

## **GRAHAMSTOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Management Committee held in the School of Art, Somerset Street, on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2007, at 5 pm.**

**1. Present:** Danny Biermann, Jane Dalton, Roswitha Hobson, David Hodgson, Willem Makkink, Christopher Pitman, Doug. Rivett, Dominic Thorburn (Chairman), Roux van der Merwe, Johan van der Walt.

**Apologies:** Roger Embling, Don Hendry, Clive Whitford.

**2. Election of Officers:** In terms of the Constitution the Committee unanimously elected Prof. D. Thorburn and Prof. D. Hendry as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson respectively.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting** held on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2007. These were confirmed.

**4. Minutes of the AGM,** held on 27 March, 2007. These were confirmed, subject to the correct spelling of Mr. Dacombe's name.

### **5. Matters Arising from these Minutes:**

5.1 AGM, Public discussion: Rosemary van Wyk Smith's suggestion to organise projects across heterogeneous Wards to promote Black involvement in GRA was accepted. Secretary to contact Rosemary to identify and to assist in coordinating such a project with the Committee. Chair to contact Nikki Kohly with a view to a similar environmental project with diverse groups.

Mr. Makkink complimented the GRA on the very successful AGM, in content, discussion and record attendance.

5.2 Memorandum: Chair tabled a letter from Bruce Probyn, Head of DSG, supporting our Memo, and setting out the consequences of a water failure for their 280 girls in hostels. He also warned of the emotional trauma and serious implications of a power failure during end-of-year examinations. They would support any action that we might take.

5.3 Goat Farm: Mr. van der Walt has had no further response from his contact in Irene. Mr. Makkink reported that, at the EDT meeting that afternoon, the absence of a report from the LED (Local Economic Development) Officer was decried, and discussed at some length. Concerns about viability were again expressed : will it be economical to collect and transport small quantities of milk from many farms? Where is the R4.2m. reported as on offer? A report in Grahamstown This Week spoke of 9 farms already allocated in the district, and a further R500 000 from the European Union. It was also stated that the farms had bought dairy equipment and 100 mohair goats per farm. Arrangements for training are also said to be in place. The LED Officer's next report is awaited with interest.

Item remains on the agenda. (see also 7.2)

5.4 Water and Electricity outages: The Task Team had not reported by the March 8 deadline. Remains on agenda.

### **6. Correspondence:**

6.1 Transport Forum Agenda: Chair noted that GRA does not often attend, as the Forum deals mainly with taxi matters. It would be more useful if traffic issues were included in its scope.

6.2 Letter from Prof. Doreen Atkinson: See 10.2 below.

6.3 Letter from Clive Whitford asking for follow-up at Mayoral level on GRA memorandum to ensure attention and action. See 9.3 below.

6.4 Reply from DSG: See 5.2 above.

**7. Finance:** Mr. Hodgson reported a good intake of subscriptions at the AGM. R930 collected. R300 transferred to Savings, and R204 at hand for routine expenses. A list of still-outstanding subs. will be given to committee members for informal reminders to persons they can approach.

## **8. Reportbacks:**

8.1 Full Council, 12 March, Chair: This was the Quarterly meeting; Mun. Manager and Speaker both absent. **Mayor's Remarks:** Welcomed new IDP Officer; noted need for budget to be aligned to the IDP (Integrated Development Plan). Announced the formation of the new **Chamber of Business**, due for launch in April. (*Secretary applauded the representative format of the Chamber, but noted that the GRA had taken a leading role in securing progress on such a business body. However, we were not invited to the launch, or given any mention for our involvement in the Business Forum. Mr. Beer was reported as saying that the Chamber would liaise with the GRA*). The meeting deplored the **litter and untidy buildings** especially in Beaufort Street and Raglan Road. The water and electricity failures were seen as serious, due to ageing infrastructure; but also to under-performing officials, negligence, and tampering. All this was bad for business and investment. **The IDP Report and Plan** were slated as unacceptable: unprofessional, out of date, and very poor. The new IDP Officer is to address this. **The Business Centre** is to be renovated (yet again) at a cost of R385 000; budget money for this is to be re-directed from a truck for the Electricity Department. A window on priorities?

