal of the Association, in a form approved by the Executive Committee, shall be kept in the custody of the Secretary. It shall never be affixed to any document except with the authority of the Executive Committee and in the presence of two (2) members thereof who shall affix their signatures to every document so sealed.

11. Winding Up

11.1 The Association may by a majority of at least 75% of the membership present at a General Meeting held for that purpose resolve that the Association be wound up or dissolved at a date specified, provided that all liabilities of the Association have been duly discharged.

11.2 In the event of the winding up or dissolution of the Association any assets of the Association, after payment of all liabilities, shall be deposited in a Trust Fund administered by three (3) qualified persons at least one of whom must be a member of the Law Society of New Zealand and one must be a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. The funds and/or income from such funds shall, within a period of two years from the winding up or dissolution of the Association, be disbursed only for the betterment of the ratepayers and residents of Masterton. If upon winding up or dissolution of the Association there remains after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities any property whatsoever the same shall not be paid or distributed among the members of the Association but shall be given or transferred to some other organisation or body with similar objects to the Association that also has an income tax exemption or for some other charitable purpose, within New Zealand.

11.3 No addition, alteration or rescission of Clause 11.2 of this Constitution shall be made without the written approval of the Inland Revenue Department.

12. Complaints and Disputes

Complaints

12.1 Any member may make a complaint in writing to the Executive Committee.

12.2 On receipt of a complaint the Executive Committee shall appoint a Sub-committee of three (3) members of the Executive Committee to consider the complaint. The persons so delegated must be free of any conflict of interest in respect to the substance and nature of the complaint. Appointment of the Sub-committee may include a specific time frame in which to report back to the Executive Committee.

12.3 The Sub-committee considering the complaint will seek any information or evidence that either supports the complaint or negates the complaint. This process may include hearing in person from any other person deemed to be familiar or associated with the substance and nature of the complaint. This may include interviewing the complainant. Throughout this process the principles of natural justice shall be adhered to.

12.4 In cases where the complaint is directed against another member's actions or written/spoken word that person will be provided with a copy of the complaint and given a reasonable opportunity, including being heard in person, to respond to the complaint.

12.5 When the Sub-committee is satisfied it has all the information it requires to determine the validity of the complaint then it may report accordingly to the Executive Committee with or without a recommendation regarding an outcome, which may include termination of a member's membership.

12.6 The Sub-committee will make every endeavour to complete its processes and report back to the Executive Committee at the earliest practical opportunity or within the specific time frame set by the Executive Committee at the time of appointment of the Sub-committee.

12.7 The Executive Committee will consider the findings of the Sub-committee and will determine the outcome of the complaint. This determination will be conveyed to all interested parties in writing within forty-eight (48) hours of the decision.

12.8 The complainant will have seven (7) days to consider the decision of the Executive Committee, and if so desired, submit an appeal.

Disputes


12.9 On receipt of an appeal against a decision made by the Executive Committee an independent arbitrator will be appointed by the Executive Committee to consider the appeal.

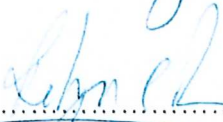
12.10 The arbitrator will undertake whatever action is considered necessary to consider the appeal at the cost of the Association. The arbitrator will report back to all interested parties with a decision within a reasonable time frame.

12.11 Decisions made by the arbitrator to resolve the dispute shall be accepted by all parties in good faith.

THIS CONSTITUTION WAS APPROVED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE MRRA INC HELD ON SUNDAY 25 JUNE 2023

Certified by:

..... Lyn Riley, President

..... Robyn Prior, Secretary

..... Hewitt Harrison, Committee Member

Dated: 8 Nov 2023

Local Focus: Masterton protests against civic centre plans



By **Ellie Franco**

Video Journalist Wairarapa, NZH Local Focus · NZ Herald · 10 Apr, 2022 03:13 PM · 3 mins to read

More than a 1000 people gathered on Saturday to protest against the possibility of Masterton District Council replacing the existing recreational space, pools and War Memorial Stadium with a new civic centre.

Masterton Action Group co-chair Hewitt Harrison said the protest was an attempt to persuade Council to halt the project under their Long Term Plan.

"[It] has received an enormous amount of opposition," he said.

Masterton has been without a civic centre since the closure of the council's earthquake-prone town hall in 2016.

"The old town hall has to be demolished, it has to come down," Harrison said.

"There is a perfectly valid site there with plenty of space.

"It's a solid site. The foundations are okay there and there's plenty of parking.

"If they put the town hall, the civic centre here, they're going to have to create new parking facilities for it.

"And how do they do that? Well, they'll probably close Dixon St, which they haven't admitted at this point in time.

"We're saying the population of Masterton is not behind this.

"We want them to hold and allow the new council coming in October to review it, consult comprehensively with the community and make the choice, rather than have councillors half-against and half-for.

"How can you proceed with a \$31 million project when you have half of your council who don't want to do that?"

Masterton Ratepayers & Residents Association President David Farlow said Councillors in favour of protecting the recreational site received abuse.

"I remember very much the term dodo was used about one of them," he said.

Councillor Gary Caffell was said it was great to see so many people at the protest.

"I think it shows the depth of feeling for what's happening in Masterton at the moment over the civic centre," he said.

"People are really engaged and I think when you look around at the numbers people are really getting united over it."

"From a council [perspective], that's something we really appreciate."

Councillor Bex Johnson said the northern end of town had been important to the community for generations and the skatepark and pools were at risk.

"We need to keep this here," she said.

Harrison said the majority view was there was only one site for a new civic centre: the existing town hall.

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Despite some council members opposed to the development of the existing recreational space, a Masterton District Council spokesperson said Council had "not yet received any proposals for the site".

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