



Wilderness Ratepayers and Residents Association

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Established 1971

Chair Report for AGM 19 February 2025

Simon Jamieson, Chairman

The WRRRA had an active 2024 with many positive changes and several challenges still to deal with. At the time of writing, we have about 370 member households up from around 340 at this time last year.

This report is intended to summarise the main activities since the 2024 AGM and outline future plans which are available for discussion with the membership at the AGM and future meetings and events.

The WRRRA Constitution.

Over the last twelve months the committee has maintained the status as an Association but applied to SARS for registration to be able to issue S18a donation certificates. However, the process has been subject to delays due to administrative difficulties and misunderstandings by SARS. The process is now in motion again which could facilitate more and larger potential funding from donations and the provision of tax certificates to donors. This, in turn, should mean that larger projects can be undertaken in future.

Treasurer's Report and Adoption of the Reviewed Accounts. Our finances are in good shape as will be seen on the reviewed financial statement. Our decisions about income (such as the rand amount of annual subs, finding other sources, soliciting donations, etc.) and expenditures (such as for maintenance, Fire Forum items, environmental projects) have been made at our ExCo meetings. We have also been taking these discussions and decisions as much as possible in conjunction with the general membership, as experienced when considering the recent large increase in annual subscriptions.

Secretary/Administrative. Based on legal advice received, work was completed on the revised constitution for submission to SARS. Further work was undertaken to interpret communications received from SARS during the registration process. Work on role descriptions for committee members, WRRRA policies and procedures continued as well as ongoing updates and improvements to the content of the WRRRA website. Communication of the interruption to the Wilderness Wall Signage Program due to the N2 upgrade was managed effectively.

Development Diligence. Balvindra Walter has continued to represent WRRRA at site visits to many properties to attempt to oversee due process and influence positive outcomes. This has resulted in WRRRA commenting on most planning and development applications in the greater Wilderness area. The controversial applications relating to the usage and potential developments on the Common and ERF 1297 (Kleinkrantz) are still ongoing.

Wilderness Action Group + Village Maintenance. The Wilderness Action Group (WAG), financed by member and non-member contributions, continues to be active outside of the central village area with verge clearing and general improvement and maintenance projects. At the same time, the Village Maintenance work, financed mainly through business donations to the Wilderness Improvement Program (WIP) as well as general WRRRA funding, remains an active force in keeping the central village area attractive, clean and tidy. Both initiatives continue to be successful with visible results that benefit residents and visitors. We thank our donors, members and businesses for their ongoing support that enables us to keep Wilderness special and will continue to encourage commitment from residents, existing and new businesses to keep this work dynamic. As requested in the Vision workshop, an operations manager has been appointed who oversees WAG and WIP.

Environment Portfolio. Various projects have commenced and made small progress throughout 2024. A team of local unemployed young workers has been employed for two days a week for most of the year to clear alien invasives from private and municipal land. A separate portfolio was created within WRRRA called the ACT (Alien Clearing Team) which has a specific mandate to fund-raise and use the proceeds for alien clearing.

The WRRRA “Eco-Centre” was finished and opened in November 2024. This displays relevant information on the ecology of our area whilst informing residents and visitors of natural facilities and also the regulations and by-laws of developing property.

Public Safety. Safety continues to be a complicated matter. We are fortunate that there is not a great deal of criminal activity in Wilderness but we are not immune and this can change. We have continued to engage with all local security providers to encourage an integrated approach for the benefit of the Wilderness community. There appears to be continued disarray regarding manning of the Wilderness Police Station and any provision of services from SAPS. We continued to approach SAPS to motivate the rejuvenation of our monthly community police forum including the provision of statistics and trends within the area.

Fire Forum. The WRRRA Fire Forum has been functioning since 2017. Fire Management Units have been established in each of seven neighbourhoods. In October 2024 the Common became the venue for the Fire Expo. A very special event took place where many fire-related organisations came together with their colourful equipment to promote awareness of the fire hazards that exist in our community. It is hoped to continue this event bi-annually. WRRRA supported the creation of large fire-breaks in Langvlei Dunes and has been assisting with the clearing of aliens along the Seven Passes road in order to create a much-needed firebreak.

Talks and Events. “WRRRA Talks” presented five events over the past 12 months:

Wildfires – Learning our Lessons	Dr Guy Preston
Chasing the Winds of Adventure	Jeff Ayliffe
Discover Psychedelics	Henrico Hanekom
Alien Clearing and the law	Stiaan Kotze and Delia Power
Nature, in healing Trauma	Linda Devine
Let’s Talk Baboons	Wynter Worsthorne

Suggestions for new topics/speakers are always appreciated and a volunteer to assist in arranging the talks would be wonderful to find.

