

How pleasing to host a record attendance of 90 members at the AGM last month. Attached to our email are the Minutes of our 19th December general meeting, and below is a list of the 2012 committee including 4 new members, and their respective portfolios:

Office Bearers: Graham Sell was re-elected Chairman, Pieter Naudé - Deputy Chair,
Niel Viljoen – Treasurer, and Vanessa Hau-Yoon - Secretary

Portfolios: The portfolios were allocated as follows:

Budget, Rates & Taxes: Graham Sell, Niel Viljoen, Pieter Naudé & Neville Ewing

Finance/Wilderness Improvement Program: Pieter Naudé, Graham Sell & Neville Ewing

Tourism & Business Signage: Paul Nicholas

Rail Reserve: Neville Ewing & Phillip Parsons

Town Planning: John Callanan & Graham Sell

Services: Electricity, Water, Sewerage & Refuse: Pearce Johnston

Environmental: Sanparks, Weeds & Aliens, Beach, Lakes, Rivers & Health: Inez Jamieson

assisted by Neville

Ewing

Traffic, Traffic Signage, Roads & Pavements: Hugh Pharoah

Safety, Security, Emergency Services & Law Enforcement: Hugh Pharoah

Neighbourhood Watch: Hugh Pharoah

Communication & Liaison: Sylvia Sell

Treasury & Admin: Niel Viljoen & Vanessa Hau-Yoon

The new committee held its first meeting of the year on Wednesday 11th January.

2012 will be a challenging year for all parties, and we trust Council will see Wilderness as a tourism draw-card with revenue and job creation potential, and assist WRRRA to maintain the village's sense-of-place. Priority is therefore to be given to the Wilderness Improvement Programme, to ensure that a fair share of rates and taxes paid by the residents is utilized to maintain the village and surrounds as a prime tourist destination. This responsibility to Wilderness voters has been sadly neglected over the past few years, while George has benefited from our funding.

We have yet to be informed of the results of property revaluations. It is well-known that property prices are substantially down compared to the 2007 valuation, which should result in a reduction in rates. However, Council is trying to recover from the dire effects of past reckless spending, so the incoming committee feels it is reasonable we continue to pay the same rates. An increase in rates, however, will not be tolerated.

In addition, Wilderness has no library or community centre to upkeep. Our common is often neglected, and our roads are a disgrace, whilst George's public open spaces and verges are regularly groomed. Many roads in The Wilderness do not have street lights, and many areas are not connected to municipal sewerage. Wilderness residents should therefore also enjoy an additional rebate in rates & taxes, and not be used by council as a cash cow.

Another area of great concern is the lack of law enforcement. Although it was gratifying to note a strong presence over the Christmas and New Year weekends, there is no noticeable law enforcement during the rest of the year. Unfortunately, during peak season traffic officers on duty took it upon themselves to direct vehicles onto the Common for parking. This is not the purpose of the

Common, and the resulting damage and residue of litter and broken glass is unacceptable. Hopefully, this situation can be better managed next season. Parking has always been problematic in Wilderness village, but the introduction of the Milkwood Village KwikSpar combined with the influx of holiday makers over the festive season exacerbated the problem to intolerable levels.

In her final N2 feed-back prior to stepping down from the committee, Sue Ledger reported that Sanral are reconsidering the alternative N2 routing project, as they feel it would be very difficult to build across the Ramsar site, for several reasons. A positive sign is their declared intent to sell the land back to private ownership.

Prompted by two of our members, we have looked at a crime reporting website where we have registered WRRRA and created a network for our members to sign up to. We still have to populate it with some of the latest data, but the direct link is <http://www.turnitaround.co.za/network/wrra> and we will appreciate any feedback. On signing up as a member of the WRRRA Network, you will be able to report crimes or suspicious activity that will be immediately communicated by email to all members of the network. Similarly, you will also receive email alerts that will enable you to take extra precautions if the activity is in your local neighbourhood. Early warning is the best way to combat crime, so we urge you to sign up and use the WRRRA Network for the benefit of us all.

Many members may have noted a bumper sticker produced by George Municipality reading “I George”. Some of those members have suggested we rather have our own bumper sticker reading “**Wild 4 Wilderness**” or “**Wild About Wilderness**”. Give us your thoughts and tell us what you think.

Regretfully, for those who have not yet paid your subs, this will be your final newsletter before we delete your address from the circulation list. Should you wish to continue being kept up-to-date, please submit your subs and let us have your proof of payment.