8.2 EDT, 13 March. Prof Rivett: Following complaints about the absence of the Mun. Mgr. from all EDT meetings, Mr. Dredge attended in his place. Cllr. Whisson asked why there was still no sign of the promised **Kaolin Report** and wanted details of the R100 000 set aside for "small scale mining". There was again criticism of the lack of movement in EDT matters. **Makana Tourism Report:** Noted that R48 000 was still owing by Bhisho to Kwame Makana arising out of the Premier's directive that officials visiting must stay in the Township. **Goat project:** Terry Myburgh tabled the Steering Committee Report. The proposed dairy has been named Bokwe Dairy. A refrigerated road tanker is planned to collect milk from the farms, but no cost details were given. Both Swiss and cross-bred goats would be used. **Quorha Project:** Project manager Rommel Roberts has had his contract extended to June, after lengthy delays. No progress on **Grahamstown – Alicedale Rail Link**.

8.3 Social Services, 15 March, Secretary for Mr. Embling: The meeting started late and was brief. Chairperson Masoma remarked that Grahamstown was becoming **the dirtiest town in the Province**. Cllr. Whisson reported that interviews were under way for a **Head of the Library Service**, to replace Ms. Hartzenberg. Makana Brick has donated bricks to build the **Fingo Vilage Library**. Cllr. Whisson queried the absence of a Health Report for February, and noted that the **January nil report on new Aids and STI cases** was misleading as there were no nurses to do the testing. Cllr. Peter noted that a number of **Playing Fields in Makana** have either broken fences or no fences at all.

8.4 LHID, 19 March, Mr. van der Walt: Cllr. Ntshiba now chairs this Committee, in place of Cllr. Peter. Councillors requested a report on the **Water Problems**, and what actions are to be taken. The Task Team had not reported. A report was requested on the **Alicedale Golf Estate**, where plans for only six houses have been submitted so far. Is there a time limit for building? The first **Electricity Report** in 3 months was tabled. The **Howiesens pumps motors** are away for repairs again. A qualified electrician has resigned. Was he the only one left? The **insurance for the substation explosion** has not been settled, and will now go to Court. **Alicedale Housing** (216 units): Land Affairs has approved transfer of land to Makana; approval by Public Works now awaited, as is the release of funds. But still no transfer of land for the **Upgrade of the Sewage Ponds**. The application for 3 farms to be re-zoned and sub-divided into an **Eco-Estate adjacent to Lalibela Game Reserve** awaits a decision by the

Dept. of Environment, following an Environmental Impact Assessment. The DTIS has approved it in principle. **St. Raphael Trust re-zoning:** After many delays, this will now go to the Premier of the Eastern Cape with a recommendation that it can be used as an “Aids Help Centre”. The LHID Chair described the three objections received as “classic racism”. The proposal for a **R3000 deposit on building plans approved**, to cover removal of rubble from pavements after completion, has been agreed to. **Staff vacancies:** There are 75 in Roads and Stormwater, including 17 Driver-operators for trucks.

8.5 EDMH, 20 March, Miss Dalton: Chairperson absent, thin attendance. **Veld fires** remain a problem, despite the damp weather. An arsonist is suspected. **Flood Damage to Houses:** The contractor is not performing on the 2002 damage to Transit Camp houses. Plans are in place for work on the 2006 damage, but await the Mun. Mgrs. signature to apply for Mun. Infrastructure Grant funds. **Alicedale Fire Station:** A full-time service is being considered, as the part-time posts could not be filled. There was a complaint that **overgrown street verges** were not being attended to in Gtn. East. Mr. Pitman pointed out that verges in Harrismith St. adjacent to absentee owners had not been attended to for many months, and were knee high. **Stockowners:** 33 stock impounded, but still no contractor, due to intimidation. **Spring on Stones Hill road:** Some concern about litter and abuse. Prof. Thorburn noted traffic problems with the heavy usage of the site. **Caravan Park:** No progress, as there appears to be no developer.

