

SEPTEMBER 2014

Hugh Pharoah

Most of you will have heard of the sad passing of a long-serving and faithful member of the WRRRA Committee, Hugh Pharoah. Hugh served the Wilderness community in a variety of ways over a long period of time and was active in community affairs right to the end. He served as the Warden of St Aidan's Anglican Chapelry in the Village and as the WRRRA Portfolio member for Roads, Safety, Emergency Services and Law Enforcement. Hugh also represented WRRRA on the Neighbourhood Watch.

His involvement with WRRRA was characterized by a whole-hearted commitment to his responsibilities, and he was never too busy to attend to issues raised by residents or to follow up on long-standing concerns. This was evidenced by the communication that Hugh sent to everyone affected by the building of the traffic circle on the N2. It will be difficult to find someone of his caliber to take on his varied responsibilities. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Anne, his children Peter and Tracey and their families. It was a privilege to have worked with him.

Changes, but WRRRA moves ahead

The WRRRA Executive Committee is undergoing some changes, necessitated by the sad passing of Hugh Pharoah and the relocation of the Deputy Chairperson, Phillip Parsons. Neville Ewing has agreed to assist Pieter Naude as Deputy Chairperson until the end of the year, and it is likely that other people will be co-opted to fill existing vacancies. An exciting development has been the approach from the Hoekwil Ratepayers and Residents Association with a view to areas of common interest/concern perhaps leading to a closer working relationship in due course. We will report on progress on this front in the coming months.

Because of these resource constraints, it is envisaged that for the rest of 2014 WRRRA will concentrate on consolidating the gains that have been made and ensuring that current programs are sustainable. We have built excellent relationships with Municipal officials and we will continue to work with them to ensure that the quality of service that residents receive is maintained, and where less than desirable, improved.

Pieter Naude will concentrate his efforts on transitioning the **Ambassador Project**, the flagship of the Wilderness Improvement Program, from WRRRA to the soon-to-be-created NPO. In this he will be working closely with Ronald Board and Fran Anderson, who will be taking full administrative responsibility for all aspects of the Project.

GIPTN

The disruptions caused by the upgrade of the road and pedestrian infrastructure are largely a thing of the past, and most people have probably forgotten what the Village used to look like. There is still some final tidying up to do, signage to install and the one-way system in Leila's Lane to implement (there were only two comments received by the Municipality and the proposal to make the change will serve at the Council towards the end of the year).

It is encouraging to see the way in which the Restaurants have embraced the "pavement" concept and undoubtedly we will see this developed further during the tourist season.

Rohan Meissenheimer and Jacques Quinot conducted an onsite inspection last week with the teams concerned. The cleaning of road to the SANParks parking area should have commenced, and the rectification of signage is underway and should be completed soon. Telkom confirmed (after many e-mails from the Municipality) that they have obtained the bricks and other material to repair the manhole area at the 4-way intersection.

Wilderness Improvement Program

The proposal that was circulated to members regarding the formation of an NPO to manage the Wilderness Improvement Program, was well received. Only 3 persons were not in favour, and 29 expressed support (even though the email requested a response only from those who did not support the proposal). A meeting will be held shortly with the business community, at which WRRRA will seek the cooperation of the business community and their approval to go ahead and register the NPO. The process of registering the NPO, which will take a few months and will commence as soon as the Constitution has been drawn up and circulated to WRRRA and the business community for comment.

We are greatly encouraged to hear the news that the Mayor and Council have agreed to continue their financial support of the Ambassador Project for another year. Their support recognizes the valuable contribution that this Project plays in creating a safe, clean and attractive Village environment, and creating sustainable jobs within the community.

Some of you may have seen a strange yellow tricycle in the Village in recent weeks. This is the new “Village-Mobile” that has been purchased with a view to helping the Village Ambassadors on their rounds cleaning and patrolling the Village. Its primary function is to assist the morning shift to remove the black bags from all the bins and to take these to the central collection point. During the day it is used to facilitate the patrol of areas such as outside the Hotel and down Leila’s Lane. As mentioned in last month’s Newsletter, the Village-Mobile has been sponsored by our MP, Jaco Londt and a group of supporters.

