



BUSHMAN'S RIVER MOUTH / BOESMANSRIVIERMOND

Ratepayers' Organisation / Belastingbetalersorganisasie
(BRRAG)

P.O.Box / Posbus 90, Boesmansriviermond, 6190

Website: www.brm.org.za/

Chairman's Report December 2009

2009 saw a number of changes in our Organisation. At last year's meeting, the idea of merging with the KOSRA (Kenton on Sea Ratepayers' Association) was mooted and the committee was mandated to investigate the matter. Your committee came to the conclusion that we needed to maintain our autonomy and to look after our own issues and that joining forces with the KOSRA on communal issues was the better option. After all, there are issues which affect Bushman's in particular and we are of the view that we are able to effectively deal with local matters.

At a special meeting during January, a committee was elected consisting of myself, Sheila Swanepoel, Eric Smith, Wendy Grove, Oorlog Botha, Duncan McTaggart, Pieter Mouton, Andrew Murray, Bill Northrop, Ian Smith and Vossie Vosloo. We co-opted Corris Krogscheepers as the twelfth member of the committee. Eric Smith, Duncan McTaggart and Oorlog Botha resigned during the course of the year and Fanie Venter and Stompie Bellingan were co-opted. The committee portfolios are as follows:

Chair and legal – Lötter Wepener

Vice Chair – Sheila

Treasurer – Fanie

Secretary and newsletter – Wendy

Legal matters - Pieter Mouton

Safety and security – Ian / Andrew

New Developments & Building Regulations, Potable water – Bill

Roads, Verges, Vacant Plots, Street Signs, Parks, Traffic – Corris

River, Estuary Care, DEAT, Beaches, Health, Hygiene, Sewage, Refuse removal – Bill / Andrew /
Vossie/Corris/ Lötter

Website - Ian

NRF & Disaster Management – Sheila / Bill / Lötter

Ward 3 Committee and IDP representative– Sheila

Riversbend matters – Stompie

At our first meeting we tackled the possible amendment of the Association's constitution, an issue envisaged at the last AGM. We came up with an amended constitution which was duly adopted during the Easter holiday at a special general meeting. The constitution, in both English and Afrikaans, can be seen on our website www.brm.org.za, which Ian kept going during the past year at his own cost, despite being away for a considerable period of time. We also took a decision to get involved in our Village affairs by doing certain things ourselves and adopted the slogan: "We make the difference / Ons maak die verskil". You may recall that at last year's meeting one of the biggest frustrations was the lack of co-operation and service delivery by the municipality and the lack of responses to letters and other communications. In that regard, not much changed during 2009. The past year again proved difficult to communicate with the municipal officials or rather difficult to obtain communication from them. We again, like last year, have had little or no response to correspondence.

“We make the difference / Ons maak die verskil”

Committee: Lötter Wepener (Chairperson), Sheila Swanepoel (Vice Chairperson), Fanie Venter (Treasurer), Wendy Grove (Secretary), Stompie Bellingan, Corris Krogscheepers, Pieter Mouton, Andrew Murray, Ian Smith, Bill Northrop, Anton Vosloo

The committee decided to act against the non-responsive municipality and when the sewage conservancy tank in Riversbend (on the way to the Sandbar) overflowed into the River for the umpteenth time, (despite this problem being reported to the municipality and several occasions during the preceding year), we approached the High Court in Grahamstown for assistance. The court ordered the municipality to submit a plan for the proper maintenance of the tank. The tank has not overflowed since the court order, but we are ready to act against municipal officials should this occur. (Officials who allow the tank to overflow will be in contempt of the court order and may be liable to imprisonment should the order be breached). This probably set the tone to a more aggressive attitude towards the municipality by your committee, but we resolved to continue on that path should it be necessary. The sewage reticulation is far from properly operational. I trust that our newly appointed municipal manager will be able to resolve maintenance issues which have been neglected for so long.

We are co-operating with all other ratepayer associations through our membership of the NRF (Ndlambe Ratepayers' Forum). This organisation acts with the collective input of all the different associations in order to address issues of interest to all ratepayers in Ndlambe. It, for instance, was very active in the valuation roll that has now been finalised after many mishaps.

