



**QUARTERLY REPORT OF THE HERMANUS RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION  
APRIL 2022**

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*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much – Helen Keller*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the lessons that Covid has taught us is that we need one another. We encourage more people to be involved with the HRA so that we can be effective in achieving our goals.

## **REFLECTION ON THE NEW COUNCIL**

The new Council was constituted in November 2021 and early indications are that it is no longer business as usual. Our new Mayor Dr. Annelie Rabie has hit the ground running and it seems that she is action oriented and committed to ensuring that the Overstrand continues to be a wonderful place in which to live and work. The Mayoral Committee has been restructured and we look forward to seeing an invigorated group of individuals focused on fulfilling their mantra of an “Overstrand for All”. This appeared to be borne out when MAYCO members gave feedback following their first 100 days in office. We trust that the current momentum will be maintained in the long term.

## **WARD 3 COMMITTEE**

The Ward Committee elections were held following the local government elections and the HRA was re-elected for the next 5 year term.

Since the last round of elections the Ward Committee Rules were amended in a number of respects. Most significantly each voter could only vote for one organisation unlike the process followed in the past where members were elected by a show of hands and people could vote for more than one organisation. This aspect has elicited comment from a number of wards and a request has been made to the OM for further consultation on the rules.

## **OMAF**

The Overstrand Municipal Advisory Forum (OMAF) is a gathering of all the ward committees in the Overstrand and meets annually to receive and give feedback on issues of municipal importance and priority. The meeting took place on the 15th March at the Sandbaai hall. The main points made by the Mayor are as follows:

- The current IDP is extended until June 2023 and a new draft will be tabled in council in March 2023
- The current IDP and draft Budget will be released on 30th March 2022
- The 2022/2023 Budget process to be finalised by end of May
- There is a R20 million budget shortfall at present which needs to be funded

- A perception that the rich subsidise basic services for the indigent is wrong as national government provides financial support for this
- The two main Business groupings need to come together to address common issues
- Investment in Hermanus is not happening and this results in no new job opportunities being created
- The Economy is heavily reliant on Tourism which hasn't recovered from the effects of Covid
- Lawlessness no longer to be tolerated
- Role of Ward Committees to be reviewed to improve functionality and representivity.

How these issues are implemented during the year ahead will be the subject of future quarterly reports.

## **SOCIAL COHESION**

For the last two years, as a member of the Ward 3 committee, the HRA has participated in the process of developing a Social Compact for the Schulphoek housing project. Following some uncertainty around who should be participating, other than those directly affected, the discussions are soon to resume and will include representatives from Ward 3. It seems appropriate that there is representation from surrounding communities as we are all affected by the dynamics in one another's' suburbs. We don't live in a vacuum and any contribution towards ensuring that what is to be provided in Schulphoek is appropriate is to be welcomed.

## **THE BYPASS**

The current situation with the Bypass as we understand it is as follows:

Our Mayor has said that during her term of office there will be no Bypass through Hermanus. Consequently no provision has been made either in the IDP or in the municipal budget. Similarly we are assured that the Bypass is not on either the Department of Transport and Public Works (DT&PW) IDP or in its budget. Whilst it is comforting to hear such assurances there remains the issue of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) commissioned by the DT&PW which is the critical factor in either approving or rejecting the application on environmental grounds. With an approved EIA the door is open at some future date to go ahead, but without approval the Bypass is dead. Any new attempt at building a Bypass would trigger a new EIA and considering the millions already spent this seems unlikely. The only cast iron assurances we will have is if the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP) does not approve the EIA and it lapses and if the MEC responsible

for Environmental Affairs does not approve it. Until then, and only then, can we consider the matter closed. In the coming weeks the HRA, Whale Coast Conservation and the other organisations and individuals opposing the Bypass, will seek clarity on the issue through our legal representative and give feedback accordingly.

## **FERNKLOOF NATURE RESERVE**

Despite much time and effort having been devoted by the parties there is still no co-management agreement between the Hermanus Botanical Society and the Overstrand Municipality. Given the new Council's stated commitment to placing the environment at the forefront of their term in office it would be nice if the agreement could be finalised sometime soon. Once this is concluded then the focus could perhaps shift towards a re-examination of the role and composition of the Fernkloof Advisory Board which many people feel is overdue. In a late development we understand that at its next meeting on 26th April council will consider a proposed agreement with the Hermanus Botanical Society to establish a Botanical Garden in Fernkloof.

## **CBD REGENERATION**

The next phase of the CBD Regeneration project will focus on the general area of the Taxi Rank at the entrance to the CBD. The area is currently quite scruffy and not a good advertisement for Hermanus. The areas receiving attention are the parking area opposite the NG Kerk, The Circle, the Welcome board and the Taxi Rank precinct itself. We anticipate that there will be the same level of consultation with interested and affected parties as with the High Street component.

## **MUNICIPAL PLANNING TRIBUNAL**

Following a decision taken by Council at its February meeting the Municipal Planning Tribunal will in future have greater representation from members of the public. We are pleased with this decision as it has been an issue raised by the HRA for a number of years. The vacancies are currently being advertised.

## **AGM**

The meeting took place on 1st March 2022. The current EXCO was re-elected with one member not standing for re-election. In conversation with a variety of other organisations we have realised that in future we need to conduct "hybrid" meetings where members can attend in person or virtually.

## **FINANCE**

Our current financial position is healthy with total fund sitting at R148,000. This is partly owing to tightly controlled expenditure as well as a positive trend in renewal of annual subscriptions. In the year ahead we will be incurring some expenses with regard to secretarial services and the maintenance of our website and social media presence.

## **EXCO**

The search continues for motivated individuals to join the EXCO. We have had some encouraging interactions with members of a few of the new groupings which were formed during Lockdown with a view to incorporation into the HRA. We will keep you posted of developments. What has emerged very clearly is that a singular organisation with a large membership and a collective viewpoint wields more influence in our interaction with the municipality than many smaller ones each following more local interests.

## **THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET**

The municipal Budget for the 2022/2023 financial year is available on the Overstrand website and comments can be submitted until 29th April 2022 to [cfo@overstrand.gov.za](mailto:cfo@overstrand.gov.za). It is apparent from our review that much thought has gone into realigning the budget with current realities in the municipality and with practicality and affordability in mind. Sadly the basket of municipal services is set to rise by 8.3% (Table 11 pp 20) for households with a credit electricity meter, which is in excess of the current inflation rate but it does include the hefty increase in the price of electricity approved by NERSA. The HRA has submitted feedback to the municipality on both the BUDGET and the IDP.

## **IN CLOSING**

With the general relaxation of Covid restrictions life seems to be returning to some semblance of normalcy and we anticipate a resurgence of economic and social activity in Hermanus. We look forward to some of our traditional events such as Fynarts, the Kalfiefee and the Whale Festival taking place in the coming months.

*Brian Wridgway and the EXCO.*