

GRAHAMSTOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of a Meeting of the Management Committee held in the School of Art, Somerset St., on Wednesday 6th June, 2007 at 5pm.

1. Present: Mr.D. Biermann, Miss J. Dalton, Mr.R. Embling, Mrs. R. Hobson, Mr. D. Hodgson, Mr.W. Makkink, Mr. C. Pitman, Profs. D. Thorburn (Chair) and R. van der Merwe, Mr. J. van der Walt and Mr. C. Whitford.

Apologies: Profs. D. Hendry and D. Rivett.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 2nd. May, 2007: These were confirmed.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes:

3.1 Goat Farm: A report on the March 6 meeting did appear on the EDT Agenda, but Ms. Myburgh was not there to answer questions. Mr. van der Walt will try his informant in Irene again. Remains on EDT and on our agendas.

3.2 Section 139 Provisions: This section in the Constitution of the Republic provides for a Province to interfere in a Local Government “which does not fulfil an executive obligation”. The procedures are complex and probably meant to apply only to seriously dysfunctional municipalities. Makana is not yet there. Mr. van der Walt tabled a summary document for members to study and to come back with comments and queries at the next meeting.

3.3 Business Chamber, and Electricity services for Festival: The Business Chamber held its first meeting on May 10. Represented were the Business Forum, Rhodes University, the Black Business Sector and the Indalo Organisation, a Game Reserves body. Despite invitations, NAFCO did not respond and are not on the Chamber. The first meeting looked at longer term strategic goals but also formed a sub-committee to liaise with the Mayor on shorter-term issues. Electricity for the Festival and Water Supply are on the current agenda. The Forum is keeping an eye on infrastructure and on the functionality of some of the service delivery functions. Chair noted that Rhodes had voiced concerns over electricity and water, and had experienced a sub-station failure. Noted that Brookshaw had a long outage.

Mr. Makkink said there's a Festival Planning Committee looking at electricity, street lights and the Village Green, among others. The Electricity Dept. is low on resources, but is engaged in the Festival planning.

3.4 Mr. Dabula Njilo noted as new Director, Technical and Infrastructural Services. Mr.van der Walt said he was at the May 21 meeting and was articulate.

3.5 Stones Hill Road: No response to date; Chair will follow –up.

3.6 Township Liaison: A cooperative structure based on Ward Committees was suggested where councillors and constituents could meet to raise problems and questions. GRA to set it up and to run it. Mrs. van Wyk Smith will help in this, assisted by a member or members of this Committee. A “cross border” Ward, having Black and White areas is needed as a pilot. Volunteers sought by next meeting. White/Coloured/ Black interaction to be promoted, and GRA links forged with the Township communities.

3.7 Exco Secrecy: Far-reaching budget decisions were taken by the Mayoral Executive with no reference to Portfolio Committees. See also 6.8 below. Secretary was not able to see PSAM. Noted that our contacts there were tenuous.

3.8 Caravan Park: No details, but much activity on the site.

4. Correspondence: A letter has gone to the Mayor recapping our presentation to him at a meeting. There is a copy on the Website (www.smarthost.co.za/gra) See also 6.7 below.

5. Finance: Mr. Hodgson read out the still-outstanding subscriptions, and Committee members undertook to follow up. Will members please note and follow-up on their undertakings.

6. Reportbacks:

6.1 Aesthetics: No meeting on the 14th; only one signage item dealt with by the Chairman and Mr. Christian. Mr. Pitman's details forwarded for next meeting on 11 June.

6.2 EDT, 15 May, Mr. Makkink: **Goat Project:** Ms. Myburgh not there, and request for financial details not met, so item is not on Makana Budget. However, some money has been received from the EU and Cacadu. Comments on "dead goat" and "cash goat" were muttered. Wait and see.

Railway Projects: Mayor, Mun. Manager and Mr. Nduna to see Spoornet about Grahamstown – Port Alfred line. Noted there is a current lease to a trolley company. Grahamstown to Bloukrans could run without much repair work. Two trains a day from Alicedale to provide a same-day return from Bushman Sands to Grahamstown for tourists is being considered for the future – but prospects are not great. **Business Chamber:** No response from Nafcoc, and a proposal to drop them and to reassign the seats on the Chamber. **Small-scale mining:** Lots of people listed, but no proper business plans or much activity. **Kaolin Report:** Still "available" in Mun. Mgr's office, but not yet tabled. **Ostrich Theme Park (Ostrimark):** The earmarked land has been sold to another party, and the project is back in planning. **Car Wash:** Building is proceeding. **Usobomvu Youth Fund:** No evidence of serious mismanagement has been found. **SALGA Conference:** A paper (no author given) on Economic Development was in the agenda. Noted that the utility of Community participation in complex projects was questionable; little more than topical and personal concerns came to light. The quality of Community inputs needs to be strengthened.

6.3 Social Services, 17 May, Mr. Embling: A routine meeting. **Shops inspection** reports. **CBMP:** Community-based Maintenance Project still active. **Library:** Noted that Mrs. Hartzberg's post as Assistant Director, Library Services has been filled by Ms. Patricia Vubela. **Fingo Library** proceeding. Valued donations from PG Glass, and Makana Brick.

