

Subject:

re submission to the costing and hence excessive rate increase of 7.8%

Date:

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8/3/23

Dear Councilors,

firstly, may I congratulate the council, namely the MDC staff, in getting out the Annual Plan Consultation booklet, it is not only very informative, but easy to read and hence understandable by most.

My main concern resolves around the level of increases, that firstly the councilors have accepted without challenging the CEO over some of these cost expenditures. Yes, on the face of it, it might seem you have, but what I see is someone who has put up some figures, of operating costs, which have been argued over and brought down marginally, all the while, whilst patting oneself on the back, whereas a more serious look has gone unnoticed: Namely, the constant growth increase of council staff, since 2016, when our new CEO was appointed. Prior to that rate annual increases were fought over keeping it under 4% and sometimes just 3%. The last mayor told me, upon first being elected, how he didn't see any need for rate increases, as the area underwent revaluations every 3 years and most major builds were paid for out of either reserves or, in the case of the Picton library, forestry profits.

Let's look at some facts. Firstly, Marlborough, as a district, has only seen a population growth of less than 1%, around .089% I believe. Yet council staff have increased by 16%, whilst vehicle purchases have gone up by 22%, needing now to take up the whole of the top floor car park! Now these are MDC figures, not mine. So, whilst some increase in staff might be argued away by new or additional national government requirements, not all can. Neither can additional expenditure due to weather events. I mean, why do we now need 3 environmental staff, plus vehicles, where we have a net loss of trees per annum and thanks to such a high net loss of trees Marlborough's has become a much humid and wet environment. And why the majority of street, park and river seats, are set directly in the sun, so much for sun safe?

For instance, 95% of recent weather damage, to MDC roads, were paid for by Waka Kotahi.

The new Blenheim library and art gallery, that had been previously budgeted for at \$20m, was now 3/4 paid for as a shovel ready project by the national government!

Forestry, the port of Marlborough and the airport, all of whom have seen an upturn in recent business and hence increased revenues, even allowing for the wasteful use of funds on the recent prolonged court case over the Picton Aquarium by the Port Authority.

What of council owned buildings remaining idle (loss of income) and hence dilapidating such as the old Blenheim Working Man's club?

Does the council have a buyer, or use for the now empty old Blenheim library building?

In Picton, we have an on-going issue with either not enough street rubbish bins or the incorrect size of bins, that when overflowing does not show the town to its best, which is often. We have been waiting years for a shade/sail cloth to be mounted in front of the Picton library, so as to shade the seats there, but to no avail; though I hear a tender has gone out for the south side to be covered. Really, the south side!!! The foot paths in many areas are either slippery when wet or are very uneven, something that I have kept up a barrage of pics over to my local councillor, the mayor, the MDC and Marlborough roads, or anyone else, who will listen, yet little changes!

I would like to know just how much is held in reserves and where they came from?

I would like to see accounts that show how the profits, from MDC owned enterprises, feed into our budget and help reduce current rates, something I was promised by the last mayor?

Lastly, over the 15 years, I have lived in Picton as a senior, I have seen my senior rate discount drop from around 33% to around 22%. I wonder what the council has in mind to offer a larger discount, as our pensions sure aren't keeping up, and what MDC might do nationally to help bring them back and have an annual 33% discount locked in?

Thanking you for your time I look forward to speaking on such matters when appropriate.

Regards

Chris R Davies



Have a GREAT day.