

## HUNTERS HILL COUNCIL VOTES FOR RATE INCREASE OF 9.7%

Hunters Hill Council considered 3 Options for raising rates at an Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 12 December 2018. The 3 Options placed on public exhibition were: 'Option 1' the statutory rate peg increase of 2.7%; 'Option 2' with an additional 4.04% for Community Facilities; and 'Option 3' with a further additional 3.0% for Operational. The total increase for 'Option 3' thus amounted to 9.7%.

In outlining his reasons for the need to increase rates by an average of \$117.26 a year, based on a median land value of \$1.53 million, Mayor Bennett said the council's costs had increased as it was frozen out during the State Government's failed amalgamation attempt.



*Hunters Hill Mayor Mark Bennett moved the motion for increasing the rates.  
Picture: Courtesy Northern District Times*

The Mayor blamed cost shifting by the Government onto councils for the rate increase as well as the need to maintain ageing assets and pay increased legal fees, alongside the financial pressure of increased community demand for services and place development commitments. "If we don't raise rates, we risk our independence," he said.

Hunters Hill has a lot of unrateable property and a relatively high proportion of public housing — both of which affect council's bottom line.

An independently conducted IRIS Research phone poll of over 400 residents found support for the rate rise as preferable to cuts in services.

Councillor Ross Williams stressed that the financial pressures on Hunters Hill are the same pressures faced by councils across Sydney which are being squeezed by "obscene and absurd" government cost shifting policies and new fees and charges.

It was noted that a well-maintained council would increase property values.

Independent councillors Mayor Mark Bennett, Ross Williams, Justine McLaughlin, Jim Sanderson and Elizabeth Krassoi voted for Option 3 – the 9.7% increase. Liberal endorsed councillors Ben Collins and Zac Miles voted against the motion.

It became clear that the Liberal Councillors were playing party politics. They did not support residents' wishes to properly and responsibly look after our assets, buildings, parks and facilities. Many are saying that they are deliberately trying to financially run down the council so as to try to make a case for amalgamating Hunters Hill with Ryde. That is certainly consistent with the refusal of the Liberal Government to pay the Council's court costs as ordered, and the increasing 'cost shifting' by the Government onto Hunters Hill Council, that is now at a staggering 15% of its income.

Clr Miles said after the meeting that council's decision "may be worse than getting a chunk of coal for Christmas". Who knows what that means.

The Council will now apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal who will begin assessing the application against criteria set out in the Office of Local Government's guidelines in February.

The Council YouTube video of this Hunters Hill Extraordinary Council Meeting 4453 can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78Qrewp340U>

The agenda item 1.1 re Consideration of Special Rate Variation is at <http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/Page/Download.aspx?c=4911>

The Northern District Times 13 Dec 2018  
<https://savehuntershill.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/SHHMC-Hunters-Hill-Councillors-vote-in-favour-of-rate-increase-NDT-13-Dec-2018.pdf>

The Weekly Times 19 Dec 2018  
<https://savehuntershill.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/SHHMC-Councillors-vote-for-rates-to-rise-in-Hunters-Hill-TWT19-Dec-2018.pdf>

Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition (SHHMC)  
19 December 2018