

GRAHAMSTOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Management Committee held in the School of Art, Somerset Street, on Tuesday 6th November 2007, at 5 pm.

1. Present: Mr D Bierman, Miss J Dalton, Mr R Embling, Prof D Hendry, Mrs R Hobson, Mr D Hodgson, Mr W Makkink, Mr C Pitman, Prof D Thorburn (Chair), Mr C Whitford.

2. Confirmation of Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October. These were approved.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes:

3.1 *Grahamstown name change.* After an incorrect date had been published in Grocotts, the meeting had been rescheduled as an imbizo for Thursday 8th November.

3.2 *Agendas and minutes.* DT would in future circulate agendas by email, and place four copies at Makana Tourism for collection. Council portfolio agendas were to be collected at Makana Tourism by the respective GRA members. DH would circulate minutes to CP for scrutiny, and after any corrections would circulate these to GRA members via e-mail, and DT would also place 4 copies at Makana Tourism.

4. Correspondence:

4.1 Letter drafted by CW to Mayor re staff shortages in the Finance Division sent by DT. No response had been received from Makana Municipality in response to GRA's letter.

4.2 Development of St Andrews Lucas and Gowie fields. DT in receipt of e-mails expressing concern that Makana Municipality was not capturing letters of objection to this development, and that these letters were not being considered in the course of re-advertised meetings.

5. Committee reports:

5.1 *Aesthetics. (CP)* Only six persons had attended this low-key and inconclusive meeting. Signage in Bathurst St (Hyundai, HQ) and Hill St (Cassies) had come under discussion. The request by *Daily Sun* to advertise on telephone poles was turned down. Frontier Hotel was being renovated to accommodate Nedbank, and also the section of Old Mutual formerly housed in the Whiteleys, on the bottom floor. The façade was to be retained and the alterations would be in keeping with the style of the building.

5.2 *EDT. (WM)* The goat project was coming to a head, as Council had realised that something was amiss, Ms Myburgh consistently avoided meetings where she could be called to account, and various monies were unaccounted for. Clr Reynolds had been taken to task severely for suggestion that the Mayor might have been remiss in not appointing a Board of Trustees, although it emerged that he had, in fact, nominated trustees but the Board had never been constituted! This matter was to be discussed at the next EDT meeting. WM had also been taken to task severely for commenting on the Grahamstown name change issue, and had been told not to interfere with "political issues"!

5.3 *Social Services. (RE)* The uneventful meeting had discussed *inter alia* the lack of street names in Grahamstown East and the take-over by the EC Government of Primary Health Care from Makana Municipality. GRA expressed concern at this move in the light of the well-documented underspending by the EC Government.

5.4 *LHID. (CW)* The meeting had had no chair, no deputy chair and no Director of Technical Services! Clr Simakuhle assumed the role of Chair. Councillors from both parties had expressed grave concern at the 28 vacancies (14 in the Water & Sewerage section, 14 in Roadworks) in this division, as well as at the fact that one of the two graders and a tractor had been out of action for an extended period. Mr Robertson ascribed this to the difficulty in obtaining spares for the 20 year-old machines. The single operational grader now had to perform two functions (construction as well as repair), meaning that one of the two teams stood idle for extended periods. Mr Robertson expressed delight at Clr Simakuhle's suggestion that a new grader be bought (for which he had been pleading for years) and hoped that the Clr could achieve success in carrying this forward. A detailed record of electricity complaints was being kept, 90 having been recorded over the past month. The consulting electrical engineers to the Municipality, Kwezi V3, had resigned and the services of Ballenden & Robb (the designers of the existing network) had been engaged on a temporary basis. This had been necessitated by the fact that Makana Municipality, while

having no qualified ticket holder, had been selling electricity illegally for three months. Council recommended that this appointment be confirmed and extended to include various management and training aspects.

5.5 *EDMH. (JD)* The Traffic Dept was in the process of producing suitable street names for Grahamstown East. The caravan park reconstruction was implementing Stage 2 and all buildings were nearing completion. Regarding Bots, the plans for Ornee Cottage had been passed (construction was, in fact, completed) and discussion was ongoing re the Environmental Centre. Working for Water had been allocated a grant of R100,000.00. The committee decided to support the creation of a post for an Environmental Officer, as the SA Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) guaranteed every citizen the right to an environment that was not harmful to health. This was a municipal responsibility which currently was not being adequately addressed. Council had 57 registered firearms, of which 7 had been "lost", 5 could "not be found", and 10 were in their possession. There was no central register.

5.6 *Finance. (CW)* The debtors register was seriously in error, as the sums of the vertical and the horizontal columns did not tally. Graham Protea Hotel was a serious rates defaulter, but the Municipality was reluctant to tackle them on this issue as "their figures are wrong but ours are also wrong"! The same situation applied with the rates owed by the Education Dept. Clrs Fulani and Reynolds had been appointed to a budget task team to ensure that the budget adhered to the guidelines set by National Treasury. On a scale of 1 to 21 (1 being the lowest credit risk), Moody's, an international credit rating company, had awarded Makana Municipality a score of 12. This score could have been 9, but was pulled down by a) the lack of managerial capacity and succession planning, b) maintenance backlog of assets, and c) low revenue and commercial activities. A decision was articulated that salary costs would be kept within National Treasury guidelines by "not appointing new staff in vacant positions when they arise"! It was decided that that the 80% reduction in rates enjoyed by the Grahamstown Foundation would fall away, but that the Foundation would be requested to make its resources available to the Municipality free of charge as and when required!

5.7 *Police Forum (DB)* There had been no agenda, no minutes, and the forum was effectively moribund.

6. Finance: (D Hodgson) The GRA had a positive balance of about R800.

7. Any other business:

7.1 *Register of attendance.* A proposal by CW that GRA members keep a register of which councillors actually attended meetings, and that this be minuted, was accepted.

7.2 *Newspaper notices.* RH, JD, CP and RE volunteered to scrutinise and report to the GRA notices appearing in the press concerning municipal matters.

7.3 *Name change* DT agreed to re-submit the previous GRA letter of March 2005 stating the preference for the use of Grahamstown – Rini.

8. Next meeting: 4th December 2007.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.

Don Hendry, Hon Secretary, tel. 046-6224243

7th November 2007

.....
Chairman

.....
Date