



## CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

March 2025

Dear Hermanus Ratepayers

A year has rushed by since the Hermanus Ratepayers Association (HRA) was revived at last year's Annual General Meeting on 7 March 2024. The first few months were occupied in undertaking a process of renewal which included: developing a new strategy, co-opting members to the HRA executive committee (HRA EXCO) to expand the skills base, developing our new website and WhatsApp communication platforms and promoting membership. After our formal establishment in May 2024, and during the balance of the year to date, Aloma Jonker, Delia Scott and Martin Barnard have resigned. We thank them for their contributions and wish them well in their future endeavours. Rae du Plessis from the Hermanus Business Chamber (HBC) has recently been co-opted to the EXCO. The HRA EXCO has the following members currently leading the organisation:

- **Ken Briggs:** Ken is a development economist and currently the Chairperson of the HRA EXCO. He is the managing partner of a boutique consulting firm, where he specializes as a development economist working in both the private and public sectors. He leads our local economic development portfolio.
- **Russel Schierhout:** Russel has retired to Hermanus Heights after a lengthy corporate career spanning 36 years with the Standard Bank (4 years) and BHP Billiton Limited (32 years) Groups, specialising in banking and treasury. He currently leads our communications and administration portfolio.
- **Tobie Louw:** Co-opted to the HRA EXCO after our March AGM. Tobie lives in Fernkloof. He is a professional engineer with vast experience in the consulting and engineering businesses, specializing in major urban infrastructure provision. He has extensive experience in bulk water infrastructure and contract management and a special interest in the conservation of our fauna and flora. He currently leads our infrastructure and conservation portfolios.
- **Ian Paterson:** Ian has lives in Voelklip and is the Managing Partner of a leading futures research, strategy, human resources and organizational design consultancy. He is also a philatelist with a specialized interest in history and the preservation of heritage. Ian currently leads our heritage portfolio.
- **Francois Huysamen:** Francois was co-opted on to the HRA EXCO to provide Information Systems and technical back-office support, where he has already made valuable contributions in establishing our website, setting up our back-office systems, including the new PayFast payment gateway membership renewal system.
- **Rae du Plessis:** Rae, our most recent co-opted member, has a legal background but is currently a prominent entrepreneur in Hermanus. She serves on the Hermanus Business Chamber (HBC) providing a useful link between the HRA and the HBC.

During the year the HRA has remained focused on the key aspects that emerged from its strategy session in May 2024, namely to:

- Provide strategic support to ratepayers through listening, to understand and respond to the issues and concerns of ratepayers.
- Playing an oversight role to ensure that the Overstrand Municipality (OM):
  - Applies good governance and prudent financial management, ensuring “value for money”.
  - Responds to the needs of the community (ratepayers and the broader communities).
  - Provides effective and efficient service delivery.
  - Preserves our unique environment.
  - Ensures appropriate and sustainable development.
- Improve two-way communication (lobby and listen) between the community and OM through:
  - Ensuring regular and structured interaction at both an executive and operational level to take up issues, problems and concerns on behalf of ratepayers.
  - Providing regular feedback and pertinent and objective information to the ratepayers and community.

In accordance with our strategy, we have also tried to not get drawn into matters that are not of a common concern to the ratepayers and/or where we believe we will not be able to make a meaningful contribution. In this regard we strive to adhere to the following principles:

- Not try to be “everything to everyone”; rather focusing on issues that we could make an impact on and that matched the expertise and competencies within the HRA executive.
- Not try and micro-monitor the OM or “second-guessing” every decision they make, rather focusing on key issues pertinent to the majority of HRA members and the community.
- Not engage directly in matters that are being addressed by other community represented bodies, although we will have a voice and will engage and support the appropriate bodies in their endeavours, e.g.:
  - Safety, security and crime prevention, given that there are already specialist community represented bodies addressing these aspects, namely HPP and the recently re-established Community Policing Forum (CPF).
  - Baboon control and protection matters, being addressed by HBAG
  - Cliff path extension matters, being addressed by the Cliff Path Action Group. (CPAG).
- Not to engage on issues over which we cannot contribute in a meaningful way. Where possible rather to provide an information dissemination function to help members better understand these issues.
- To always engage in a positive and constructive manner

Over the year the main activities undertaken by the HRA have largely been based on matching the functional requirements with the available capacity and interests of the HRA EXCO members. The key highlights of the year include the following:

## Organisational development:

- Established an HRA EXCO portfolio structure and activated the portfolios activities to enable us to start responding actively to the issues being raised by its community.
- Developed a new HRA website, along with the PayFast membership payment gateway currently under trial and scrutiny as a sustainable long-term solution.
- Developing the membership base through communicating the purpose and functions of the HRA and the work being done within the portfolio structures. Over the year of renewal, 2024, the active membership rose from 228 to 587, with annual paid-up members increasing from 148 to 222 when annual membership was closed in the last quarter of 2024.

