Council Meeting #1 - Minutes

Project: Hooker Road — Rhythm and Vines Festival Relocation to Tamahere

Date: 3 September 2026

Time: 2pm

Location: Waikato District Council offices

Attendees:

Name	Role/Organisation
[redacted]	Waikato District Council — Growth Implementation Manager
[redacted]	Waikato District Council — Development Support Manager
[redacted]	Waikato District Council — Principal Planner
[redacted]	Waikato District Council — Infrastructure Operations & Delivery Manager
[redacted]	Barker & Associates — Director
[redacted]	Barker & Associates — Senior Planner
[redacted])	Commute — Traffic Engineer
[redacted]	Live Nation / Rhythm and Vines — CEO and Festival Director
[redacted]	Live Nation / Rhythm and Vines — Event Operations Manager
[redacted]	Live Nation / Rhythm and Vines — Site Operations Manager

Item	Detail	Action
1	Attendees introduced themselves and outlined their roles on the project.	
2	KS outlined Rhythm and Vines' 24-year track record in Gisborne (current capacity circa 26,000–27,000) and the proposal to relocate to 254-276C Hooker Road, Tamahere — a former sand quarry site of approximately 70–80 hectares near State Highway 1. The relocation is intended to grow the festival beyond its core 18–25 demographic toward a 25–65+ audience, leveraging the site's proximity to Hamilton, Tauranga and Auckland and existing field-days-scale supplier networks, with the aim of establishing the event as a major national New Year event. The festival is expected to evolve over time from a music-only event to a broader arts festival incorporating local craftspeople.	

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Item	Detail	Action
3	XA outlined the event as a four-day music and camping festival held 28–31 December annually, with a build period of mid-November to mid-January (4–5 weeks build, 4-day event, 2-week pack-out). A five-year resource consent is sought, for capacity of up to 35,000 attendees (15,000–18,000 campers, remainder day visitors).	
4	Two main arena areas are proposed with five stages in total (main stage capacity 35,000; secondary stages circa 10,000 each), positioned to face inward, away from the river and residences. An on-site camping car park is proposed (no vehicle movement for 4 days), plus three off-site car parks on Hooker Road, Racecourse Road and Cambridge Road. Security comprises a 2.1m double-fence perimeter with moat, 24/7 CCTV and an event control room. Welfare provisions include 40 St John paramedics, Red Frogs, The Haven (psychological support), and breath and drug checking. Approximately 1,200–1,500 workers will be required, with a preference for hiring through local community groups and clubs. No fireworks are proposed, due to residential proximity. GT then introduced the specialist technical workstreams (traffic, servicing, noise, ecology and other matters), summarised below.	
5	Traffic (JB / Commute): a high-level traffic assessment memo has been circulated, with a collaborative approach proposed for Council to review the draft before the final report. Key issues are intersection capacity, the State Highway interface, the traffic management plan, and bus routing and parking. An opportunity was identified to coordinate with the nearby Waikato Thoroughbred Racing fast-track application (site circa 200m away) on shared intersection upgrades and Hooker Road speed limit changes. Estimated private vehicle movements are up to 5,000–7,000 per day; campers are expected mainly 28–29 December and day visitors 29–31 December. Currently 20–25 buses serve the Gisborne event, with a significant increase targeted for Tamahere.	JB to engage Council's transport team and NZTA, and coordinate with the Waikato Thoroughbred Racing team where possible.
6	Site servicing (Maven): fresh water will be trucked in with an on-site reservoir and reticulation. Portaloos will be pumped out and waste removed off-site. Grey water (circa 1 million litres) is proposed to discharge to ground, subject to percolation testing, and will require regional consent. Power will be supplied via generators with site-wide reticulation; earthworks are expected to be minimal, working with the existing landform.	Maven to finalise the grey water discharge approach for regional consent.
7	Noise (Styles Group / [redacted]: acoustic modelling and noise contour mapping are underway. Stages are positioned to face inward, away from the river and residences. Council may require independent peer review depending on exceedance levels; the noise contour map	Styles Group to produce a noise contour map as the first step in the acoustic assessment.

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	will be critical for identifying affected properties and pursuing written approvals.	
8	Ecology and other specialist matters: Ecological Solutions ([redacted] is focused on bat ecology within the significant natural area (gully, western boundary); the SNA and archaeological sites are outside the festival footprint. A small number of archaeological sites have been identified, and Heritage New Zealand engagement may be required. The site is a former sand quarry (contaminated land).	Engage DOC on bat ecology once methodology and initial findings are available.
9	19 letters of support have been secured to date (neighbours, local residents, hotels, MPs, Waipā District Council); five neighbours have been secured on Hooker Road, Racecourse Road and McLowney Road. These are letters of support only, not formal s95 written approvals. Planned consultation includes NZTA, DOC, iwi (underway), emergency services, Heritage New Zealand (if triggered), and Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato (Waikato River). Community engagement will include briefing the Tamahere Community Group (chair: [redacted] alongside ward councillors and the mayor; Council noted Tamahere as its "most vocal community," and news has already begun circulating following the Waikato Thoroughbred Racing open day. VJ outlines the community benefit model includes a preference for local hiring and a charity partnership model (a $25 redemption fee on complimentary tickets raised over $100,000 in Gisborne).	NB to facilitate a joint briefing with ward councillors and the Tamahere Community Group ([redacted]
10	The traditional RMA pathway will be used (fast-track was ruled out as "neither cheap nor fast"); activity status is likely to be discretionary. The notification outcome will turn on the effects assessment, particularly traffic and noise, with the prospect of non-notification if written approvals are secured and effects are adequately mitigated. Target lodgement is the first or second week of October 2026, to close the submission period before the 20 December statutory closedown and avoid a February/March notification and May hearing; the decision and appeal period need to be complete by June/July 2027 to allow for a November 2027 festival. The next 4–6 weeks will involve collaborative pre-application work with Council's traffic, acoustics and civil teams. Other consenting matters flagged include off-site park-and-ride consents, building consents, liquor licensing, event permits, a possible hazardous substances consent (generator fuel tanks), Te Ture Whaimana requirements, and contaminated land (former quarry).	Confirm consent requirements for off-site park-and-ride locations.
11	Council confirmed this is the first event of this scale proposed in the Waikato District. Council is undergoing structural changes ahead of amalgamation and is reviewing its concierge service model for major developments, but has committed to establishing a dedicated project	Council to establish the dedicated project team (engineer, planner) for

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	team (engineer, planner) for pre-application collaboration. Civil aspects are relatively straightforward; water/wastewater considerations are primarily about traffic movements. Acoustics is likely to require external peer review if significant exceedances are identified; ecology peer review is considered unlikely unless critical issues arise. Synergies with the Waikato Thoroughbred Racing development (shared parking, intersection upgrades) were discussed; that project's own consenting timeline is estimated at 1+ year to consent, plus 1 year of track consolidation before operations. Sound Splash (Raglan reggae festival) was raised as a useful comparator for lessons learned. [redacted] (Council) was identified as the liquor licensing contact.	pre-application collaboration.
12	B&A sent a follow-up email to Council on 4 September 2026 thanking them for the meeting and confirming the matters above, including that JB would engage Council's transport team and NZTA and coordinate with the Waikato Thoroughbred Racing project, and that NB would assist in coordinating an informal briefing with the Tamahere Community Group and elected members.	

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