

# Tree campaigner and arborist agree on some road changes

By HARRIET PALMER - Taranaki Daily News  
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A meeting with the mayor has been labelled "amicable and fair" by 80-year-old tree campaigner George Fuller, but he's not ready to give up his crusade yet.

Yesterday Mr Fuller met with New Plymouth Mayor Peter Tennent and council-appointed independent arborist Bruce MacDonald to discuss the ramifications of a planned road through a section of Pukekura Park.

At stake is a 400-year-old puriri tree, which Mr Fuller claims will die if the council goes through with a roading option voted for by New Plymouth District councillors last week.

His opinion is at odds with that of Mr MacDonald, a senior consulting arborist at firm Asplundh. He believes the council has voted for the plan that will work most in the tree's favour.

This option is still being looked upon as the best by council but after the meeting with the "tree guys" Mr Tennent said there would be some adjustments.

"It's more a Bruce-George solution now," he said.

These changes included some overseeing of construction by an arborist as well as group Friends of the Park and a promise not to disrupt tarmac from the 1960s around the base of the tree but to let it break up naturally.

"It's fair to say we're all on the same page, whatever we do is going to be a compromise," Mr Tennent said.

Another option suggested by Mr Fuller was to slightly suspend the road above the base of the tree so it did not interrupt any of the roots.

Mr Tennent said this was looked into by council officers yesterday but it was deemed an "arm and leg", option which would cost too much. Mr Fuller still hoped an environmental engineer would be able to look into the idea.

"Really in the back of my mind I pray (and I don't pray very much), I yearn for an environmental engineer to be brought in to give an opinion," he said.

"I think it's more important to retain the character of the area than save money."

Mr Fuller is still in preparation-mode for his seven-day vigil at the site and will be there between noon and 1pm starting tomorrow.

"I haven't given up hope. I still feel committed to not stir things up politically, just to get people knowledgeable and clued-up."