8.6 Finance, 22 March, Secretary: **Two Finance Directorate DVD's** were shown, to be used to educate consumers and encourage careful use of electricity and water; and to pay for services. **Income** remains up on budget and **Expenditure** down R1.4m on salaries, due to vacancies. Noted as “serious” by the Auditor General. **Total Debtors** now R126m., down from R129m. last month. **Credit Control:** New regulations enable the Municipality to disconnect services if property rates are not paid. There also appears to be a provision (unclear) to divert rent received to cover rates. A policy document on **Supply Chain Management** was considered. Procedures for bids and tenders will be systematised and better controlled. Also a policy document on **Fleet Management** for better control of Council's vehicles. Covers who uses and when; what for; bad driving; and reporting accidents and damage. Proposal for a **Fleet Manager**. Urgent to have an internal secondment soon, and then a new post. This appears necessary and cost effective.

8.7 Special Council, 29 March, Prof. Rivett: Cllrs. Reynolds and Whisson were constructive in their comments and criticisms. An impression was that too much money was being spent on higher-level posts, and too little on essential operating personnel, especially technical. **IDP Report slated;** Budget (still in draft) and IDP to be reconciled in follow-up. **Mayoral Executive Members** proposed to be full-time, at huge cost. This is still in the draft budget. **Auditor General's Report** was discussed; including some very negative assessments of the Municipality's financial management. Not all of it valid, it seems. A lack of internal controls was singled out, as was the “**Abuse**” of **cellphone allowances** to the tune of more than R109 000. These excess allowances were irregular expenditure, and should be recovered from the persons concerned.

The intention of Mr. Dredge to accept a post with Ndlambe Municipality was greeted with dismay. Noted that a new and competent Building Inspector was also moving there. The reasons, corroborated by a number of sources, appeared to be ongoing interference with Officials by Councillors. GRA is deeply concerned at all this, and alarm bells should be ringing.

8.8 Aesthetics, 16 April, Chairman: The meeting was not quorate, but the removal of a balcony room from the old La Galleria building in New Street was considered. This is an historic building, once an orphanage. To be investigated further.

**8. Portfolios and Strategies for the Year:** The Secretary will circulate an internal document with existing portfolio members and dates. This will be for discussion at the May meeting. In the interim new members are welcome to join the GRA reps. at any of the remaining April meetings (LHID, EDMH, and Finance.)

**9. Any Other Business:**

9.1 Wessa Meeting , 25<sup>th</sup> April: This is to discuss a joint project among NGO's for the Greening of Grahamstown. Mrs. Hobson to attend for the GRA. Library Hall, 4pm. Contact person, Jenny Gon.

9.2 Letter from Prof. Doreen Atkinson on s.139 Procedure: S.139 of the Constitution covers action against non-performing Municipalities. Prof. Atkinson has sent us a Manual covering procedure to do this. Passed to Mr. van der Walt to peruse and comment.

9.3 Liaison with Mayor: Secretary met Mr. Kate at Graduation, and discussed the Memorandum. Agreed he follows up with Mayor, and progresses action on our Memo.

9.4 Mr. van der Walt drew attention to a Friday 20 deadline for nominations to the Geographical Names Committee. Agreed that Cllr. Whisson be approached. (Prof. Rivett and Mr. van der Walt have progressed his nomination and hope to beat the unreasonable 5-day deadline. )

**10. Next Meeting:** It was agreed to try to move our meeting date to the first Wednesday of the month. Next meeting to be **Wednesday 2 May. Same venue: Art School, Somerset St., 5pm.**

**Roux van der Merwe, Hon. Secretary, tel. 6225687.**

**20<sup>th</sup> April, 2007.**