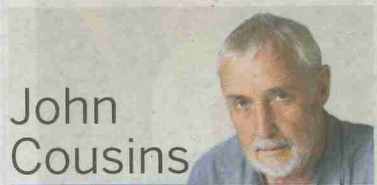


# Council adopts STV voting system



John Cousins

**T**HE traditional tick-a-box voting system has been discarded by the Tauranga City Council in favour of a more complicated system in which voters will rank candidates in order of preference.

In a decision that Mayor Greg Brownless said came "out of the blue", the council agreed by an overwhelming majority to drop the First Past the Post (FPP) election system for the 2019 and 2022 elections.

The council voted 8-3 this week to replace FPP with the Single Transferable Voting (STV) system, with only Mr Brownless and councillors Bill Grainger and Terry Molloy opting to stick with the status quo.

The meeting was in total contrast to the five minutes it took the Western Bay District Council last week to decide to stick with FPP.

Eight of New Zealand's 78 councils used STV in the 2016 election. The council's decision could be reversed by a city-wide poll of registered voters, but that would need opponents of STV to petition for a poll — requiring signatures from 5 per cent of Tauranga voters.

With the Bay of Plenty District Health Board already elected using STV and the city



**CHANGE:** The traditional tick-a-box voting system has been discarded by the Tauranga City Council in favour of a more complicated system in which voters rank candidates in order of preference. PHOTO/FILE

council opting for the same system, city voters now awaited the decision by the regional council to decide whether the three elections were entirely STV in Tauranga.

The regional council meets in Tauranga today to decide whether to keep the status quo or switch to STV. Tauranga's former mayor and now regional councillor Stuart Crosby said he had always supported FPP but the city council's decision meant

he was now reflecting on which system he would advocate for the region. One voting system would be helpful but the regional council had constituencies all across the bay, he said.

City councillor Steve Morris said the council had been accused of being "male, pale and stale" and with the exception of the three women councillors, everyone else qualified.

Councillor Gail McIntosh said STV offered more advantages to

## The essential differences between First Past the Post (FPP) and Single Transferable Voting (STV)

**FPP:** The candidate with the most votes wins.

### Advantages of First Past the Post:

- ✓ Familiar to most people.
- ✓ A straightforward system of voting and counting votes.
- ✓ Results showed exactly how many people voted for which candidate.
- ✓ Allows tactical voting.

**STV:** Voters rank candidates in order of preference. Candidates must reach a set quota of votes to be elected.

### Advantages of Single Transferable Voting:

- ✓ Fewer wasted votes.
- ✓ Virtually impossible to cast a tactical vote.
- ✓ Voters encouraged to express their true preferences.
- ✓ Election results reflect the wishes of the majority of voters.
- ✓ More votes contribute to the election of a candidate than under FPP.

candidates from minorities, with the current council not representing the city's cultural mix.

Councillor Rick Curach was persuaded by evidence provided to the meeting by the council's electoral officer Warwick Lamm which included that STV had been shown to not affect voter participation elsewhere.

Councillor Molloy said he carried out his own street poll by asking 12 people what STV meant. "Not one of them understood it... if you don't understand the mechanism, how can you trust the answer?"

Mr Brownless said STV was a

"don't worry, trust us proposition". "I'm blown if I can understand it."

After the meeting, Mr Brownless commented that the decision came "out of the blue" with no discussions among members prior to the meeting.

He said any decision to change the election system should have gone out for community consultation. "The community should be deciding the method... we should have sought public input."

He said many voters only ranked one candidate in STV elections. "It just gets confusing."

## What do you think?

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