



**Wilderness Ratepayers and Residents Association (W.R.R.A.)
Annual General Meeting Wednesday 22 February 2023**

Minutes

1. Welcome and Apologies: Apologies were received from Andy and Shirley Pedrick, Andre Joubert, Frank Shamley, Chris Burlock, Bob and Lynne Davidson, Dee and Roy Marcus, Josua Louw.
2. Chairman's Report: John confirmed that the Chairman's report had been available on the W.R.R.A website for some weeks and that members had been asked to read this prior to the AGM and he hoped everyone had done so. He asked permission to change the order of the agenda a bit, saying that we would be covering some of the Chairman's report in the presentations to come so any discussions about it could be saved until later and that he would leave the previous AGM minutes and amendments to the constitution to the end of the meeting.

Development Diligence: John introduced Simon Jamieson to present the work of this Portfolio, saying that Simon would give an overview of ongoing work and future plans.

Simon's presentation covered all aspects of his role in relation to planning applications. He explained OSCAE permits, NEMBA and the Spatial Development Framework. He explained that he was supported by the others in the W.R.R.A Development Diligence team (Balvindra Walter and Chris Gaigher) as well as Charles Scott from Waleaf and W.R.R.A member Jan Heyneke. W.R.R.A has regular liaison with Priscilla Burgoyne from GM as well as SANParks and also works with the various conservancies and environmental specialists e.g. Arne Witt. Simon explained the environmental projects for 2023 and asked for suggestions for other projects as well as commenting that anyone who could volunteer a chain saw and bakkie for use from time to time would also be appreciated.

Henry Paine commented that it was important not to miss out on Heritage in this discussion in relation to the protection of views and culture and that he would volunteer to assist. Simon stated that the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve was also useful. Simon mentioned the recent launch, by a local resident, of the environmental awareness website, www.savewild.co.za.

The question was raised about Ramsar, which was formed to designate wetland preservation sites and covers Wilderness lakes and downstream of Touw River. Concern was raised about



the use of weed killer in these areas as it gets into the water system and impacts on vegetables. Hugo Leggatt commented that not all waterways are covered.

Jan Heyneke commented that the Spatial Development Framework contains ideal descriptions for the Wilderness area and that George Municipality needs to read this and adhere to it. He also mentioned two other areas for attention – lighting and also fencing so as to get free movement of wildlife. Simon mentioned the Touw River Conservancy having held workshops to identify fencing that can be removed or changed and advised that it was their AGM on Thursday 23 February at the Fairy Knowe Hotel. Lynne Oosthuizen asked for more information about the TRC and Simon explained the history of the organisation and that it had started in Hoekwil and grown to cover the Lakes area and Wilderness.

Arne Witt said he would like to talk about the interrelationship between WRRRA, George Municipality and our councillor. Mike von der Heyde commented on the Spatial Development Framework saying that George Municipality regard it as purely a recommendation. He said that Lauren Waring had undertaken to sort out the relevant bylaws and asked if she could come back and give a progress report on this.

Chloe Guerbois commented on the Seven Passes Road that was damaged in the floods and asked when this work would be completed.

Membership and Social media presence: John commented about membership numbers which are up from this time last year and said that with an average of about two persons per household, we are now representing about 700 Wilderness residents. John estimates that Wilderness has a population of c. 7,000 so our membership reflects about 10% of the total population so the fact is that we represent a lot of people but we don't represent nearly enough. He introduced committee member Joletta Eichweber to present how we can increase our membership and communicate with it through social media, particularly Facebook.

Joletta explained that having attended the vision meetings she became aware that more communication was needed and on that basis had created a new Facebook page which she felt provided a nice medium for WRRRA to reach out to the community. She explained

what to click on and 'like' and also advised that she is creating a WRRRA WhatsApp broadcast group that members can add themselves to and receive notifications of events.



Road Action Group: John introduced Greg Mayne who has been leading WRRRA efforts to tackle road safety on some specific roads (Saasveld Rd, Whites Rd and Heights Rd) as well as some roads in Hoekwil and Rondevlei. He mentioned the involvement of the George Heritage Trust in relation to some sites e.g. the bridges along Saasveld Rd. Greg's presentation covered the lack of restrictions and signage in various areas and he cited a photograph taken at the bottom of Whites Rd as an example of what we want to achieve in that there is signage posted covering weight, speed and height restrictions. He also drew attention to the photograph of a truck and said that another method of identifying whether a vehicle was allowed to be on certain roads was whether it was a single axle vehicle or a two axle vehicle. Overall Greg felt that the trends were positive in terms of reducing the problems but said that RAG can only make recommendations and were still reliant on official reports to agree or make recommendations.

There were a number of comments and questions following the presentation. Concern was expressed about flood damage to Saasveld Rd that nothing has been done about, general danger to pedestrians and whether speed bumps can be placed in certain areas. Greg confirmed that speed bumps have been requested. Henry Paine advised that charges have been laid against the truck driver who damaged the Silver River Bridge and that the case is going to court in March. Jerry Eccles suggested that RAG should liaise with Development Diligence in relation to building applications and associated work so that consideration can be given by the Planning Department as to the specifications of vehicles that would need to access development sites. It was also suggested that the traffic department should spend more time in central Wilderness as there are daily issues and transgressions occurring there. JM said that there are other people/groups addressing village issues and that these did not fall under the remit of RAG. Arne Witt commented that the biggest problem seems to be where the responsibility lies for the various roads – province v. municipality. Questions were raised with Councillor Barnardt who advised that the municipality has no jurisdiction for most of the roads but that she and the mayor had met with some of the farmers and made progress. Greg and John met with the newly appointed traffic chief who is interested and helpful, as an example, providing reflective jackets for children walking on the roads.

