

### **VAGRANT PROBLEM**

We have recently been made aware of the scale of the vagrant problem in and around the Village. It appears we have a growing resident community of vagrants who are sleeping under bushes along the railway line and at Wilderness Station. These are proving to be a real nuisance to residents and visitors, soliciting for money and often under the influence of liquor or drugs. They also take rubbish, sort through it for any salvageable items, and then leave the rubbish strewn around.

We are actively working with residents, the business community and the law enforcement officials to find a long-term solution to this growing problem. We are also engaging with SANRAL and particularly Transnet, who bear primary responsibility for the maintenance and security of their respective properties. Please report any incidents to Hugh Pharoah ([hapharoah@gmail.com](mailto:hapharoah@gmail.com)).

### **WILDERNESS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

It has become evident that WRRRA needs to place the WIP, and in particular the Village Ambassadors, on a sounder financial footing. To this end we will be launching a revised financial plan that will hopefully lighten the burden on the business community. We will be releasing more details shortly by way of a special Newsletter.

Clr Leon van Wyk informed the last Ward 4 Committee meeting that great interest has been shown both locally and provincially in the successful implementation of the WIP program, and particularly in the Village Ambassadors. There is the possibility that this concept may be introduced in other areas locally and even further afield.

### **REFLECTION ON A BUMPER FESTIVE SEASON**

This festive season was the first year-end for the Village Ambassador Program, and what a test it was. The Village was literally "invaded" by visitors and tourists alike, to an extent that has not been experienced before. We are grateful for the dramatic upswing in visitors that Wilderness and our business community experienced, but there is much that still needs to be done to deliver a truly unique Wilderness Experience. Our Village Ambassadors played a major role in ensuring that visitors to our Village experienced a safe, clean, friendly and warm welcome. In December alone, the Ambassadors, not counting the deterrent influence that their uniformed presence brought to the Village, foiled two attempted break-ins in the Village. Their main task is to keep the Village safe and clean. Judged by the feedback we received and from personal observations over the past 12 months, the Ambassador Program helped to transform the Village into a clean and safe environment.

We learned many valuable lessons that we have already factored into our plans and projects for the new year. Better supervision of the Village Ambassadors, electronic attendance registers, a late-night shift on Fridays and daily refuse bin cleaning, have all been implemented already.

The inadequate parking facilities in the Village is another problem area that is receiving our attention at this very moment.

### **PORTFOLIOS FOR 2014**

We still need to fill the important committee portfolio of Municipal Services, and we are therefore looking for a volunteer – ideally someone with an engineering or appropriate technical background. If you are interested, or you know of someone suitable whom we could approach, please contact our Chairperson, Pieter Naude (082 554 8104).

### **GIPTN**

We are pleased to report that we held a meeting on 5 February with the Consulting Engineer from AURECON and Harold Basson, Lindsay Mooiman and Lionel Daniels of the Municipality. Clr Leon van Wyk also attended this meeting, where WRRRA was represented by Pieter Naude and Phillip Parsons. This was the first meeting that resulted from the joint statement agreed to last year. The following important points were made at the meeting:

- It was agreed that we would be kept informed of development as they arise, and we would be invited to attend their monthly project meetings.
- The project team will be meeting on 6 February with Town Planning to assess progress. A meeting had been arranged towards the end of last year with SANParks to discuss the proposed permanent transit point at the SANParks' parking area

adjacent to the N2. This meeting was unfortunately postponed, but another meeting will be arranged as soon as possible. It was noted that the local SANParks officials were very positive about the proposal, but that the final decision would rest with SANParks National Office. Sketch plans for the design of the transit point have already been drawn up for discussion. However, given the difficulty of the process, which would involve a full EIA and ultimately the transfer of land or consent usage, it is unlikely that this could be finalized within 24 months. It was agreed that application for funding to conduct this investigation would be applied for in the next budget cycle. It was stressed, however, that commitment to the process would not necessarily guarantee a successful outcome.

- The tender for the construction of improvements to the road system in the village would be awarded on 15 February, and work should commence by early March.
- The provision of additional parking in Leila's Lane would be investigated.
- The route to Wilderness Heights would ideally be up and down Heights Road. However, it is possible that for safety reasons the return route might need to use White's Road.

We are very positive that the first step outlined in the joint statement has been taken – namely the inclusion of WRRRA representatives in the design and implementation process. We look forward to further positive engagements with the project team.

#### **ISSUES RAISED AT THE AGM**

- It was agreed that at present it would not be in the interests of WRRRA to advocate the creation of one representative body for the whole of Ward 4.
- Opposition to the temporary bus terminus outside the old Karos Hotel. See progress report on GIPTN above.
- A letter has been written to Trudon (Pty) Ltd, who compiles the telephone directories for TELKOM, requesting them to list Wilderness in a separate section.
- It was decided that the issue of spotlights shining onto the beach was not one that WRRRA could pursue, but an appeal would be made to residents in this regard towards the end of the year via the Wild News.
- Other matters such as cutting back vegetation on certain roads, the issue of vehicles speeding and the uniformity of streetlights are being dealt with on an ongoing basis.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

- Old Karos Hotel. It appears that there are parties interested in purchasing the Karos Hotel, and an announcement is expected before the end of February. We await the outcome with interest, since the closure of the hotel has had a severe impact on the economy of Wilderness.
- Transnet Freight Rail are still considering their options regarding the use of the line and the rail reserve. Sadly it is pretty much accepted by all parties that the steam train service will not be resurrected. However, any developments on this line must be seen in a positive light as they will ensure that the track and reserve are better maintained than at present. A tourist attraction using the line would undoubtedly be positive for the tourism industry in the region.
- A burst water pipe at Ebb and Flow on Friday 24th resulted in a loss of water supply to the Touwsrante and Hoekwil areas. Municipal teams worked on the problem as reported in the local press. Municipal officials are to be commended for their efforts and the contingency plans that were made. This incident, does, however, highlight the problem of aging infrastructure that we have asked the Municipality to address in the upcoming budget.
- Clr Leon van Wyk informed us that no application for a new liquor license has been received by the Municipality. If one is received it will be advertised for comment and objections in the usual way.