



BELASTINGSBETALERSVERENIGING
HERMANUS
RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

Hermanus Ratepayers Association Quarterly Report: May 2023

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.
— Winston Churchill

The last few months have been a busy with a number of issues taking a chunk of our time. Preparations around the AGM, Ward Committee and OMAF meetings, commenting on the municipal Budget, correspondence with a variety of people and institutions on a range of topics and assisting ratepayers with queries. These are the things that take time and effort and are at the heart of why the HRA exists. We are not political, we are an organisation in, of and for our community.

WE HAVE A SECRETARY!

Elizabeth Van Niekerk has agreed to join the EXCO of the HRA as our Secretary. Elizabeth lives in Voëlklip and rendered sterling service to the HRA on a temporary basis when [we assisted homeowners with lodging objections to their property valuations](#). Throughout the process she showed kindness and compassion coupled with keen attention to detail as she led people through the objection process. We look forward to working with Liz as we take the HRA forward in the coming months.



THE COUNTRY MARKET

To move or not to move, that was the question



Picture courtesy Xplorio

As Chair of the HRA I felt that I could play a meaningful role in mediating a solution between the parties and my offer was accepted. Since the process of mediation began early in May one of the key questions has been where the Market would be in the long term. This has been a bone of contention between the Market operator and the Overstrand Municipality (OM) for a long time. It was also the subject of a public participation process that took place several years ago.

The new location: Next to BOSKO

On Thursday 18th the question was answered – the Market will move towards the mountainside next to BOSKO. For some of the regular faithful supporters this may be a disappointment. The old familiar layout and the way it all hung together will become but a memory. What the new site offers is a unique opportunity to start from scratch, to conceptualise something new, something that works well, and complies with building standards, and is safe. The agreement to move has had the effect of galvanizing the parties into action to conclude negotiations regarding the long-term lease and to deal with the myriad consent and approval requirements which apply.

The bottom line is that there is progress!

Remaining hurdles

It is not all beer and skittles however as the question of the granting of an extension of the short-term lease in the current location is still under discussion. Wrapped up in this is

the question of the liquor licence as well as the soundness and safety of the existing structures.

At the heart of the matter is the lifeline that the Market represents to the many people who trade there and those who depend on them as well as the considerable benefit to tourism in Hermanus.

HRA as mediator

What the mediation process aims to achieve is

- agreement on the long-term lease in the new location;
- agreement on the short-term lease while construction takes place on the new site;
- security of tenure for the market operator and by implication the traders; and the
- continuation of the current liquor licence until a new lease is concluded.

A friend has suggested that the process of relocating and redeveloping the market is a project that the wider community can be drawn into, creating a sense of belonging and ownership in the process so that it becomes *OUR MARKET*. More about this as the process unfolds.

THE BYPASS

The BYPASS or a THROUGHPASS?

The BYPASS is a misnomer. It should be called the THROUGHPASS

At the FIRST THURSDAY engagement with Premier Alan Winde, I presented a document to him and the MEC for Transport setting out the opposition of the HRA, and by implication most residents of Hermanus, to the proposed trunk road through the heart of our town. This comprised of a [two-page motivation](#) with supporting documents. The Premier did me the courtesy of listening attentively to what I had to say and then offered his perspective on the question of forward planning to anticipate future growth. He acknowledged having had discussions with our Mayor and promised to study the document and to respond once he and his team had applied their minds to the issues. I emphasised the fact that there were alternatives for which the environmental cost had already been paid and that Hermanus is a destination and not “a dorp on the road to somewhere”. A few days after the event I received a call asking for the HRA’s email address so that we could be sent a response. As an eternal optimist I feel encouraged.

BABOONS

Unknown status of baboon management contract beyond June

Without wishing to duplicate the comprehensive feedback from Pat Redford regarding baboon management we are concerned about the fact that the current contract ends in just 5 weeks. Responses to requests for meetings on the subject have been slow in coming and there is a concern that all the gains made over the last few years will be lost. For more comprehensive information and their latest newsletter please visit HBAG at www.hermanusbaboons.co.za.

WARD COMMITTEES

Half a loaf is better than no bread ...

Since the amendment of the rules Ward Committees have been meeting at two-monthly intervals which have included IDP and Budget presentations. I wish I could give the assurance that the system is working, and everything is hunky dory but that's not the case. We have this week a schedule of meeting dates and times for the balance of the year many months after requesting it. There remains a concern that issues raised at the meetings do not make their way up the chain through Portfolio and Mayco meetings and eventually to Council. The items submitted by members are often omitted from the agenda and meetings have taken on a sometimes-acrimonious flavour because of a perceived lack of action. On the plus side the minutes are more accurate and inclusive than in the past and there is a renewed focus on the legitimacy of the participation by some of the current members. The Ward Committee Rules are also to be reviewed before the next round of Municipal elections. Anne Stern, an EXCO member, has undertaken to make a study and a submission on behalf of the HRA.