Change of date for the AGM

After much debate it has been proposed that the date of the financial year be changed to coincide with the calendar year, making it easier for those concerned with tracking membership fees. This means that the AGM will of necessity move to early in 2015 in order to ensure that the audited financial statements for 2014 can be approved. The original intention of having the AGM over the holiday period was to allow those persons who are not normally resident in Wilderness to attend. However, an unintended consequence of this was that many resident members did not attend as they were too busy with the holiday season. The proposed date for the AGM is February 2015. Members will be contacted to establish whether this proposal is acceptable or not.

Wilderness Heights update

We are still waiting for the commencement of the feasibility study on Erf 329 (Heights Informal Settlement) that was initiated by Province. The initial report was due to be completed and published by the end of July, but to date we have neither heard nor received any information. Ronnie Board has requested local and provincial authorities to tell us what progress has been made with the feasibility study, and despite assurance given previously, the feedback in this regard is not positive.

The objective of the feasibility study is to identify, investigate and evaluate all the possible options that can lead to a sustainable solution for all the residents and ratepayers of Heights. Once completed, the report will hopefully give direction to the way forward and help to way up the various options from a social, political and economic perspective.

In the absence of this report WRRRA is currently pursuing alternative avenues in order to obtain a meaningful solution which will serve the interests of all parties.

Exciting event for Wilderness – 4 October

Who could forget the huge elephant puppets who stole the show in the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa? Well, with the Global March for Elephants and Rhinos and Lions on 4th October, in conjunction with the Garden Route SPCA, conservationists and animal lovers will join the Woof-a-thons (dog walks) being held at both Wilderness Common and Botanical Gardens in George. On display will be some of the puppets, who will join the start of the procession on Wilderness Common.

For further information please email the organizers at info@cannedlion.org or check out the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/74144322561635/>

Tourism

Paul Nicholas represented WRRRA at the **Tourism Stakeholder Engagement** held on 24 July 2014 in George where Labeeqah Schuurman, Chief Director: TAE (Tourism, Arts and Entertainment) and DEDAT (Department of Economic Development and Tourism) presented a 5-Year Tourism Growth Strategy for the Western Cape. At the same session Judy Lain, Chief Marketing Officer: WESGRO outlined a 5-Year Tourism Destination Marketing Plan.

Unlike previous years, there seems to be a coordinated and inclusive momentum that should lead to a strategy that will enable all, including Wilderness, to exploit the uniqueness of each area and region while drawing on the strength of a coordinated Provincial Framework.

Arising from the Tourism Stakeholder Engagements, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism is in the process of developing a Cycle Tourism Framework for the Western Cape. This is one of the key niche markets identified as part of the provincial tourism strategy for the next five years. A draft framework was widely circulated for comment. We are excited about the recognition of Cycle Tourism as a key niche market, considering how well Wilderness is positioned to exploit this niche.

Other news

- One of our oldest (should that be “longest-standing”?) WRRRA members, Don Cameron, has reminded us that the place we live in should be referred to as simply “**Wilderness**” in both English and Afrikaans (never “the Wilderness” or “die Wilderness”) – Government Gazette No 1904 of 1 Sept 1989.

- As part of a provincial initiative to provide free wi-fi coverage to certain areas, we are pleased to announce that this will be available at all restaurants in the Village as well as at Selinas and Milkwood Village within the next few weeks.

- *The George Heritage Trust* is once again fully functional, and Don Cameron is the Wilderness representative on the Committee. He requests residents to submit any proposals for possible Heritage Sites to Private Bag X6568, George, 6530 or www.georgeheritage.co.za

- **The Kula Malaika Foundation** for Child Care and Youth Development (NPO 082780) is appealing for volunteers to assist them in providing a life skills program in the Hoogekraal area. They are looking for people to teach English and Afrikaans reading and writing, basic maths and bookkeeping, sewing, cooking, administration, computer skills, vegetable gardening and other basic life skills. Anyone able to assist is asked to contact Monika (0826710845) or Watson (0761446633)

- If you are worried about the height of the water at the Touw River mouth, the situation is that the level is currently at 1.64m and needs to reach 2.1m before SANParks will undertake to open the mouth artificially.