## Functional activities:

The HRA has been actively participating in the following key initiatives (*Note: All reports and minutes referred to are available on the HRA website repository*):

- **Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and budget comments:** The HRA provided detailed comment on the Integrated Development Plans (IDP's) and the 2024/25 budget
- **Ward Committee participation:** As a member the HRA has had ongoing and active participation on the ward committee structure, where the HRA has been instrumental in challenging the OM and raising a wide range of ratepayers concerns and views
- **De Mond tender process:** Undertaken an investigation into the De Mond tender process. The initial review raised concerns around the lack of upfront public participation, resulting in the HRA writing a formal objection to OM. More work was then done, including having engagements with other community groupings, the Municipality and Point Caravan Resorts and soliciting legal advice. This resulted in the HRA EXCO deciding not to be party to any legal challenge against the tender process and rather to follow the pragmatic approach of engagement to ensure that the site plan and ultimate development satisfies the ratepayers. Unfortunately, this process of engagement is currently on hold due to an impending legal challenge from other community groupings.
- **Oversight over critical OM Infrastructure:** The HRA has on an ongoing basis been reviewing of key aspects of the Hermanus infrastructure to ascertain the status and development plans to ensure adequate capacity for the future. Tobie Louw leads this portfolio, currently actively monitoring the following key aspects:
  - **Bulk water supply:** Liaison with the Engineers at Overstrand Municipality regarding the long-term planning for sustainable bulk water sources for Hermanus.
  - **Hermanus Wellfields monitoring:** Participating in the Hermanus Monitoring Committee (HMC) that monitors the Hermanus Wellfields' performance to ensure sustainable delivery. HRA's participation ensures oversight and feedback on the management of this important water source.
  - **Fernkloof sewer project:** Liaison with Overstrand Municipality infrastructure department towards expediting the waterborne sewer project for Fernkloof and Kwaaibwater, ultimately alleviating the negative financial and environmental impacts by removing the need for tanker services.
- **Fernkloof attacks on hikers:** The HRA, through Tobie Louw involvement with Fernkloof Nature Reserve (FNR), played a key role in establishing and serving on a small steering group that developed solutions to deal with this threat. This initiative was successful in curbing the immediate security threats.

- **Fernkloof Drive gravel road:** Stepping in over the fire season to address the challenges of the fixed bollards on Fernkloof Drive extension (The “gravel road”) potentially compromising emergency access. The HRA chair prepared a proposal that entailed temporary booming of this section of road (in lieu of the current barricading). This proposal was recently again discussed with the Executive members at OM. This work has resulted in the OM Executive agreeing to the introduction of a booming system, as an interim measure that can be opened rapidly in the case of an emergency. The process is currently being taken through the ward committee for formal council approval and implementation. The long-term solution will be subject to public participation.
- **Dog Walking:** The HRA investigated the issue of dog walking in the context of the recently approved by-law and undertook a community dog survey. In this regard a survey to test ratepayers views was launched with the view to developing a motivated proposal to the OM on dog parks and demarcated area(s) for the walking of dogs off-leash. This resulted in the HRA drafting a report motivating responsible dog ownership and opportunities for off-leash walking. The report was recently formally tabled to OM and is being followed through the Ward Committee structures.
- **Basic Assessment Report 1 erf RE/4833 Voëlklip, Lifestyle Estate development:** HRA provided comments on sections of the Basic Assessment Report 1 (BAR 1) for the proposed Lifestyle Estate development on erf RE/4833 Voëlklip. HRA contended that, to meet the ever-growing demand for urban development into the future, our town can benefit from limited, well-designed development. However, it is essential that such development must be strictly undertaken with appropriate environmental sensitivity and not overburden the town resources and infrastructure.
- **Support to community organisations:** The HRA providing ongoing support to other community organisations, including HBAG, HPP and the Hermanus Business Chamber. In this regard more recent activities have included the following:
  - Providing support and input to HBAG on addressing the current baboon management crisis
  - Participating with the HBC parking investigation as well as with it's Swallow Park upgrading initiatives

#### **HRA finance overview:**

In 2024 the HRA received R 40,158.00 through membership and donations, a significant 64,24% increase on the previous year. Going into the new financial year we have a bank balance of R 92,517.03. It should be noted that the HRA also made donations to the following deserving initiatives: Fire fighters – R 1,225.00 and the Fernkloof Nature Reserve (FNR) – R 5,000.00 towards alien clearing.

It is evident that during 2024 its first year of renewal, the HRA has already started to play an important role in supporting the Hermanus Ratepayers ensuring that our community receives the recognition and services they deserve.

During the year a new oversight body OCAN was formed address Overstand wide issues across all 14 wards. We realise that this has created some confusion, so wish to emphasise that this new organisation does not duplicate the HRA's functions. We, HRA, are not affiliated to them, our objective domain is Hermanus Ward 3 and part of Ward 4, with a more focused and specific mandate. We will continue to liaise with them, as with other organisations, to avoid duplication of effort.

We believe during this first year of the new HRA EXCO, we have established a firm base on which we can develop further to ensure that we address the issues and concerns of our members. We acknowledge that we have mainly focussed on major common challenges to Ward 3 and have not been able to address all issues of our constituency. As we develop more capacity through EXCO membership and active ratepayer participation we will be able to expand our sphere of activity and interest. In this regard we wish to thank those individual ratepayers that have helped us during the year. I would like to single out Adv. Johan Naude (*Sandbaai*) in providing *pro bono* legal advice/opinion on the De Mond tender process and John Little (*Voelklip: HRA ordinary member*) who provided valuable assistance with our recent dog survey.

In conclusion, to enable us to serve the community effectively, I need to emphasise that increased membership is critical to ensure that the HRA becomes a more representative body for Hermanus ratepayers, providing a strong base to engage with and lobby OM. We will continue to provide support to the Hermanus Ratepayers, to ensure that our community receives the recognition and services that they deserve.

Our aim for 2025 is simply to keep expanding our involvement and service to the Hermanus community.

**Ken Briggs**  
(HRA Chairperson)

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to find out more about the HRA and/or wish to join by following [this link to our website](#).