6.4 LHID, 21 May, van der Walt and Whitford: Chair Ntshiba has called for reports on housing, roads, clinics, water and electricity for appropriate action. New Director to take all these in hand. **Electricity complaints:** Phones not answered and no action on reported faults. Concern over Festival breakdowns. **Fingo Village Houses:** Contract for 577 units, only 200 built. Contractor appears to have defaulted. No details. **Salga Conference on Infrastructure:** This looked specifically at deterioration of old infrastructure, lack of qualified support staff, and funding for repair and replacement. There is a lack of Project Management. Agreed that Officials study this paper and workshop the primary issues, as all this applies to Makana. **Electricity Staff Situation** is deteriorating further, after two more senior resignations. Asked that exit interviews be made available; also the effect of neighbouring Municipalities who pay better.

6.5 EDMH, 22 May, Miss Dalton: **Alicedale fire service** progressing; two permanent persons to be appointed; some support from Bushman Sands during Presidential visit. **Vukani Greenbelt:** R200 000 from National Treasury. **Alien vegetation** eradication continues; R100 000 budget. Mountain Drive complete, Grey Dam out to contract. **Botanical Gardens:** Proceeding, but Environmental Centre now out; only entrance block and tearoom will be built. A pity, as Centre would have been an appropriate "core tenant". **Speedhumps** proceeding in many areas: Park Road, Albany Road, Miles Street. Humps at African Street parking area not visible enough; no warning signs. Prof. Thorburn to follow up on this. **Traffic Officers overtime** now costing more than three new Officers. To be looked at.

6.6 Finance, 24 May, Secretary: **Debtors now up to R129m.** We are again not even collecting our current debt. **Current Budget:** Mayor speaks of "sensitive policy choices", but lion's share goes to expensive senior posts. Budget is way above Treasury's 5% guideline for increases. **CFO's Performance Agreement:** The usual daunting detail; now a new system again after collapse of previous one. Impressive list of CFO's duties – a challenge to Dredge's successor. **New Credit**

Control policy: Much bigger deposits for defaulting debtors; and service contracts to tighten up on owner/tenant situations, as in digs. **New Rates Policy:** A lot of useful detail here.

Salga Conference paper looks at under-spending by many Municipalities. Why, when such backlogs? Municipalities trying to hang on to Electricity Distribution. **Budget Late Item:** Lively arguments here. Reynolds criticises staffing emphasis on “high flyers” but not enough “footsoldiers” who have to deliver services. Emphasis is on economic development and job creation, which needs high level strategic inputs and is now the priority over service delivery. Whisson speaks on senior staff increases and relative neglect of operating and service areas. Criticism is not accepted.

6.7 Meeting with Mayor, 22 May, Prof. Hendry and Secretary: Some useful interaction with Mayor and 4 Councillors, on GRA Memorandum. Infrastructures discussed; also crisis in Training of new incumbents due to a lack of capacity to provide the essential on-the-job component. This disadvantages new appointees, which shows in the current high labour turnover figures. Councillors say we must encourage our skilled manpower to stay, and efforts must be made to attract skilled Whites again. Should not have to look at Cuba and India. The meeting was followed up with a written report to the Mayor, which is on the Website.

6.8, Special Council, Budget, 28 May, Biermann, Whitford and Secretary: The Budget has been extensively covered in the Press, and has been widely-criticised. In brief, there has been a huge increase in staff costs, to 46.5% of expenditure, and the Operating Budget shows an increase of 14.5% against Treasury guidelines of 5.5%. There are five new full-time Councillors at R415 000 p.a. each, and increases for Section 57 employees varying from 33% for the Directors and 40% for the Mun. Mgr. to R850 000 p.a. By contrast, Maintenance and Repairs are down from 2006-7 to 6.2% of Operating Budget. This disparity between salaries to top management and expenditure on desperately-needed infrastructure and essential service delivery has been deplored and GRA has advised National Treasury of its disquiet. (Document posted on Website), with copies to the Press and the Mayor. The process by which the Budget was arrived at and the way it was rushed through Council is mentioned. There is also concern at attempts to stifle the freedom of speech of Opposition Councillors. The Budget has been described as “unaffordable” with the result that when salaries have been paid, the shortfall will have to come from capital works and repairs and maintenance funds, as in recent past years.

7. Any Other Business:

7.1 Liquor Trading By-Law: Public meeting on 20 June at 5.30 noted; copies of By-law to Chair, Mrs. Hobson and Mr. Biermann, who will attend. **Trading Hours** are as previously-failed By-law, i.e. midnight on weeknights; 2.a.m. Fridays and Saturdays; and 10 p.m. Sundays. Concern that Trading Hours are not closing times, and drinking will continue.

7.2 Sector Crime Forum, 29th May. Mr. Biermann: This is up and running again, with better organisation and high level support from Rhodes. Richard Gaybba is Vice Chairman. **Crime Report:** R500 000 theft losses per month. Drug trafficking in High Street. Closer liaison with Rhodes. Reported rapes. Business Against Crime now in place. Lighting and unsafe areas to be addressed. **Policing:** 106 uniformed Reservists being trained. Reinforcements for Festival will be in place. Liquor By-law: Same concern at trading hours/closing time problem.

7.3 Smarthost list: Secretary to speak to operator re volume of traffic generated on “Reply” mode, to all on list.

8. Next Meeting: Wednesday meetings to be re-considered. To look at FIRST Tuesdays again, as second was a problem. This may suit all. **But next meeting only, again on a Wednesday, 11th July, at 5pm. Venue to be advised.** (4th is Festival) **Note 11th not 4th.**

The meeting closed at 7pm.

Roux van der Merwe, Hon. Secretary, tel. 046 6225687.
GRA MINS 6.07

8th June, 2007.