The next public meeting will take place in mid July.

THE CLIFF PATH

Credit is due to Jobre Stassen and her dedicated team of supporters in gaining the approval to join the two major sections of the Cliff Path. This has been a lengthy and difficult process and we look forward to a sensitive and environmentally friendly solution which will enhance the experience of traversing this most magnificent stretch of our coastline.

A look into the future of the HRA

At our recent AGM the EXCO and I undertook to hold a Strategy Session applying our minds to the issues we face as an organisation, to identify the issues impacting on us as an organisation and to chart a course for the future. The session was held on 13th April, and I can share the following issues that we've identified with you.

Societal issues

- Following the Covid pandemic people seem to have become more insular and more reluctant to 'get involved'.
- Volunteerism has been declining for many years. Not just in respect of the HRA but in all the organisations with which we've engaged.
- Many people have adjusted their lifestyles towards survival .
- Our membership and the demographic of our area is an ageing one with few young people.
- Confidence in national and local government has declined and few people see the point in complaining or making suggestions.
- Social media has meant that people can interact with their community without leaving home.
- Social media also provides a platform for airing one's views without having to join an organisation like the HRA.
- There is a belief that someone else will take care of issues at local level.

Issues impacting on the EXCO

- Membership renewals have been declining for several years
- EXCO vacancies have become more difficult to fill
- Institutional knowledge is being lost
- Constructive and fruitful engagement at Ward Committees is compromised
- Remaining members are often complacent knowing that the bases are covered
- Requests for volunteers have gone largely unanswered

We believe that if there were no HRA there would be a need to create it and it is therefore worth preserving and fighting for.

Our strategy

- Seek out capable suitable qualified people to fill some of the *key* vacancies (Vice Chairperson and Treasurer} in the short term i.e. go and find them.
- Conduct the Member Opinion Survey to establish what the current needs and concerns of members are in addition to those identified by the EXCO, remembering that we are driven by the needs of the members.
- In response to the Survey results define relevant portfolios and staff them with committed and capable people.
- Re-launch the HRA in conjunction with a recruitment drive to attract and retain younger members.

Some of the portfolios we believe there should be:

- Finance
- The Environment
- Social Cohesion
- Corporate Governance / Legal / By-Laws
- Infrastructure and Planning
- Membership and Recruitment
- Media and Communications

In the short term we will be seeking out people who we believe will be willing to join the EXCO, including the next Chairperson, rather than continue to ask for volunteers. We are currently in conversation with several people, and we will give feedback in due course.

We are collaborating with other ratepayer organisations on the format of the Member Survey because of the relevance of the issues across the municipality and as a means of sharing the cost. Having analysed the feedback, we will then make changes to the EXCO portfolios and create an appropriate structure to take the HRA forward.

In business we talk about *Form before Function*, so having fixed the structure of the EXCO we will go ahead with a re-launch and recruitment campaign.

Throughout this process we will keep you updated more frequently and in line with the progress we make.

As is always the case we will be relying on your continued support.

RECESS

With a number of EXCO members either overseas or busy with other commitments we will be in recess during the month of June and we will not be holding any meetings. We will however be forging ahead with the process of finding new talent to fill vacancies on the EXCO.



Brian Wridgway and the EXCO

 <https://hermanusratepayers.co.za>

If you are not yet a member, please join our ranks:

CLICK to join 

Our values

- First and foremost, we believe in good governance and clean administration.
- We value transparency and accountability and sensible stewardship of the town's resources.
- We value the essential historical character of HERMANUS and will defend its preservation.
- We value the Fernkloof Nature Reserve and what it represents as an essential part of Hermanus.
- We oppose rampant development and the over-densification of our suburbs.
- We subscribe to openness and transparency in representing the interests of our members.

The HRA track record

- We have a track record of involvement in current affairs in Hermanus often leading to interventions promoting the interests of our members.
- We routinely examine and comment on Town Planning issues which may impact on the preservation of the character of the town.
- Through the Ward Committee system we are responsible for identifying issues for inclusion on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and motivating their inclusion and execution.
- We do an analysis of the annual budget and make comments and recommendations to Council.
- We are consulted and give comment on proposed municipal legislation such as by-laws.
- We attend Council meetings from time to time and comment on the substance and process.
- When necessary (frequently) we correspond with members of Council and Administration on a range of issues which affect the quality of life of the people of Hermanus.
- We refer issues brought to us by members regarding service delivery to relevant authorities.