



**Wilderness Ratepayers and Residents Association (W.R.R.A.)  
Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 21 February 2024**

**Minutes**

**Welcome & Apologies:**

Simon Jamieson, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He spoke briefly about the Vision and Mission workshops held in late 2022 and commented that one of the points that came out clearly was the need for more communication and confirmed that this had been an area of focus during 2023.

Apologies were received from Candice Hobday, Janice Cox, David and Ingrid Wilson, Dave and Angie Hill, Anne Hadley, Keith Blackwell, Hugo and Helen Leggatt, Johan Van der Berg and Mandy Fick.

**Adoption of the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting, and matters arising therefrom:**

There were no questions or comments and adoption of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 22 February 2023 was proposed by John Miller and seconded by Joletta Eichweber.

**Adoption of the minutes of any previous General Meetings, if any, and matters arising therefrom:**

There were no questions or comments and adoption of the minutes of the Special General Meeting held 4 September 2023 was proposed by Rob Berry and seconded by Juanita Knox.

**Chairman's Report:**

SJ asked Lydia de Waal to present a brief overview of the Treasurer's Report and Reviewed Accounts. She presented several slides and commented that the biggest increase in expenditure was in relation to the environmental portfolio with the greatest reduction being seen in the WIP portfolio due to the cessation of the Monitor program. She noted that funding from businesses for the WIP portfolio had also decreased due to the reduction in services relating to the monitors and security. She mentioned that there were two 'floats' shown in the financial records and advised that one was in place for W.R.R.A. Talks and the other for W.A.G.

Simon gave a few further highlights from the Chair's report:

NPO Status: we are working on being able to do more so that we can get involved in more projects such as the refurbishment of the boardwalk. Applying for NPO status has required major changes to the constitution but will enable tax benefits to be provided to donors for specific projects.



Communication: we have ramped up our communications to include WhatsApp groups, a WRRRA Facebook page and more frequent newsletters.

Development Diligence: many planning applications come through to WRRRA and the aim has been to look at all of these but during 2023 due to Simon's personal circumstances, the time spent reviewing applications has been greatly reduced and no comments have been submitted. Balvindra Walter has continued to be involved in site visits as appropriate. Simon stated that we need people to step forward to assist with this portfolio or alternatively, we rely on the work of other organisations such as Waleaf and join forces with them.

Budget: Lydia presented the budget for 2024 saying that the available funds are those that we have available combined with those that are projected. Simon commented on the R40000 spent that has mainly been for alien clearing and involved employing unemployed people to clear these mainly on municipal and SANRAL land, some on private property. Rob Berry asked why we did not budget to spend 100% of the funds available. Lydia replied that we can try to spend it but it is safer to have some funds in reserve. Simon stated that at this stage the figures shown are what is predicted and are not definite. Funds need to be kept in reserve for committed WRRRA expenses in the following year. Romy Foster proposed that we should employ more unemployed people and clear as many aliens as possible.

WRRRA Talks: Simon advised that there had been five excellent talks last year, mainly on nature subjects. He said that we need someone to join the committee to focus on this portfolio which gives members the opportunity to be sociable as well as assisting with communication.

Community Liaison: Simon reported that having lost Shelley who had previously headed up this portfolio, we have no one covering it at the moment. This is a huge portfolio that helps our community and funding has been set aside for it. We are prepared to look at how this portfolio can be covered, perhaps by more than one person.

### **Looking ahead to 2024**

Risk of fire – raising awareness: Simon commented that the biggest risk is within Wilderness, Wilderness Heights and Langvlei Dunes where there are many invasives and, if they are close to buildings and there are Eskom issues, they can spark fires. The importance of building within legal guidelines and doing essential alien clearing is important to preserve the value of property as well as safety.

Places of interest project: in the process of compiling a library of information that could lead to the development of hiking trails and other tourism opportunities. Input from residents is welcome including stories and photos.

Environment: we are ramping up alien clearing and looking at buying a chipper but there are issues with cost (R85000), noise, storage, operation and logistics.



Simon advised that all of the plans for 2024 are pretty ambitious. He had looked back at the vision and mission project facilitated by Roy and Dee Marcus and there were 24 points that the membership said we should be doing and weren't and quite a lot of those we are now doing.

Simon thanked the executive committee for their efforts and support and also the businesses who, through their WIP contributions, keep our village beautiful.

He commented on the lack of an active police force in Wilderness and the role WDF has played in clearing out vagrants which has been somewhat controversial but has been a huge help. Mike von der Heyde disagreed and said either we keep to the law or we are a Wild West society.

### **Election of Executive Committee**

Simon confirmed that all current committee members were available to continue in their roles and all were re-elected.

### **General**

**Places of interest project:** John Miller described how this project had started as a heritage inventory and was now places of interest. He confirmed that there were documents available on the WRRRA website and asked for feedback. He introduced Henry Paine who advised that George Municipality is already working on a heritage project and is well ahead of most other South African municipalities in doing so. The project started with existing heritage locations and many others have been identified although they may not all be recognised at this time but it starts us down a path. He suggested that reading the pre-ambule to the Heritage Act was a good start as it is very far reaching. The local project had started with a chart of around 50 places of interest, some need to be photographed and further research done and they are looking for the support of the community in helping with this. Romy Foster asked if trees, particularly Milkwoods, can be recognised. Henry agreed that they should be marked and be part of the inventory and John confirmed that the help they need with the project does not have to be a long term commitment.

