

14 April 2009

Submission to the CCC 2009/19 LTCCP

By

**Mt Pleasant Memorial Community Centre and Residents Association Inc.
(MPMCCRAI)**

Mt Pleasant Memorial Community Centre
3 McCormacks Bay Road
Mt Pleasant

MPMCCRAI respectfully requests the members of the Christchurch City Council accept and act upon the following submissions:

Summary of Submissions

- 1) **Demonstrate in the final LTCCP how all expenditure relates to the achievement of the City's nine Community Outcomes**
- 2) **Retain the 2006/16 Policy on Determining Significance**
- 3) **Do not quadruple borrowings - maintain the current level of borrowings. Remove the Convention Centre expansion of 44.7M from the budget.**
- 4) **Prioritise transport spending on public transport improvements not more roads for cars.**
- 5) **Fund the Home Energy Advice Centre instead of creating a new energy organisation.**
- 6) **Include all funding necessary for the earliest possible completion of the Ferrymead Bridge.**
- 7) **Recognise that existing aquatic facilities in the Hagley Ferrymead ward do not meet our community's need for regular, affordable recreation. Provide for such a facility within the 2009/19 LTCCP.**
- 8) **Reinstate the Mt Pleasant (Memorial) Community Centre maintenance grant of \$5,000 per year as a line item in the community facilities budget.**
- 9) **Put on hold the decision to fund the St Albans Community Centre expansion until the current consultation on the Community Facilities Plan is completed. Secondly, under take a needs analysis for such a centre in order to establish an objective need for a \$3.7 million centre in this area.**
- 10) **Do not fund the \$11.5 million tram extension. Reallocate this funding to an east/west shuttle service.**
- 11) **Support the inclusion of funding for a new library in the Linwood area.**

Introduction

1. The Mt Pleasant Community Centre and Ratepayers Association Inc (MPCCRAI) was established as an incorporated society on 5 June 1953 and has a reputation across the city as an active and representative residents' group. Our rules provide that we, ..."act as a watchdog on behalf of the community and in particular to promote community views to the Christchurch City Council and Canterbury Regional Councils"
2. Our coverage is the area bounded on the east by Balmoral Lane up to the Summit Road, along Bridle Path Road to Heathcote River mouth, along the Heathcote River to the junction of Ferry Road and Charlesworth Street, along Charlesworth Street to Linwood Avenue, Humphreys Drive, Tidal View, Heathcote Bridge and Main Road to Balmoral Lane.
3. At our AGM held 24 March 2009, the Association changed its name from the Mt Pleasant Community Centre and Ratepayers Association to Mt Pleasant Memorial Community Centre and Residents Association Inc. This change more accurately reflects our center's history as a War Memorial and that our Association represents all residents of the area, not only "ratepayers".

Submissions

1. Integration of Draft LTCCP, Community Outcomes and the LGA 2002

It was apparent to our group reading the LTCCP that there was a lack of integration between the draft LTCCP and the community's nine Community Outcomes as required by the LGA 2002. Although the Community Outcomes are set out on page 3 of the summary document of the plan we were unable to find them in the full plan documents and more significantly we were unable to find reference to how any particular stream of expenditure would help deliver the desired community outcome. This gave the reader a sense of lack of direction and lack of integration within the council. Additionally, we found the material

lacking in specifics for line item expenditure and generally found the documents difficult to navigate through.

Submission

Demonstrate in the final LTCCP how all expenditure relates to the achievement of the City's Community Outcomes.

2. Policy on Determining Significance

The Policy on Determining Significance is one of the most important parts of an LTCCP. This policy is the ratepayer's assurance that important city assets and activities will not be altered, changed or sold without the public being given an opportunity to be consulted about the proposed change. We submit it was the intention of the LGA 2002 that a Significance policy would mean that all matters of significance to a community requiring a decision would be made transparently and with the involvement of the community. It is therefore critical to a continuing partnership of trust between Council and its community that this policy assures residents that they will be consulted on all "significant" issues for the city.

