

Kiom Myers



5/8/2015

Dear Sir,

In 1972 my Rates were \$76.00 the same as my weekly wage. In 2000 rates \$1,024, 2010 \$2,158, 2014 \$3,848, 2015 \$2,940 + 5.50% increase for 2016 my Rates will be approx \$3,100.

The compounding effect will mean that in 2020=\$4,300, 2030=\$8,600. I am 68 years of age, how will I be able to generate that amount of money in the future? There are other increases on my budget as well - Health Ins, Rates, Fuel Gas, Electricity.

Nillumbik council have not demonstrated any desire to control spending, in fact they have a "New Initiatives" category now only \$700,000 down from \$1 million! The Town Square project supposed to cost \$2,450,000 now \$3,100,000. Please refer to the Herald Newspaper cuttings.

In your Consultation Paper April 2015 - "What are we required to do?" Paragraph 3 in part: without compromising councils autonomy. I think this is the wrong approach. It seems from the evidence that most councils are incompetent. The Mitchell Shire is a prime example. Councillors seem to delight in spending on projects that are unnecessary and ignore any objectors. When they leave office the debt is left to us to pay not them and it does not bother them but people are struggling to pay their bills.

For the State government to gain control back from these Shires they should reduce the number by half, the number of councillors by half - Nillumbik has 7 why not 4 - have a "Flying Squad" of inspectors to assess what councils are spending money on. Have stricter criterion as to what councils can spend on. For example: Nillumbik could suspend buying "art work" for 5 years.

To allow Ratepayers to catch-up just a little there should be a "moratorium" on increases for the next 3 years and then go to the CPI level.

Any spend by councils in excess of \$3 million should have to be approved by the Local Government Minister this would help control debt levels. For example: The global Financial Crash of 2008 was the only thing that stopped the Nillumbik Council from building new council offices in Eltham at a cost of \$16 million - then they would put the Rates up to service the debt!

In your Terms of Reference, paragraph 3: "to contain the cost of living in Victoria."

- ① Drop Principle 3: Councils have lost the right to be autonomous with their proven records of waste
- ② Just do it - CPI - then hand out the tissues

Yours sincerely
W. Myers



Local council spending revealed: overseas trips, hurt feelings and more ...

Your rates at work

A LOCAL council is flying officials to San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver and New York to investigate North American colleges, despite already signing off on its plans for a local university town.

City of Maribyrnong officials will fly to the US for eight days next month citing it is critical to the success of turning Footscray into a

BRIDIE BYRNE AND CHRISTOPHER GILLET

"thriving university town". But the council refused to answer questions about the cost of the trip to ratepayers.

Mayor Grant Miles said international flights and hotels would be "modest" in cost and would appear on the travel register later this year.

"The purpose of the benchmarking exercise is to learn from the experience of North American university towns where university and civic authorities have worked together to achieve civic rejuvenation," Cr Miles said.

"The Footscray University Town project aims to initiate and deliver on urban, social and economic renewal for

Footscray as a university town. This is a collaborative partnership between council and Victoria University."

Berkeley, Mission Bay, Simon Fraser and Columbia are among the universities on the itinerary. Cr Miles, deputy mayor Nam Quach and sustainable development director Nigel Higgins will have the task of

finding out what lessons can be applied to Melbourne. Plans are under way to turn Footscray into a university town with sports and arts precincts to shed its "wild west" image and rejuvenate the area.

The overseas trip comes after the council increased rates by 4.7 per cent over the next financial year.

In addition, last year the Auditor-General found the council did not adequately consider the impact of rate increases on its residents.

Maribyrnong was one of 12 councils audited to assess rating practices in Victoria. bridle.byrne@news.com.au SEND TIPS TO WASTEWATCHERS@NEWS.COM.AU OR PHONE 9292 1226

FROM THE MAYOR

Council's budget has been out for consultation throughout May and is due to be adopted at our June Ordinary Meeting. While setting the budget we have had to take into account the long-term perspective.

Council is also planning for the impact that the State Government's rate capping policy will have when annual rate increases will be limited to CPI.

Over the coming year, Council will engage with you to consider how Millumbaik should best respond to rate capping while remaining financially sustainable and still meeting the community's needs over the short and long term.

The reality is that we rely on our rates income and funding from other levels of government to provide more than 100 services. Limiting the rates income will have an effect. If

Council needs a rate increase higher than CPI to provide the services and facilities that our community needs, then we need to obtain an exemption from the Essential Services Commission.

To make a decision about this we need your views on priorities for services and infrastructure needs in coming years and how this can be financed.

Managing Council's budget is complicated.

There are so many worthy services and facilities that need financing and understanding the intricacies can be difficult. Rate increases are often driven by external impacts and cost-shifting by other levels of government, rather than Council's own spending decisions.

Still in denial!

Helen Coleman

Mayor, Cr Helen Coleman

Town square irks people

1/7/2015
MILLUMBAIK mayor Helen Coleman continues to understate the amount of public opposition to the development of the Eltham Town Square.

An impromptu rally in the square on Saturday, June 13, attracted more than 300 people.

Leader Community Newspapers reserves the right to edit letters. Letters must carry correspondent's full name, address and phone number.

ple, all expressing their concerns and signing yet another petition in an attempt to convince those councillors in favour of this expensive and inappropriate project to reconsider this folly.

It is unclear, as Cr Coleman states, that some people have "a greater understanding of what it will mean for Eltham" (Mayor's Message, *Diamond Valley Leader*, June 17), when the business case feasibility and risk analysis has never been released to the public.

Clearly, this is a risky venture, subsidised by rate payers and leaving a long-term debt for us and future councils.

LOU EMPSON, Eltham

From Millumbaik News Winter 2015

ELTHAM

Plan objections 'too late'

FIGHT OVER TOWN SQUARE PROJECT IN VAIN AS WORK STARTS

Brittany Shanahan

TWO petitions against the controversial Eltham Town Square renewal project failed at a Nillumbik Shire Council meeting last week, have been submitted "too late", mayor Helen Coleman says.

Almost 1800 residents and 54 traders signed separate petitions that asked the council to "desist from plans

to build a commercial enterprise", despite the tender being awarded to ACE Contractors last month.

The project, which includes a restaurant, public toilets, a water fountain and changes to access roads next to the car parks, was given the tick of approval by the council on October 13, 2014.

During last week's council meeting, Cr Ken King said the project had divided councillors and the community, but "the numbers have it in the end".

Cr Meralyn Klein said she was "very concerned" about the objections to the project, saying "plans were buried inside the website" and the

community consultation process had "let the community down".

Cr Bronnie Hattam said some signed the petition without knowing the facts.

Cr Michael Young said the Eltham Chamber of Commerce supported the council's plans, despite the petition. The organisation

could not be reached for comment. Cr Coleman told the *Diamond Valley Leader* works had started and the petitions were "too late".

"A majority decision of (the) council was made in April 2015, to award the tender to complete the town square redevelopment works, at which point, the final and le-

gally-binding decision to proceed with this project was made," Cr Coleman said.

"The petition was received almost two months after the contract was awarded. (The) council has been consulting with traders and the community on this project since 2007, until 2014. The development has started and is due for completion in early November."

1/7/2015

1/7/2015