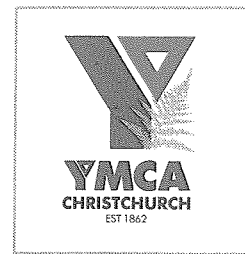


4 May 2006

Our Community Plan
Christchurch City Council
Freepost 178
P O Box 237
Christchurch



I am making this submission in my capacity as CEO of the Christchurch YMCA. In doing so I cannot speak on behalf of all trustees, staff, volunteers and members as such consensus is not practical. However, we are directly involved during the year with probably at least 30,000 individual people and a number have asked us if we would make a submission.

The submission endeavours to be consistent with our understanding of the challenges of the city arising from continual discussion at many levels of our organisation.

Due to constraints on time, our submission is based on the summary draft. If we delayed until a full copy was obtained and absorbed, we would not make the deadline.

Introduction P 1

The community outcomes are supported in general terms.

The Budget P 3

We do not accept that rate increases of the amount planned are acceptable. Some may ask if the YMCA has the right to challenge these figures because of the \$1m grant towards the new Bishopdale recreation/youth centre. But for \$1m the city has got the provision of a \$9m facility which is a good investment by any standard.

We do not understand why a major increase is essential to avoid a significant reduction in services. If Christchurch continues to grow so will its rating base and income. Major capital projects can and are at least partly funded by loan. If the cost for pipes has increased by 50% (and no time period is given for this increase) one would have thought that alternative services or products would become viable alternatives.

It is very difficult in a document like this to comment financially without being forced to identifying the savings. This is a challenge for management and governance who have access to the real information. Viable businesses and organisations such as ours have no choice but to maintain a balance between cost and income and we find a way to do it.

If we want a city that is prosperous, rate increases must be more moderate. The situations where the Council imposes hidden costs through poorly applied regulation can strangle the prosperous city concept. Any quoting of rate % increases must add the impact of extra user pay charges included elsewhere in the document.

Major Projects P 4.

It is important for a community to trust their Council to set the right priorities based on more detailed information than we have. The need for waste treatment does appear essential. A new bus exchange at \$59.5m and the Blenheim Road deviation may not be considered essential by many of us.

mindbodyspirit

Young Mens Christian Assn. of Christchurch Inc.

Under discretionary projects will school safety zones at \$1.05m actually improve safety? Is \$11.1m for the Botanic Gardens an extravagance? What sort of planning allows so many suburban malls and then spends \$10.3m trying to entice the shoppers back and funding part of this from the city businesses that have kept our city alive, so critical to other worthy Council objectives?

There is no mention of other major capital projects done through other parts of the city structure. The construction of a new Council headquarters. The strange purchase of shares in a struggling port without a sound and secure strategy for producing future benefit.

Council Savings P 8

We would have particular concern about the closing of the Bishopdale library as it is part of a collection of facilities located where the community gathers. Rationalisation sometimes makes sense and won't be popular with everybody but libraries are an essential Council provision. If media stories of a similar cost to floodlight the cathedral are true, the rationality really becomes questionable.

A swimming pool with a cost per swim of over \$25 is not a viable facility. But if pools already exist and are an important part of their community (which has been the case for generations) are there more effective ways to manage them. It is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to provide pools so we need to think very carefully before closing existing ones. Some comparison needs to be made with the \$16 per visit to the Art Gallery.

Community Support P10

This is an area where costs can escalate without commensurate value given. Does the Council need to give advice and support to community groups and what would happen if they didn't? Is Christchurch a safer place as a result of the Safer Christchurch group? Without detailed budget figures we can't make the judgements.

Cultural Services P 11

The services are an investment by ratepayers in the community and are legitimate Council activity. Whether they are well managed is unknown and with one exception cost control is not a measure of achievement.

Democracy and Governance P 12

This is an essential but costly aspect of how we manage our Council. The expectation of satisfaction target is very low. On P 7 we are told a measure is everybody feels represented by their decision makers. This objective could be a clear path to failure. We expect to be listened to if it is practical to do so but don't expect to agree with all the decisions. We do need to respect our decision makers and have them communicate their reasons for the decisions they make. But they have been appointed to do the best for our city, not to be the representative of every faction that may supply a few more votes.

Situations where Councillors have to sign a pledge of loyalty to the CEO are the antithesis of representation and an indication of an ailing organisation.

Economic Development P 13

If we are talking about economic development, are there clear measures of the value added through the existence of this expenditure? The value added can only include what is achieved that would not have been achieved without the Council support. It may be found that a far better investment

would be improving how the Council manages its regulatory functions.

Parks and Open Spaces

Essential for a healthy city but sometimes policy and its implementation is contradictory or badly planned.

Recreation & Leisure P 15

Once again a role for the Council, especially in the provision of major facilities and recreation grounds. Involvement in recreation programmes not requiring the backing of the Council should not be delivered by the Council.

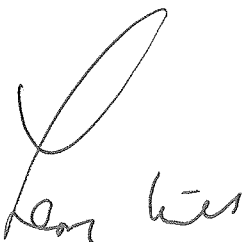
Regulatory Services P 17

Most knowledgeable commentators say that the ability of the Council staff to objectively and promptly do their job has diminished. Probably this is too much regulation but a job not done well enough is a frustration to the citizens. It would be interesting to know whether current objective feedback would indicate anything like 80% satisfaction.

Conclusion

We do not expect to agree with all decisions and actions of the Council. You frequently have to balance valuable but opposing options. We do think that there needs to be a high level of respect for governance and management from the ratepayers and this has to be earned. And we do expect this to be done without crippling cost increases.

We do not request to present our submission to the hearing but are happy to do so if requested.



Terry Hill
Chief Executive Officer
email terry@ymcachch.org.nz