This year's LTCCP seeks to exclude matters which are either deemed "urgent" or "commercially sensitive" from the special consultative procedures of the Significance Policy on the following grounds.

The matter is Urgent

We strongly disagree with the exclusion of consultation on the grounds of urgency. It is rare that a matter comes before Council which is so urgent that public consultation cannot be undertaken. It is rarer still that a need for an urgent decision has not arisen out of a situation of the Council's own making through poor staff procedures and/or time management. If the excuse of "urgent" was permitted to circumvent public participation in issues of significance as would be permitted under the wording of the draft LTCCP we have no doubt that the number of "urgent" matters would rise exponentially.

The matter is Commercially Sensitive

We are also in disagreement with the second change being sought to this policy, where the matter is commercially sensitive.

In the past twelve months the Council spent 17 Million dollars of ratepayer's funds on dubious and unbudgeted property investments in the central city. This money was not tagged for such expenditure nor did the council invoke the Special Consultative procedure despite the property purchases being outside the significance trigger, being a budget decision of more than 5 million in capital expenditure. The decision has subsequently been approved by the Auditor General which demonstrates the current significance definition does not require changing.

In our opinion the way the council conducted this set of purchases was seen as underhand and treating certain parties in the community with favour. We would not like to see a further weakening of the policy because of commercial imperatives.

Submission

Retain the 2006/16 Policy on Determining Significance.

3. Council Borrowing

The Council has signalled in the LTCCP that it intends to quadruple the level of its borrowings over the life of this LTCCP.

The premise behind the increase appears to be to move to "better achieve intergenerational equity".

In the past the Council has always borrowed a portion for capital expenditure but budgeted to meet the majority of capital expenditure by rates to ensure that we only purchased what we could afford as a city.

This Council intends to borrow for strategic property investments, equity investments in CCTO's, investment property, new short life assets and other assets.

Over the life of the LTCCP the council and Mayor in particular has stated the rate of borrowing will not exceed 8% of income.

MPMCCAI concerns are:

- There is a continually climbing level of borrowing throughout the 10 year period; it does not reduce at any point.
- What therefore is the effect of this borrowing just outside this 10 year window?
- Can the city still manage to service the debt and meet new capital expenditure needs of younger generations if it takes on this level of debt now?
- If the city doesn't get this right we will in the future be faced with huge rate increases to meet the costs of borrowing and further new expenditure or we will simply not be able to purchase new capital items.
- We are saddling the next generation with the wants and needs of this generation; the next generation have no say about this.
- We have no idea about the needs and costs facing future generations. If we saddle them with our debt what choices are we giving them?
- We are not satisfied that all items of capital expenditure requiring borrowings are necessary e.g. the expansion of the Convention Centre of \$44.7million. The community has not had the rationale for this expenditure explained to them.

Our Submission

**Do not quadruple borrowings - maintain the current level of borrowings.
Remove the Convention Centre expansion of 44.7M from the budget.**

4. Transport

It is an acknowledged truism that traffic expands to fill the roads provided. Christchurch needs to look no further than Auckland to see this. Yet 40 years ago that city was advised repeatedly that it should invest in a light rail system rather than continue to expand roads and motorways. It ignored that advice and the result is gridlock which will require huge expenditure over many years to solve. It has also changed the city from a collection of interesting and different "villages" to a metropolis of choked and noisy roads.

The proposed LTCCP suggests spending almost a billion dollars on roads, transport and public transport. The biggest proportion of this is to provide more road area to cater for more vehicles. This is exactly what Auckland did in the early seventies.

The ROAD transport strategy should aim at making public transport cheaper, faster and more convenient than the private car. This requires dedicated bus lanes rather than extra car lanes when roads are widened. If deemed necessary, these bus lanes can be restricted to morning and evening rush hours. To co-ordinate with these, frequent inner city shuttles should be provided to service major business and retail areas. At the outer suburbs, "Park and Ride" centres should be provided. All these strategies are known to have worked very well elsewhere. They can do so here.

