



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

*I believe we should strive towards maintaining and improving standards
in our beautiful town – Brian Wridgway*

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The winds of change... should we resist them?



Image courtesy Gertrude Smith

To the casual observer Hermanus is an attractive seaside village where everything works, the locals are friendly, the coffee is good, and the scenery and beaches are beautiful. This perception has been changing steadily for some years now. It is evidenced by the size and scale of some of the buildings under construction, the opening of the Whale Coast Mall, the construction of the new industrial area and the influx of people into Hermanus.

There is a worrying undercurrent of dissatisfaction that permeates much of the interaction between the citizenry and the municipality on issues ranging from the complaints management system, land use planning, vagrancy in the CBD, the lack of a parking management system and the dysfunctional ward committees. Without sounding too idealistic, I believe we should strive towards maintaining and improving standards in our beautiful town. I'd like to consider several issues with you below.

FERNKLOOF NATURE RESERVE

Encouraging news

It appears the Municipality and the Hermanus Botanical Society (HBS) are close to reaching agreement on the tenure and future role of the HBS in Fernkloof Nature Reserve. Not being privy to the details I am nevertheless encouraged by feedback from the Chairperson about progress. It is likely that the agreement will be signed once agreed to by members. A sensibly crafted co-management agreement will result in improved maintenance and closer co-operation between the affected parties.

The issue of the role and composition of the Fernkloof Advisory Board has been referred back to the Botanical Society by the Mayor. The brief is to make relevant recommendations to Council once the issue has been dealt with by the community.

THE BYPASS

Worrying news

Few issues in our town elicit more heated discussion than the proposed Bypass. It has featured in every quarterly and annual report since 2018 and this will continue until the matter is resolved. On the basis of reports received and correspondence entered into over the last few months it is apparent that there is no lack of resolve on the part of the Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW) to continue with the process of gaining approval. Attempts made by the HRA to obtain information from the provincial MEC for Transport have met with nothing more than an acknowledgement of receipt.

Correspondence shared with the HRA by other parties indicates that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is alive and well. Although our mayor Dr. Rabie has stated categorically that there will be no Bypass during her term of office there are no guarantees of what will happen during the next administration. Of further concern is that the DTPW has published draft legislation that has the potential to empower the provincial department to approve the Bypass notwithstanding both municipal and public opposition. We will continue to keep a watching brief on the proposed Bypass and keep you informed.

WARD COMMITTEES

Too few meetings

In April 2021 Council adopted a revised set of Ward Committee Rules which came into operation with the election of ward committees in November 2021. Much fanfare was made at the time that the Overstrand Municipality was the first in the country to conduct this important process. Sadly that is where the celebration ended: the ward committee system is currently a mess. Meetings have not been held monthly in compliance with the rules; after nearly eight months there is still no schedule of future meetings. Despite

requests from a number of organisations to resolve the issue and to comply with the revised rules there is little progress. Following two brief meetings early in the year for which the agenda was set by the mayor and an Overstrand Municipal Advisory Forum (OMAF) we have had only one formal meeting. Our mayor Dr. Rabie is on record as saying that meetings should take place only every two months but has not followed this through with any engagement with ward committees whatsoever. At times neither the administration nor our ward councillor has been able to give any meaningful feedback on what or when or where. This is unacceptable.

Following the OMAF meeting in March, I questioned the Mayor on the intention to reduce the frequency of committee meetings and was told that it was in order to “address operational efficiencies”. She further said:

“We are in the process of realigning the business cycles and having ward committee meetings every second month for a while, is one way of ensuring that the relevant officials have time to see to it that the items serve where they should.”

Although I indicated that I was prepared to be patient while she got her house in order it is now July and still there is no published schedule of meetings and no engagement with ward committees about how we will operate in future. The Ward Committee Rules are unambiguous in specifying that meetings should take place monthly and this is clearly not happening. By the time you receive this report I will have written to the Mayor and the Speaker of the Council, whose responsibility it is to ensure that ward committees are operational, insisting that the rules are adhered to and that meetings are scheduled monthly.

TOWN PLANNING

The thin end of the wedge...

Having mentioned town planning in the introduction to this newsletter I want to bring to your attention an application to build a suite of apartments on the property adjacent to the NGK Grobler Church hall in Marine Drive.

Deviations from current building regulations

This application seeks to change the zoning in order to double the density currently specified for the site as well as to exceed the permissible height of three stories to four. In addition, the application seeks to amend the boundary on two sides from 2m to 0m. There are four deviations from current building regulations.

Densification

Without going into further specifics about this particular application I wonder whether applications of this type are the thin end of the wedge. We are witnessing the construction of mega-houses in Voëlklip as well as applications to densify properties

there on a scale not seen before. In one instance two erven are becoming four erven and four houses will be built on land designated for only two. The occupation density is effectively doubled.

Unfettered development

One understands that Hermanus is a sought-after destination. Recent press reports have shed some light on the inward migration of high-net-worth individuals which has potential financial benefits for the town, but if this goes hand in hand with unfettered development and wholesale densification then it is cause for concern.

infrastructure under strain

There is deep and well-founded concern that our infrastructure needs massive capital investment just to keep up with natural population growth and that if we permit unrestrained growth and densification, it will not be able to cope. The recently held Investment Conference, although well intentioned, did little to address concerns about an infrastructure under strain. Many are of the view that upgrading of infrastructure should precede any further significant development and not follow it.

A seaside metropolis?

Is there an appetite on the part of the Council or the administration to preserve the unique character of Hermanus or is it going to become some sort of seaside metropolis? At all costs the Hermanus community should resist development pressure that would result in it looking like the Strand!

HRA WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Now on your phone...

The HRA recently engaged the services of Anna Weideman to assist with improving our visibility on social media and specifically to revamp our website and bring it up to date. She's done a great job.

Our reports sent by email are now also available on the website under "[News](#)" and archived under "[Documents](#)". The [membership application form](#) can be submitted online. Do encourage neighbours and friends to join at R100 only.

WhatsApp

Fewer members are viewing email and prefer to access information on their smartphones. Anna has assisted in making reports and other content smartphone friendly for your convenience. Also let us know if you would like to be added to our WhatsApp updates. The WhatsApp subscription is at the bottom of each webpage in the footer.

Our thanks to Bob Stanway who created the first version of the website and who continues to post updates on Overstrand issues of Facebook.

THE EXCO

Meet our new members

I am very happy to be able to tell you of two new appointments to the Exco.



Dr John Bristow has joined the HRA and has agreed to be co-opted onto the committee. John is a retired geologist and with his wife Marilyn live in Northcliff where they are active in the community. John will be taking a particular interest in both water and environmental issues on the association's behalf. We welcome John and feel certain that he will make a huge contribution both to the HRA and to Hermanus.



Cathy Bruce Wright has also joined the HRA and has taken on the role of Secretary. Cathy has many strings to her bow. Cathy has extensive experience in business particularly in finance and administration. She is an active outdoor person as well as an accomplished photographer. We welcome her and look forward to her having a positive influence on our operation as a committee.

VACANCIES

We still need a town planning advisor and a legal advisor. Please help us recruit by sharing the following posts widely. The links have more information, available on our website:

- [Legal advisor](#)
- [Town planner](#)

Until next time ..

Brian Wridgway and the Exco