**WIP:** Donald Clark asked if the WIP was still happening or does the money now go to WAG. Simon covered the background confirming that security is no longer funded and funds are used for village maintenance and gardening. The plan is to meet with all WIP contributors to discuss further. Simon clarified that WIP covers the CBD and WAG covers the greater Wilderness area.

**Environment:** Arne Witt raised the subject of the environmental portfolio and his belief that there are some misconceptions about Waleaf who as an organisation are trying to get better enforcement of the law and protect the environment. He said Waleaf works within the law and that he would endorse WRRRA working with Waleaf.



Simon reported that WRRRA has received details of the Kleinkrantz proposed development and that Waleaf has submitted complaints about serious maladministration to the Garden Route District Municipality. There has been some interaction with Waleaf and the suggestion is that we request an independent report and Simon asked for the opinions of the members on this. Mike von der Heyde suggested that Jan Heyneke be given two minutes to give an explanation of this so that people understand what they are saying yes or no to.

Jan advised that there had been clearing of vegetation on the Kleinkrantz site the previous week without a permit and said that there is a perception that WRRRA is happy with this as they have not been objecting and WRRRA is bigger and has more potential influence than Waleaf. He described Kleinkrantz as one of the few natural corridors between the sea and lakes and said that there had been massive maladministration with the contractor who was awarded the job not submitting a tender and that a letter had been sent to GRDM asking them to stop the work or appoint an independent investigator or committee to make sure the law is enforced. Simon confirmed that this has been going on for some time and development happened but needs to be balanced, particularly when the number of hectares involved keeps growing. All agreed that Simon should write a letter to GRDM asking for an independent investigation.

**Finance/membership:** Clint Bartlett expressed gratitude to the committee citing Wilderness as a special unusual place with plenty of wealth that is contributed generously for the benefit of all the community including others less fortunate. Simon said that the committee is looking at strategy to grow membership and more budgeting is helping the focus. Desire Zwahlen said she had looked up the role of ratepayers associations and found that this was described as being a mandated representative body of residents. She said in her opinion residents need to be more proactive. WRRRA is doing amazing work but must expand their involvement and get more people involved, including using funds in the account to get professionals involved. She described the Wilderness area as huge and said that we need more people and the council to stand up and support the residents. This was applauded.

**Yacht Club invitation:** Simon reminded those present about the event at the yacht club taking place Sunday 3 March and mentioned that WRRRA member Brian Musto is the current president.

**Upliftment Program:** Simon gave a brief overview of the upliftment program that we are looking to involve the community with as a pilot and said this was not just about the disadvantaged and that many others need upliftment. He introduced Nikki Jackman who briefly spoke about the program that had been very successful in the Overberg involving two circles of women that the program then brings together. Nikki recognised Wilderness as a unique community and confirmed she will be giving a talk on 28 February and asked people to come to it in order to find out more about the program.



**Membership fee:** Arne Witt asked what the basis of the membership fee is, citing Hout Bay charging a much higher fee. Desire Zwahlen stated it's not about the money; it is about the number of members. Simon said that we only increased the fee by 10% for 2024 because we had money we hadn't spent and we need more community interest to look at projects, other use for the funds going forward. Arne said that you can get a bigger impact if you spend more, more people join. Consider employing someone full time as has been discussed before. Mike von der Heyde said one element is cost and commented on the huge number of landowners not willing to have aliens cleared even if it is free.

**Projects:** A relatively new resident of Wilderness, Richard, said he would be joining WRRRA and mentioned projects such as the boardwalk which he feels defines Wilderness. He said he would be willing to take charge of this project, negotiate with SANParks and do fundraising from tourism businesses, saying this is a visible way to show what can be done. Rob Berry mentioned fundraising from legacy donations made in wills and described this as a major generator of funds.

**Police:** Rob Berry asked if the police have given up on Wilderness or we have given up on them. Simon responded that Bennie had left; his initial replacement has also left and currently there is only one administrative person there during office hours. It appears that a new, permanent person has now been appointed and hopefully the police forum will now resume. Mike von der Heyde said that the new person is committed and that the police forum will start in March.

**Upliftment:** Simon asked Nikki if Kleinkrantz would be involved in the program and she said yes, they are looking at involvement there.

**Security:** Sallyann Kennedy said that Wilderness has a sense of place and that the WDF may be doing a good job but their black vehicles have an aggressive appearance.

**By-laws:** Arne Witt asked Councillor Barnardt whether local government can develop its own by-laws in support of national laws. He also said that the municipality needs more environmental people. Marlene said that SA is running out of money and the cake is getting smaller and smaller. In relation to by-laws Marlene suggested that what you need should be put in writing to her to progress but said that they can only implement something that is covered by national legislation. For example, if there is no national legislation covering noise or light pollution, nothing can be done at local level.

Mike von der Heyde commented that Lauren Waring had said there are insufficient by-laws relating to the environment and he suggested that we provide Marlene with what she requires and then ask Lauren Waring to come and explain. There would be no money involved with this approach.

**Photo competition:** The winning photos were displayed in a presentation with the winners announced as Chris Leggatt, Johan van der Berg and Roxi. The prizes were a one hour session on an e bike followed by cake and coffee at the Branch Café.



Dee Marcus commented on the difference between Wilderness and the Eastern Cape where residents have to pave their own roads. She suggested that WRRRA subscriptions could be put up with focus on how it is communicated to bring people to the party.

The formal meeting concluded at 19:30.

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