

GRAHAMSTOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Management Committee held in the School of Art, Somerset Street, on Tuesday 7th August 2007, at 5 pm.

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

Apologies: Mr. D. Biermann, Mr. D. Hodgson.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on the 11th July. These were confirmed, subject to 3.1 reading "contact in the University of Pretoria".

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes:

3.1 Goat Farm: Mr. van der Walt had received further material from Miss Groom; still to be studied. EU grant of R4m. received, and a further R3.7m. applied for, for phase two. 10 Farms identified; including one in good condition in Salem; others mostly run-down and under-utilised. Spread-out locations will complicate the milk collection round. Mrs. Myburgh has no goat management expertise, but Dr. Roets has implemented an extensive project supplying goats, meat and skins. But no milk involved.

Mr. Makkink said that the local project was proceeding, and a breeding herd would be established. A manager has been appointed; a Mr. Habana who is also Chair of the Business Chamber. Infrastructural problems of distances and roads will have to be addressed.

3.2 Township Liaison: Mrs Hobson will be contacting Rosemary van Wyk Smith regarding her suggestions for GRA liaison, and for offering to assist.

3.3 Liquor Trading Hours: The Chairman has submitted GRA's input in a well-reasoned Memo covering trading hours, but also concerns about social problems, and a reminder that our by-laws should see to the specific needs of Grahamstown, and not be based on other towns. Other issues were to regulate selling as well as closing hours, and urging the Municipality to be realistic about the profit motive of business and to balance this against the rights of residents to some peace and quiet; and the socio-economic and crime-related "fall out" of excessive drinking. He was concerned that the Hospitality Guild had not made any input on the issues involved.

3.4 Submission to Treasury on the Makana 2007-8 Budget: Secretary has heard from National Treasury, who referred our letter to Bhisho. Copies of our supporting documents have been sent to Mr. Andile Magalele in Bhisho, and GRA has been in contact with the Provincial Treasury. We have asked that copies of our documents be passed to M. Lulamile Nazo, who headed the punitive expedition to Makana on the 27th. July. A number of the issues raised there are also our concerns. Chairman commented on the Province's strong emphasis on public participation, and Central Government's concern over the problems in Local Government. Secretary to contact DPLG for copies of their "Policy Talk" of July-August 2007 for our committee to discuss and respond to the issues.

3.5 St Andrews Playing Fields (Erven 237 and 238): This is being pursued by the affected residents , but there is no unified viewpoint at present. Chairman has copies of the Minutes and correspondence. GRA to keep a watching brief but not to participate at this stage.

3.6 Grants-in-Aid: Noted that the Grahamstown Foundation had received their grant at last. Secretary felt that there was a misunderstanding among Councillors of the purpose of such grants. See also Finance Reportback in 5.5 below.

4. Correspondence: Letter from National Treasury. see 3.4 above; and Submission from GRA to Mun. Manager on Liquor hours.

5. Reportbacks:

5.1 EDT, 13 July, Mr Makkink: Again the agenda was replete with long rambling reports, with no focus on discussion or decision points. **Rail Links:** The Grahamstown – Port Alfred line would be too costly to run, and not viable on tourist traffic alone. The Alicedale line may be viable with two trains each way daily. Emphasis would be freight, but it could be used by tourists and two-way traffic. A private consortium is looking at this, as Spoornet does not want it. **Car Wash:** This R970 000 project now has the tuckshop, offices, toilets, and storeroom complete. But no wash bay yet. Will it be a buckets and rags operation?

5.2 Social Services, 19 July, Mr. Embling: Mention by Chair Ntshiba of **inspections of B&B premises**. Municipality already does this. **Community Based Maintenance Programme** continues to work well. More funding requested; for e.g. lawnmowers needed. **HIV Aids:** Request that statistics for males and females be shown separately. Cllr Whisson concerned that no testing is being done at rural and mobile clinics. **Library** is looking at a mobile facility. **Sport and Recreation:** Ntshiba complains that not a lot is happening; eg. the cricket stadium.

Sadly, this was the last meeting attended by Director Sister Madlavu, who has done an outstanding job and will be missed.

