

Committee of Rural Ratepayers,  
C/- Christine Boyd (Secy),  
175 Turners Rd,  
Christchurch.

Christchurch City Council,  
Our Community Plan – Christchurch.  
Freeport 178,  
CHRISTCHURCH.

Submission to Draft Christchurch City Long Term Council Community Plan 2004 - 2014.

Committee Members:

Recently, on the 14<sup>th</sup> May, at the Yaldhurst Community Hall, a group of rural-based ratepayers held a meeting with respect to concerns they had over actions by the Christchurch City Council, and the provisions of the Draft Long Term Community Plan.

We, the elected committee of this larger group, have formulated a submission on behalf of the more than 50 ratepayers that attended, according to their direction. The submission, presented below, covers three major areas of concern to this group. We notify you that we wish to speak to this submission.

1. Our first submission relates to the structure and timing of the process.
  - The group felt that there was insufficient time for them to read the information presented in the Plan, collate further data as needed, and make submissions or otherwise as they needed. Many of them had just a week or maybe two weeks notice of the plan and its provisions with respect to their area of concern – rural properties. Within this time period busy people are hardly able to adequately deal with the sort of research, planning and preparation required to make a reasonably informed approach to the council on such matters – yet the provisions of the Local Govt Act 2002 specifically require this, for good reason. Thus our first submission is that significantly more time is needed for this process, we suggest a 3-month period from the time the draft plan was produced and publicly available to the time submissions close would be more reasonable.
  - Furthermore we consider a single week is insufficient time for people to submit, and that a month would be a more reasonable time period for people to be able to allocate the time needed for them to present their views on the plan.
2. The second submission relates specifically to the provisions in the draft plan on page 112 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Volume where part (ii) of Sector C – Rural Properties allows Council staff to charge Residential rates for rurally-zoned properties.
  - We would draw the committees attention to the statement on page 40 of the same volume where it notes some reasons for the Rural Sector rate differential (lower standard of services, reduced use of services due to distance, and reduced value to properties of council services). It is difficult, to see how the use of a property in a rural zone could have any effect, or be affected by, these reasons. In other words the use of the land does not impact on the services supplied by the council, or the cost of these services. We consider that the lack of footpaths, bus services, pools, cobbled streets, lights, speed humps, reticulated storm-water drainage and the like have the same impact – or otherwise – on

our properties regardless of whether we live on the land, or merely farm it. Indeed many of us have to live on the land – use it for our residence – in order to be able to farm it, to look after the stock, plants, or whatever it is that we do with our land. It is clear to us that if a property is zoned rural then it can expect reduced value from the council in terms of its services. Where some properties may enjoy services such as water or sewerage they pay for this through appropriately targeted rates. Thus our submission is that this section (Sector C) should remove any reference to parts (a), (i), (ii), and simply read as it does presently less those references. Thus if a property is in the rural zone, those are the rates that should apply. In this way very little confusion should arise, and where either council, or an individual, seeks to change the status of their property, the rates and zone will correspond with each other. We consider the provision for vacant land is reasonable, since it is clear such land will make little use of council services.

- It is noted by us that the present rules on this, which we understand are substantially the same as the provisions in the draft plan, have resulted in a great deal of angst and somewhat variable treatment by our members from the council. Presently staff are attempting to apply residential rates to many of us, yet have failed to provide clear reasons for this proposed change. None of us have applied to council for a change in our rating structure, or notified council of a change in use of our land. We wonder why council have seen fit to tell us that we are to be rated as residential but still remain zoned rural and receive no greater service, yet no explanation has been forthcoming. Most of all we wonder why the burden of proof of this non-change should reside upon us? Clearly a zoning-rating concurrency would deal with many of these issues, keeping a uniform approach from council to its ratepayers by planners and rating staff alike.
3. In our final submission we present to the committee, our concerns over the level of the rural-residential differential. From information supplied by council we find that the increase in rates by rural ratepayers over the past few years greatly exceeds that of the residential and business sectors *combined*. Yet over this time not one of us is able to tell of the improved bus services, better roads, or reduced traffic in our areas as a result of this massive increase in rates.
- Because of this we suggest that the presently proposed differential of 75% fails to accurately reflect the difference in value to us, and reduction in services offered to us, by council. Certainly it does not warrant an increase – in some cases by more than 20% - as presently proposed by council staff. In fact in some of our areas we cannot recollect the last time council was seen doing something for us, beyond the occasional rubbish truck and building inspector – the latter paid for by the property owner anyway. Over this same time many of us have noted the huge increase in cobbled streets, speed humps, traffic lights, and other traffic calming methods in many urban city streets. These things beautify and have a significant impact on the value of properties in those streets, cost a large amount of money to implement, yet the burden of payment to rural dwellers would seem out of all proportion to whatever public good might accrue to us. If anything those of us living on or close to Marshlands Rd for instance have noticed a large increase in traffic to and from the city, reducing our property value due to the high level of noise and smell, yet council have done little for us. Accordingly we submit that in our view this differential should be more like 50% or less to more closely represent the value to us, and cost to council, of the few services provided to rural properties.
  - Many of us appear to be paying the council for 'land drainage', yet we do not appear to be receiving this service, despite it being a targeted rate. We consider this to be

inequitable and that in addition to the services we pay for but but never receive, or use, within the general rate, this is merely another example of encroachment upon the actual differential value in rates and services to us. We ask that council address this issue within the present provisions of their policy, and that for future policy.

- We note that our concerns are not over the lack of services per se (indeed many of us want nothing from council), rather the proportion of our rates that appear to be attributed to services and value we never receive.

Thank you for reading this submission, we re-iterate our desire to speak to these points.

For the Christchurch City Rural Ratepayers Group.

Christine Boyd.

Bert De Jong.

Ross Major.

Luke Pickering.

Peter Town.

Denise Ward.

Mike Wall

Mike Mora