

Community Centre Plan For Eltham's War Memorial Building proposition for Taumata Park.

A decision favouring a community centre in the form of a grandstand with gymnasium and other facilities at Taumata Park, Eltham, to be a war memorial for the town was reached at a well-attended public meeting at Eltham. In addition, plaques bearing the names of servicemen of the Second World War will be added to the school gates, which will be modified to suit requirements.

The mayor, Dr. D. H. Saunders, stated that with the change of Government there had been a change of policy, details of which had only just come to hand.

Policy Altered

Schemes which would qualify for the Government subsidy, explained the town clerk, Mr. J. MacPherson, included playing areas, parks, gardens, community centres and other such amenities which would be granted a subsidy of £1 for £1 up to £20,000.

Dr. Saunders stated that it would be necessary to raise the money by June 30, 1953, and in order to qualify, applications had to reach the Internal Affairs Department by September 30, 1950, accompanied by sketch plans of the proposed undertaking, followed by detailed plans not later than December 31.

The committee, the mayor stated, was committed to the memorial plaques at the school gates, the delay in doing the work being due to the fact that the architect of the Taranaki Education Board, who was modifying the design, had more work than he could cope with. The Eltham Borough Council would accept responsibility for the upkeep of the gates in perpetuity. There was nothing more to do in that respect, and it rested with the meeting whether it went any further.

Alternative Proposals

A suggestion that the memorial should take the form of a combined library and gymnasium was made by Mr. A. L. Picard. This was supported by Mr. C. C. Willis, who proposed that a community centre comprising gymnasium, library and reading room should form the memorial.

A committee had been appointed to raise money for a new grandstand at Taumata Park, but there was no chance of getting enough for that project, and also for the library-gymnasium, said Mr. A. Richards. In the proposed grandstand it was intended to include a gymnasium and all the amenities required at a camp site. Accommodation for 100 people was to be provided, and the completed building would be handed over to the borough council.

Speaking in favour of the development of the Soldiers' Memorial Park as a memorial, Mr. F. S. Bush said that some money had been spent on the park and he thought the scheme should be gone on with.

Another Park

Support for this project came from Mr. G. W. Peebles who said that the council would eventually be faced with having to provide public swimming baths and such an amenity could easily be provided on Soldiers' Memorial Park. It was time to develop another park and hand it over free of debt as had been done with Taumata Park by a past generation.

The biggest point was not what a project would cost, but what the maintenance would be, said Mr. J. W. Baxter. It was costing £500 a year to maintain Taumata Park, and if another park were developed there would be an outlay of £1000 a year. Once a grandstand was erected there would be virtually no maintenance cost, and that was one of the biggest points in its favour.

The proposal to develop Soldiers' Memorial Park was defeated by 23 votes to eight, and the grandstand project carried by 23 to nine. For second choice, the library-gymnasium scheme received 22 votes with 11 against, and the Soldiers' Memorial Park 11 votes with 20 against.

It was decided that the original grandstand executive committee, with representatives of the Returned Services Association and the Homeservicemen's Association, should prepare details of the scheme.