Submission

Prioritise transport spending on public transport improvements not more roads.

5. Christchurch Agency for Energy

MPMCCRAI is concerned that the council is proposing to set up a new agency for energy at a cost of \$3 million. We believe that the existing service of the Home Energy Advice Centre has been performing the role of promoting energy efficiency for over many years now and has done a very good job for the city. We would submit that it would be a better use of resources to fund this group to continue and expand the work that they are currently doing than to establish a competing organisation.

Submission

Contribute to the funding of the Home Energy Advice Centre instead of creating a new energy organisation.

6. Urgent Work - Ferrymead Bridge Replacement

Our committee has been advocating for an improved, safe and secure road link over the Heathcote River between the eastern beach suburbs and Ferrymead for

the past eleven years. We are dismayed that despite the current link being identified by the Life Lines study (late 90's) as being unable to withstand a serious earthquake and subsequent liquefaction threat physical work has not yet begun on its replacement. Councillors do not need to be reminded that all our community's essential services are carried by that bridge potentially exposing us to being cut off in the case of a natural disaster.

Submission

Include all funding necessary for the earliest possible completion of the Ferrymead Bridge.

6. Aqua facility for the South East

In the Council's 2006/16 LTCCP the following Major Action was included on page 136, Volume 1.

Proposal to Change Levels of Service for Aquatic Facilities in the Aquatic Facilities Plan

City Area	Major Actions	Major Action Timing	Suggested Closures	Closure
East	Develop new area facility in Linwood or Woolston area, or retention of aquagym.	2017/18 to 2019/2020	Woolston	2006 onward

The above reference in the 2006/16 LTCCP was in fact misleading as it states the wording "or retention of aquagym". CCC does not own and never has owned "aquagym" which is a small private provider on the outside of the discussion area. It is not a pool relevant to the public recreational aquatic needs of the South East.

However the fact that an aquatics facility for the East was named as a major action in the 2006/16 LTCCP was recognition by the CCC of the need in our community for such a facility.

This year's LTCCP however contains no reference whatsoever to an aquatics facility for the East. The decision to remove the provision was we are told taken at staff level. This action is totally unacceptable to our organisation. We are the only area of Christchurch so poorly served by the council in terms of access to both indoor and outdoor pools. The northern area of the city already has one major facility, Jelly Park and is soon to gain a second, the Graham Condon Leisure Centre. The North East has QEII, the West - Pioneer Stadium and will have a second facility at a cost of \$21.7 million during the life of this plan. There are approximately 28,000 people without access to a modern heated facility in the Hagley Ferrymead ward. This lack of provision impacts severely on the young who need to gain and retain swimming skills. It also impacts on the elderly

who would like to have the same convenience and access to an indoor pool for recreation and keeping fit as enjoyed by other Christchurch residents.

In two Council focus groups held in the Ferrymead area of the ward the need for a therapeutic pool to service the hill suburbs was discussed. "It was felt the sea was not safe for older people and the closest heated pool was the Centennial." Needs of Older People in the Hagley and Ferrymead Wards – May 2003 Jane Parrett. The Hagley Ferrymead community board has done a great deal of research proving the need for such a ward based facility.

Submission

That Council recognise that existing aquatic facilities in the Hagley Ferrymead ward do not meet the community's need for regular, affordable recreation and that provision is made for such a facility within the 2009/19 LTCCP.

7. Community Centre Funding

In late 2007 the Council abruptly and without notice withdrew from its Service Agreement with Mt Pleasant Community Centre to provide a \$5,000 per year maintenance grant in return for our making the facility available for public use and to meet multiple community needs. This agreement derived from the early days of the establishment of the Centre and was reflected in council policy, see **page 12 CCC Management Guidelines for Community Facilities.**

This service partnership/agreement was a very economical and sensible way for the council to ensure the Mt Pleasant community had access to a community facility which met their needs.

