


To: Christchurch City Council.  
Submissions on the Long Term Christchurch Community Plan  
(as in the Summary of the Draft OF Our Community Plan 2006-16)

I do not wish to present my submissions at the hearing, and ask that this written submission be considered.

I am presenting these submissions for myself.

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Signature:.....  6<sup>th</sup> April 2006

Submission 1. The level of rates to be levied. Page 5.

Percentage increases for rates are listed at 8.55% for 2006/07, 7.03% for 2007/08, and 10.75% for 2008/09,(although a statement in the Press recently stated that residential rates will rise by an average of 9.91%, the inference being that this was for 2006/07.) Page 5 shows (top righthand diagram) that rate rises will average 9.66% in 2006/07.

The scale of these increases is quite unacceptable for the following reasons

- (1) They are excessive and far ahead of the rate of inflation which is currently around 3%.
- (2) They have been arrived at using a flawed process.

Information about Christchurch City Council processes on their website details the following process for setting the rates:

".....rates are set by the Council passing the Community Plan. The council debates what members would like to see happen to the city, and the rates department is then instructed to set a rate to collect the necessary funds....."

This is totally contrary to the principle known as "budgeting", which is used by all commercial enterprises and private individuals. The essence of budgeting is that likely income is assessed first and only then is a list of developments, purchases and costs considered. If the cost of these exceeds income, then developments, purchases and costs are trimmed to lie within income.

Private individuals and commercial enterprises cannot jack up their income to meet the cost of their wished-for activities, as the Council apparently think they can. Sure they can borrow, but the interest repayments must lie within budgeted income.

The mayor, Mr Garry Moore, is on record recently as saying, in reply to the suggestion that the rate increase was too high, ".....if we don't increase rates by that amount, we would have to withdraw money from reserves, and that would mean rates would still have to be increased further down the track....." and on another occasion'....if we don't increase rates then basic services will have to be cut...." Comment on these statements are:

- (a) What reserves? Apparently the council has reserves, some of which it intends to spend on rejuvenating the city centre Where are the details of these reserves?.

(b) It is already apparent that some basic services are already being cut, viz., keeping the streets reasonably tidy.

(3) The large increase is perceived as facilitating council participation in further commercial big business enterprises.

For example the buy-up of the Lyttelton Port Company; or competing with private enterprises like Gardenz and losing ratepayers funds in the process; or running a questionable business forum ("Converge").

The Council does not have a mandate for these types of activity. Their job is to run the infrastructure.

(4) There is a culture of extravagance abroad amongst Council planners.

An example is the amount of money spent every year on what is euphemistically called "road calming" in the Christchurch general area. This involves strategies like narrowing up the utilisable width of minor roads eg Aikmans Road, by extending some flower beds and berm out into the road space; narrowing the entrances/exits from minor roads e.g. recently on the Plynlimon/Garreg Road intersection; and installing raised pads on "T" intersections on minor roads e.g. two on the intersections of Wroxton Terrace and Jacksons Road and Clifford Street. These siteworks are costly, with the pads for instance costing at least \$40,000 each (information supplied by a Christchurch Council engineer a year or two ago) and this sort of thing is going on all over the Christchurch. Furthermore, the roads involved are almost all minor roads. This sort of activity is of doubtful value, and expenditure on this is extravagant and should be afforded a low priority. One suspects that it is some sort of agreement to keep roadworks contracting companies in business.

In some cases the road modifications have led to roads becoming more dangerous. For instance the section of Winchester Street outside St Margarets College has been narrowed, with the addition of grass berms on both sides of the road (Council policy is for a grass berm on one side of the street only!), plus wide footpaths, so that at school pickup time, there is barely room for single traffic on both sides of the centre line and even then someone abruptly opening a stationary car door would cause a collision.

(5) The level of rate increases must be curtailed to no more than the CPI ie around 3%.

This can be achieved but only by cutting expenditure so that it lies within the current operating revenue and current income from rates. For instance, as inferred above, much of the spending on roads (proposed to be 14.5% of the rate take in 2006/07) could be cut. If this was reduced by 2% then the rate income required in 2006/07 would be less by a figure of \$5.5 M - vastly more than will be saved by closing libraries and swimming pools (\$790,000).

It is unfounded rubbish to say, as on page 3, and I quote "...As with many local authorities, Christchurch is not able to limit rate rises to the level of the CPI without significantly reducing services." Where there is a will there is a way.

I suspect that the mood of Christchurch residents is such that without satisfactory resolution of this rates issue, the majority of the Council, including the mayor, will not be re-elected next time around.

Submission 2. Reductions of Services and Activities. Page 8.

(1) Closure of the Mobile Library; Redwood, Spreydon and Bishopdale libraries, and the closure of Sockburn and four suburban pools in areas like Woolston is unacceptable, particularly since the projected savings in costs are estimated to be only \$790,000 ie minimal.

Closure of libraries impacts on the mental wellbeing and ability to better oneself through knowledge. Closure of pools affects the physical wellbeing and health of a significant proportion of the population particularly growing youngsters. Although other facilities may be available within car travel distance it must be realised that many citizens, often those who stand to gain most benefit, do not have the necessary mobility, particularly since the areas proposed for closure are socially relatively deprived areas. What would the reaction be I wonder if there was a proposal to close the Fendalton Library for instance?

Submission 3. Capital projects and the funding of these. Page 4, and Page 19.

It is impossible from the data presented in the Draft Summary to figure out how the Capital Projects are to be financed. This needs to be much more transparently reported than it is at present.

In addition some details do not add up. For instance under "Proposed Major Projects.....(Page 4) there is mention of the Ocean Outfall but no expenditure figure appears in "Essential Projects" (second major para.)yet it is listed on page 19 as costing \$76M. It must be an essential project surely-certainly a higher priority than Civic Offices or Civil Defence Building! Incidentally, this project was mooted and passed some two years ago, and yet the tenders for the ocean pipeline have still to be let.