Wilderness Maintenance: John mentioned the village monitors briefly, saying that there is only one left from the intake of last year. He introduced Cornell Barnardt to present updates about village maintenance and how the village and gardens are kept clean and tidy and the work of the Wilderness Action Group (WAG).



Cornell explained the gardening work covered in the village with the main areas of focus being the CBD, inner village and Waterside Rd. This has been extended to areas along the N2 including maintenance of the flower boxes in the central reservation as SANRAL is not coming to the party. He also commented on the use of a garden service to cut lawns that are not covered by George Municipality and mentioned that the circle in front of the hotel could do with attention. He gave a brief history of the WAG initiative that was originally the brainchild of two members, Clint Bartlett and Sharon Dold, who were concerned about road safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Cornell explained the work that had been done in the outlying village areas through WAG and that Hoekwil was now also involved with HRRRA making a monthly payment. He said that WAG currently has a budget of R5k per month, R60k per year.

Mike von der Heyde raised a question about the removal of a business sign in Hoekwil with Councillor Barnardt and asked whether this had been targeted. Marlene advised that illegal signs were being removed in the whole of George and that she had initiated the removal of illegal signs in this area. John commented that we do not want a proliferation of signs and have always worked to manage this issue. Cornell said that this area is orderly and attractive but if rules are broken he will report it.

Vision Initiative: Simon Jamieson spoke about the two previous workshops that were initiated due to concerns about lack of communication that were raised at the open meeting in September. He said that communication had improved as a result and that the third vision workshop would be held 1 March to finalize a vision and mission statement for Wilderness and asked for people to read the report available on the WRRRA website and come along. Mike von der Heyde said he had attended the workshops and was in the group that identified problem areas. He said that one of the conclusions of the group was that there was a lack of political support from the ward councilor but that this had not been included in the report. Simon asked Mike to please raise at the workshop next week and Mike said he was unable to attend and that he objected to this issue having to be raised at a third meeting. It was indicated at that point that we needed to move on to the rest of the agenda.

3. Adoption of the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting and matters arising there from: Proposed by Hugo Leggatt, seconded by Andre Hacquebord and passed by members.



4. Treasurer's Report and adoption of the Reviewed Accounts: Proposed by Stephen Large, seconded by Lynne Oosthuizen and passed by members.

5. Amendments to the Constitution:

Subscriptions:

Current wording: The annual subscription for the financial year – 1st January to 31st December shall be determined by the committee and ratified at the annual general meeting by a simple majority.

Proposed wording:

The annual subscription for the financial year – 1st January to 31st December shall be determined by the committee at the end of each calendar year and communicated to the membership.

Proposal passed by members

Executive Committee:

Current wording:

c) The Executive Committee Members' term of office shall be for a period of two (2) years. Retiring members shall be entitled to hold themselves eligible for re-election.

Proposed wording:

c) The Executive Committee Members' term of office shall be for a period of one (1) year. Retiring members shall be entitled to hold themselves eligible for re-election.

Proposal passed by members

6. Ratification of Annual Subscription.

R300 for 2023 passed by members

7. Election of Executive Committee.

All committee members re-elected by members



John Miller expressed thanks to many for their support and advised that as we look ahead, we need more help in the following areas:

- Attorney, occasional need to review documents, etc.
- Non-Profit Company, occasional need for expertise, administration, accounting.
- Community Liaison, to lead this Portfolio.
- Heights Village Bus Shelter, to lead the organising, planning, and installation of the container.
- Security, to manage this Portfolio with technical assistance from Susan and support from Robbie.
- Business Liaison, assist in identifying and engaging businesses (large and small; central and outlying) for support.
- Website design, to assist with ongoing design.
- Video Production.
- Administration – assistance from time to time.
- Chainsaw and bakkie, to cut and carry alien/invasive vegetation.
- Town Planning, to assist with review and comment on applications for Development Diligence Portfolio.
- Eco-centre, to assist or lead the development of a centre in the village.

8. Other business of which due notice has been given: *None received.*

9. General

Simon further responded to Mike's point about the vision workshops and said he knew he was probably unhappy about this. Simon stressed that Mike's point had been sent to him and that he was himself a volunteer and needed more help as outlined in help wanted list. Mike said that Roy Marcus had been paid to put the report together and had ignored the point he had raised. John Miller stated that Roy was not paid, he had volunteered his time. Simon reiterated that volunteers were needed and people should get involved. John confirmed that the list would be included in the next newsletter.

Arne Witt said that he needed to understand the various roles of WRRRA, the Ward Councillor and the Municipality. He said he gets no feedback and that it is very important that this is given. Simon commented that this could be part of the solution from the vision workshop that suggests a role for a paid person. John asked Arne if he had seen improvements and Arne



said yes, but that membership needs to be built and in order to do so feedback needs to be given and if it isn't people will say what's the point of joining WRRA. Simon said this is why

we're trying to get people involved, to help themselves. Arne asked why Lauren Waring had not responded to the meeting request and why Marlene is not assisting. Marlene confirmed that she had contacted Lauren earlier that evening and had a message in response to say that there was some confusion with a previous meeting being cancelled and she will be happy to arrange a meeting. Arne said he gets frustrated e.g. speeding – people get away with it, suggestions get rejected and there is no law enforcement.

Jan Heyneke said that he has seen a dramatic change in communications from WRRRA and wanted to compliment the new team on how far they have got with this. He also commented that there is a need to sort out the stated objective in the constitution with clear rules of what we should do and being more descriptive. He suggested that this was a good mandate for the executive committee.

Marlene gave thanks to John for his work in recent months and said WRRRA was off to a great start which would develop further in the year ahead. She also thanked Jackie for her work with the committee.

The meeting closed at 20:00