

Firstly some feed-back on yesterday's AGM for those members who were not able to be at the well-attended meeting at The Pearl of Wilderness – formerly the Wilderness Beach Hotel. A key point raised in the Chairman's Report, relating to Wilderness becoming a Special Ratings Area (SRA) was discussed; the idea being that a portion of our rates will be paid into a special account to be used for Wilderness only. Graham Sell proposed that we negotiate with the municipality to reintroduce the rates rebate previously given to Wilderness residents. This rebate will then be billed to us again as a Special Rating, which will be paid into a separate account that can only be used for projects in Wilderness. As there is a lot of work to be done to turn this into a reality, not the least of which is negotiating an agreement with the Municipality, and the legal requirement that the majority of residents agree to the introduction of an SRA, the Chairman sought a mandate from the meeting to proceed with this strategy. The mandate was approved by an overwhelming majority vote.

Of course the botched Valuation exercise was a hot topic with WRRRA's membership up-in-arms over the delayed sitting of the Property Valuation Appeal Board until next year. This is grossly unfair to those who have already had to pay their annual rates, as well as to residents whose properties have been over-valued but are still expected to pay their monthly rates. Cllr. Van Wyk has recently indicated that Wilderness / Ward 4 would be subject to a full analysis of the valuations, perhaps beginning by mid January. Desire Zwahlen caused a stir when reporting that any property sold at a lower value than that shown on the Municipal valuation roll, will be subject to SARS transfer duty on the higher Municipal valuation, rather than the actual sale value. There was also good advice from Don Cameron who said that it is vital for homeowners to be present at the Appeal Board hearing of their appeal, as his previous experience indicates that the Board tend to look unfavourably on appeals by absentee owners.

A comment was made from the floor that the Wilderness Tourism Office is seen as being old-fashioned, and unnecessary in this day and age of electronic marketing and reservations. Also from the floor it was once more requested that all Wilderness roads (off the N2) be limited to speeds of 30-40km/hour because of their narrow and rural nature. A further request was that the speed limit be reduced and monitored along the Hoekwil Road past Kingfisher Close.

As the municipality no longer has the R40,000 available for lifeguards at the Blue Flag beach, a motion was proposed that R10,000 in surplus funds, raised through our leasing of the N2 wall for advertising, be contributed by WRRRA towards the resulting shortfall in the Blue Flag budget. This motion was also carried by a majority show of hands. It was reported that owners are still walking their dogs on the Blue Flag beach. WRRRA has requested Sanparks to erect additional notices banning dogs altogether from this area.

Ronnie Board's donation of his R600 auditing fee to the SPCA received an appreciative round of applause.

To move to other topics, we are pleased to note an increasing number of registrations for our Turn-It-Around crime watch website, now numbering 69. Wilderness East has experienced an unprecedented number of house robberies, all via open or unlocked windows and doors. As we have warned our members about this on numerous occasions, we can only surmise that the victims are non-members, and would request you to spread the word. One of our members has also warned that all her copper waterpipes were recently stolen from her Sands Road beachhouse. If you have not already registered on the site, we encourage you to do so. When you do, please be sure to select "WRRRA" as the network name. Existing registrants are urged to also check that your selected network name is "WRRRA", as some members have inadvertently registered with other networks that do not carry our regular alerts. The web address is <http://www.turnitaround.co.za/network/WRRRA>.

From time to time we receive requests from organizations for support or publicity. These are carefully assessed to ensure that they advance the broader interests of Wilderness before being included in our newsletters. We have been approached by the organization Thanda Jesu, in connection with the informal community at Wilderness Heights which is very much “in limbo” regarding land ownership, the provision of houses and infrastructure and the legitimacy of their informal settlement. Some of our members have expressed an understandable opposition to their being granted permanent occupation as this adversely affects property values. At the same time we recognize our civic responsibility to provide a decent education and opportunities for social upliftment to the young people of this community, who are caught in the middle of this ongoing legal debate.

Thanda Jesu has been given a lease for the derelict school building at Wilderness Heights, which they have renovated and fenced. We see this as being positive as it removes the opportunity for a squatter community to expand onto this property. As from February 2013 they will be providing after school care, a feeding scheme for these children, assistance with homework, as well as a soup kitchen for needy residents of the informal settlement. If you are able to assist in any way with either equipment or a little of your time, please contact Doug Oliver (082 900 9399 or email dougoliver@live.co.za).

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all safe travel, a wonderful festive season and a good start to the New Year. Thank you for the many emails sent in support of our efforts on your behalf. We look forward to, and will greatly appreciate, your continued support in 2013.