We also want to recognise the efforts of our Exco events coordinator, Jo, who assisted in the creation of many events for the benefit of the community. Benefits were achieved not only in participating in enjoyable experiences (e.g. Bingo and Hypnosis) but also in the significant funds raised which, in turn, were utilised in benefitting members, not least in providing additional security support during the tourist season at key points.

Finally, on events, we cannot forget the event of the year – the Funky Masquerade Ball. Hugely well attended and enjoyed by a magnificent turnout of overdressed residents, this event raised over R25,000 for the Alien Clearing Team. Many thanks to Romy and her assembled committee for the evening and the fund-raising.

Community Liaison. Again, during 2024 the WRRRA has not maintained a head of this portfolio and so coordinated actions have not been achieved. Since my appointment, I have met with the leaders of Kleinkrantz Natures Valley and Wilderness Heights Village to better understand the communities but have so far had little communication with Touwsrante community. 2025 objectives will depend on a volunteer coming forward to take on this portfolio.

Plans for 2025

Over the last six months there have been increasing discussions amongst the Exco and some members that WRRRA needs to enlarge both its ambitions and its bank balance in order not to continue to stagnate as a small Association with a reputation that exists mainly to clean and maintain our streets.

Decisions were taken to significantly increase our membership fees whilst at the same time strategising to increase our membership. Feedback from members on 2024 activities was favourable both in terms of communication and in membership increases. To continue this trajectory WRRRA needs to continue to fund the activities through increased subscription fees and also increase our representation to external organisations through continued membership number increases (despite the increase in subscription levels).

It is important to note that a lot of the work performed in 2024 was achieved through the application of funds built up in the WRRRA bank account over time and not just the membership fees from 2024.

Municipal Representation

The main criticism of the Exco in the last few years has been its apparent ineffectiveness in pursuing member's concerns with the Municipality. WRRRA have now appointed Roy Marcus as our liaison officer with the Municipality and he has already made progress in creating lines of new communication and setting up regular meetings between the Exco and Municipal managers.

Town of the Year Competition

No locality can make plans based upon the possibility of winning a prize in a popularity competition. But we do stand a good chance of competing well and even winning in this TV-programme based competition that could raise R1m for the Wilderness community. Therefore, we have set up a sub-committee, in conjunction with George Municipality, to do our best in increasing our winning possibilities. The prize money could go a long way to developing community facilities and most probably for repairing the Boardwalk along the Touw River.

Fire

The greater Wilderness area is fortunate not to have experienced a serious veld-fire since November 2018. Statistics therefore suggest that we are due a fire soon. As time passes, there is a greater tendency towards complacency and then huge interest again around the period of an outbreak. WRRRA intends to continue to raise awareness throughout 2025 to protect our environment, property and people.

One of the major projects for 2025 will be the development of the Alien Clearing Team to work on creating a "Super Fire-Break". This will run along the Seven Passes Road along the northern boundaries of Wilderness thereby protecting the community from the most likely source of future veld-fires, in collaboration with the fire services and the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association.

WRRRA Committee

The AGM is the forum at which members are voted onto the Executive committee. It is understood that all but one of the current Exco members wish to stand to be re-elected for the forthcoming year. These also include co-opted members Clint Bartlett, Roy Marcus and Leon Brits. Charl Jacobs has also expressed an interest in joining the committee after having attended a recent Exco meeting. The one person who has opted to leave the committee is myself, your chairman. This is purely for personal (mainly medical) reasons and therefore a new chairman will need to be elected by the committee from within its own members at the first Exco meeting after the AGM.

Appreciations and thanks

Meanwhile, we have benefitted from a number of members who continue to help us, with appreciation to Arne Witt, Chris Burlock, Dee Marcus, Jan Cox, Jan Heyneke, John Miller, Juanita Wilmans, Liesel Mayne, Lizanne Breet and Lorraine Horne.

Finally, I want to give my great thanks to my colleagues on the ExCo for their support and confidence in me – Andre Hacquebord, Balvindra Walter, Chris Kritzinger, Clint Bartlett, Cornell Barnardt, Jackie Berry, Joletta Eichweber, Lydia De Waal, Susan Burger, Tracey Pretorious, Leon Brits, Vanessa Hau-Yoon and Roy Marcus. Their devotion to, and work on, so many WRRRA activities make my role a lot easier.