5.3 LHID, 23 July, Mr. van der Walt: **Seven Fountains Housing** and Agrivillage have been delayed for 7 years now, due to a lack of water for the area. Residents are angry. **Building Plans Approved:** R23m. for the first 6 months of 2006; only 4.7m. this year. **Alicedale houses (216):** All approved except by Dept. of Public Works, whose action is still awaited. Cllr. Whisson asked that this now be taken up at the political level. **Tarring of Gravel Streets:** Ten year programme discussed. Priority to Ext. 7 taxi ring road, at a cost of R4m. **Security at Municipal dams:** Quotations have been received for fencing and security personnel, but costs are very high and there is no budget. A number of **land and Housing issues** were dealt with, including a re-zoning of 4 erven in Plumbridge Drive for 11 Group Housing units (Townhouses).

5.4 EDMH, 24 July, Miss Dalton: A lot of routine matters after a late start. **2006 Floods:** 420 houses affected; some residents to be re-located and damage repaired. But it seems funds are not available (R13.75m.) **Township Street Names** to be painted on the walls of corner houses to assist emergency services. **A Junior Traffic Training Centre** proposed behind Noluthando Hall. Province will provide the R400 000, and 20 jobs should be created. **Caravan Park:** Demolitions complete and new buildings being erected. **Botanical Gardens:** Ornee Cottage restoration proceeding, but no decision on the Enviro Centre yet. Mrs. Hobson queried the cost of the ablution block there, said to be R1m. Chair said this probably included the cottage. **Name Changes:** Grahamstown said to be headed for iRhini. A query how a name like that could be marketed?

5.5 Finance, 26 July, Secretary and Mr. Whitford: First meeting with the new Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Ngcelwane, with a challenging agenda and some contentious issues.

Monthly Report: Water income nearly R6m. over budget. But 66% distribution losses reported. Capex budget R12m. but only R5m. spent (more than in the past). Debtors up again from R126m. to R128m. **Credit Control workshop:** A stronger line to be taken against defaulters. Graham Protea Hotel specifically named as a defaulter over some years. Councillors called for action. **Grants in Aid** discussed and said “to assist organisations who cannot pay for services due to financial hardships”. GRA sees this as a misconception, as Grants in the past have been to assist organisations who provide a service to the Community, which the Municipality could only supply at great cost. For example, sports facilities, the Monument, the Albany Museum. As such, they deserve some support from the Municipality, usually a grant to pay their Rates. This misconception may explain the recent reluctance of some Councillors to approve Grants in Aid. **Transforming the Finance Directorate:** This was a woolly discussion, in part on the 29% vacancies in the Division. Unclear if this was due to vacancies resulting from inter-departmental job transfers. Clearly some sensitivities, so referred to the Mayoral

Executive – where it can be discussed behind closed doors. There was mention of loss of experienced employees, the need for a retention strategy and the use of retirees to mentor newcomers. Also to encourage further study amongst staff. **SALGA Paper on Municipal Finance:** Consistent upward-trending, under-spending by Municipalities reported. Now at 44% nationally in last Financial Year. Debt levels continue to rise, and are now at R40 billion nationally. REDS, Regional Electricity Distributors, also appear to have stalled.

6. Finance: No report as Treasurer away. Miss Dalton and Mr. Embling have been successfully collecting some arrears, and will give these to the Treasurer on his return.

7. Any Other Business:

7.1 Grocotts Report on Local Government Investigation: Good coverage by Kwanele Butana , and compliments to Grocotts for critical reporting on the Municipality, who are not taking kindly to criticism.

7.2 Place and Street Name Changes: Again on front burner. Mr. Makkink asked to press his previously well-argued plea for a double name – eg. Rhini-Grahamstown. (Note that FIFA has insisted on this for World Cup venues in 2010.) Concern that District Names Committee has never met, and that all this is being imposed from outside. Chairman asked that Makana Tourism and the Chamber of Business provide a counter-lobby here.

7.3 Strategy Meeting: This is to discuss re-grouping that will arise out of the Secretary's departure in mid-October. Agreed to meet at 2.15 pm. on Tuesday 21st. August , at Mrs. Hobson's Historic Cottages, 1 Scotts Avenue. Chairman, Prof. Hendry and Secretary to liaise to plan the event.

8. Next Meeting: Tuesday, 4th September, 2007, at 5pm.

Roux van der Merwe, Hon. Secretary, tel. 046 622 5687.

10th August, 2007.