

## **Chairperson's Report**

208-368 NPO

**GRA AGM: 17h30 on Wednesday 22 May 2019**

**Grahamstown Bowling Club**



As of 10 May 2018, we have been registered as a non-profit organization (NPO – ). This does not entitle us to issue tax certificates for tax-deductible donations (that is a public benefit organization, or PBO – PBO registration is more complex and we are still researching whether we fit a category that allows tax-deductible donations.

Over this time GRA has played a role in various activities – the petition campaign calling for the council to be dissolved Makana placed under administration, a contentious general valuation (for purposes of calculating rates), Eskom's threat to cut bulk supply on 2 April and the ongoing water crisis. Looking forward, we have concerns about future infrastructure planning.

I also acknowledge the massive effort GRA secretary Tim Bill put into building this organization.

### **Membership**

At last count, we had 1799 members; growth has slowed since our original rapid expansion. However we do have sufficient weight to take on major issues. In addition to membership growth, we need more members willing to put up monthly contributions, take on projects and be active on the management committee.

### **Petition and S139 Dissolution**

We supported the petition campaign and provided evidence for the subsequent law suit by Unemployed People's Movement that is attempting to enforce the petition. While this is not our campaign, we have to respect the scale of its support. The fact that some 22,000 people signed the petition (as compared with 24000 who voted last municipal election) makes it surprising the government has not responded formally to the petition.

### **Progress in Municipal and Council leadership**

The only major change since the petition has been replacement of former mayor Cllr Gaga; by Cllr Mphalwa who is much more willing to engage with us. In August, acting Municipal Manager Ted Pillay went back to Sarah Baartman District, to be replaced by Moppo Mene, the first permanent appointment for a long time. In December, a new Chief Financial Officer, Gerard Goliath took up his position. In practical terms, we find the new CFO very open and willing to work with community. A case in point is the general valuation, where there were significant concerns about the way it was conducted and errors in the process. GRA was represented on a subcommittee mostly comprised of estate agents that met several times finally in a meeting where the contractor, Sizanane, was present. The major outcomes of these meetings: the date for objections was extended by a month, the CFO is now thoroughly briefed on the problems, a supplementary roll is planned and Sizanane has been put on terms that they need to correct the errors (including getting many sectional title properties wrong).

There has been some progress in using MobiSAM actively, particularly with water outages; sewage is the biggest unresolved problem.

### **Eskom**

With Eskom's threat to cut bulk supply on 2 April, we joined the business community (GBF and owners of Beer Property and the local Pick 'n Pay franchise) in an urgent interdict to prevent this and to order Makana to come up with a sustainable payment plan. We met in City Hall on 15 May, with representatives of Makana, Eskom and various government departments. Makana has put a new plan to Eskom based on payments only in months when they receive Equitable Share payments; this is

sustainable because these are fixed payments from national Treasury. Ensuring that the current account is kept up to date is also a concern. We await a response from Eskom on the plan.

### **Cleansing**

Trash in the townships and illegal dumping remain major issues; hats off to Makana Revive and Deutschmann in particular for their efforts in cleaning up during the 8-week work stoppage.

### **Water**

Water is the biggest issue. Over the past year, there have been several occurrences of *E. coli* contamination arising from improper water treatment (mainly, running out of chlorine gas) and a series of major outages. Back in January and February, it was a real crisis – now it is only a fragile situation.

In January, we had about 2 months' supply from Settlers Dam (supplying the west – mercifully extended because it turned out to be possible to pump down almost as low as 7%, not 15% as we were previously informed. Once Settlers was gone, we would have been 100% dependent on James Kleyhans (JK) in the east. JK at the time, rated at 10Mlitre/day, was often reduced to half that or less with frequent outages and some areas without water for weeks at a stretch. Also missing was an east-west link so even if JK was brought up to scratch, the west side would have no water. Since then:

- Amatola Water is back on board (having previously stopped supporting infrastructure because of unpaid bills)
- JK has been refurbished and produces 12–13MI/day, more than its rated capacity
- Waainek Water Works (on the west) has also had significant maintenance and does not break down as often as before
- the east-west link is in place and only high-lying areas on the west now rely on Waainek water, sourced now almost entirely from the much smaller Howieson's Poort (HP) dam

Had we not advanced on the January situation, the university would not have been able to open and the local economy would have gone into serious, potentially terminal, decline.

So it is important to understand that we are not in that scenario any more.

However, the crisis is far from over – HP is a small dam even if it tops up a lot faster from light rains than Settlers – and there is no spare capacity. So we do still need to practice extreme water saving. And the missing parts in the Gift of the Givers plan are still very much needed.

### **Future Infrastructure**

Funding to resurface Somerset and High Streets has been held up by a court challenge by the losing contractor; we are assured that funding for this project has not been lost to Treasury. Public consultation for the new Integrated Development Plan (IDP – a 5-year plan) is currently on; we are concerned that the only infrastructure in the plan relates to water as there are other major areas of concern including roads and sewerage.

### **Settlers Hospital**

We have raised issues with national health ministry of treatment of patients at Settlers Hospital, culminating in a meeting on 10May 2019 at the Hospital attended by a representative of District. The main issue we took up is patients referred to Port Elizabeth sleeping on the floor while awaiting patient transport.

### **Name Change**

A final matter that is ongoing is name change. While the change to Makhanda has been gazetted, there is a legal challenge before the courts; we await the outcome. Our own position on name change was we were concerned that the process would be open to challenge; whether those concerns are justified is now a matter of awaiting the court outcome.

Philip Machanick