We understand the removal of this grant was taken by staff because the Community Facilities budget had been cut. No effort was made to ascertain if this was a fair or equitable action or if the Centre could meet future maintenance needs without such a payment.

MPMCCRAI has never accepted that the cut was a fair or just action by Council and now as we further understand that the Community Facilities budget has since been restored, we once again request that our modest maintenance agreement be reinstated.

The \$5,000 was always paid in arrears upon receipt of the Centre's actual maintenance expenditure for the past year. This payment met a portion, not the total of the Centre's everyday maintenance cost. This is the only support asked of the council to run our centre. We provide our own administrator and cleaning staff. Please compare the costs to run other similar centres across the city. Their costs are significant.

Past councils have always acknowledged that they could not provide for all community facilities across the city but where they could support alternatively owned centres to remain viable they have done so.

This Council, in its draft Community Facilities Plan has said its support for community facilities will be directed at the following key principles all of which our centre meets.

Equity

Facilities meet the diverse social cultural and recreational needs of the city's population

Facilities are distributed evenly across the city.

Community Connectedness

Facilities are designed and situated to maximise community identity and connectedness.

Accessibility

The use of the facilities is affordable to the city's residents.

The management and maintenance cost of facilities is affordable to Council and ratepayers.

Sustainability

The design and location of facilities meets the growth and development needs of the city's population.

Efficiency

Facilities are managed in an efficient and effective manner

The voluntary committee which runs our Centre enables the council to tick all the above boxes in terms of meeting the community facility needs of Mt Pleasant ratepayers and those of the surrounding suburbs. We ask that you support us to continue to do so by reinstating our Centre's maintenance grant and by treating our centre as part of the community facilities infrastructure of this city. We have a large maintenance programme to keep our centre viable over the next ten years, eg the replacement of our floor at an approximate cost of \$46,000. The only assistance we seek from council is \$5,000 maintenance grant. As ratepayers we expect to be treated equitably with other ratepayers.

Submission

Reinstate the Mt Pleasant (Memorial) Community Centre maintenance grant of \$5,000 per year as a line item in the community facilities budget.

8. St Albans Community Centre \$3.7M Capital Expenditure item

As a community group currently battling for the return of our small maintenance grant we are at a loss as to understand the justification for investing \$3.7 million into another St Albans Community centre without first having finalised the draft Community Facilities Plan and weighing up all the submissions which will have come through this process for community facilities. Where is the needs analysis and the rationale supporting such a decision? We understand there are areas of Christchurch, even within the Shirley Papanui ward which have been waiting for capital expenditure for their centre for a much longer time than this project.

Submission

Put on hold the decision to fund the St Albans Community Centre expansion until the current consultation underway on the Community Facilities Plan is completed. Secondly, under take a needs analysis for such a centre in order to establish an objective need for a 3.7 million centre in this area.

9. Tram Extension - Capital Expenditure \$11.5M

We submit that the tram extension is not a value for money investment for the City. While recognizing that this expenditure may have spin offs for tourism within the city it is our preference that this money is invested in improving public passenger transport around the central city and in particular by establishing an east-west shuttle service. The addition of such a service would be particularly helpful in encouraging people to shop in the central city while leaving their cars at home.

Submission

Do not fund the 11.5 million tram extension. Reallocate this funding to an east/west shuttle service.

10. Linwood Library

MPMCCRA supports the inclusion of a new library for Linwood in the LTCCP. Whilst this new library will be situated some distance from Mt Pleasant it is recognised that libraries are expensive capital items and that an improvement to the current Linwood facility would be of benefit to our community. We wish to thank councillors for the inclusion of this item.

Submission

Support the inclusion of funding for a new library in the Linwood area.