Bushman's forms part of the Ndlambe Municipality which is additionally made up of Marselle, Klipfontein, Kenton-on-Sea, Ekuphumleni, Boknes, Alexandria, Cannon Rocks, Kasouga, Port Alfred, Kleinemonde and Bathurst. We are, together Marselle and Klipfontein, part of Ward 3, the other towns being represented in the municipal council by other ward counselors – ten in all. Our Ward committees have become important vehicles to communicate with the municipality and we utilise it as a tool to promote the affairs of Bushman's via the Ward committee. The Ward three committee is probably one of the best functioning Ward committees in Ndlambe, despite its deficiencies. Sadly, our Ward councilor, Maria Mike, with whom we developed an excellent working relationship, passed away recently. We hope that we will be able to have a similar relationship with the new counselor who has not yet been appointed. After a recent meeting between Ndlambe officials, NRF and NAG (Ndlambe Action Group – advocating a rates boycott), it was decided that experienced members living within the municipal boundaries would be engaged in order to assist with the development of service delivery strategies. The new year will show if the strategy will be successful.

Water: The availability of water, particularly in this part of our country, has become a serious major concern for us all. Due to the ongoing drought, the large underground borehole supply at Diaz has become so depleted that it only provides brack water. The boreholes at Diaz used to yield 2 million litres of water per day. But now the yield has reduced to 800,000 litres per day: and so the aged Reverse Osmosis plant at Bushman's continues to provide a life-line of desalinated water to the communities of Bushman's, Kenton-on-Sea, Marselle, Klipfontein and Ekuphumleni. Out of season, water availability runs at about 1,6 m litres a day, with usage at about 1,5 m litres per day from these two sources. During the holiday season, the increase in the demand for water is expected to rise to a peak of about 2,5 million litres per day. There is expected to be a shortfall of at least 700 000 litres a day in the peak season. The reservoirs, which hold 9 million litres, are presently being kept full. To prevent them running dry during the holidays, which will result in chaos, it may be necessary to cut off water supply from time to time. I urge members to respect the water restrictions and not to water gardens or use irrigation systems and hose pipes.

Security: Bushman's was not spared from the increased crime countrywide. Some committee members formed a Sector Policing System and were active in assisting with precautionary measures in our town. This was spearheaded by Ian and Andrew and it also led to our decision to form a partnership with HiTec Security who took over Web Alarms and Coastal Electronics. Hi-Tec is our preferred security provider and has supplied improved and superior services to home owners and our town. You would have noticed their vehicle and officers on duty, thus obviating the necessity for BRRAG to incur costs for increased security during the holiday period. There is a panic button at the post office and a camera, donated by Johann Smuts, which monitors access from the bridge to the towpath 24/7. We hope to install a number of additional cameras in town and to this end we have asked Hi-Tec to increase home owners'

contributions by R 10 per month. This will allow us to build a fund for capital expenditure such as the acquisition of additional cameras and other security equipment.

At last year's meeting the withholding of rates and taxes was also raised. After careful consideration your committee formed the view that that course of action, popularly advocated by certain pressure groups, is not a proper and viable solution to our problems. Negotiations through the NRF, our own efforts to obtain results from the municipality and our self-help projects are, in our view, the route to follow. Because the question of rates withholding is a popular concept, I will address those members who are interested in the topic for 10 minutes after the closure of the meeting so as not to detain others with no interest therein unnecessarily. If the meeting so decides, I will deal with it prior to adjourning our meeting.

Members are reminded that boat trailers are to be removed to the trailer park; please do not park vehicles in the slipway; please do not moor boats to the jetty which is there as a pick up and drop off facility for all; the towpath has been closed for vehicular traffic by the municipality. The rule that boats must travel at a no-wake speed from the launching pad to the bridge has been revoked by Estuary Care – and it decided that the existing sign should be changed to something like "Safety Zone/Go Slow".

Good news

Having taken the decision to act in the interests of our town and not to rely on the municipality for proper service delivery, we embarked on a number of projects during the past year: all must have seen the improvements to the skinderboom (gossip tree) area which were effected by committee members and funded by a committee member (Pieter Mouton) and a donation from Neat Pave; the walkway to the beach along the gabion wall was similarly tackled by committee members with funds provided by Pieter; we acquired a vehicle and trailer and have been employing labour to clean up the town from time to time; we met with officials of Ndlambe and the swing (refuse) bins requested by us were eventually installed throughout the Village; some speed humps have been constructed as requested by members; potholes were repaired recently; the conservancy tanks are being cleared fairly regularly; when storms caused the parking area at the sea to be covered in sand, Sheila arranged with Coastal Care to assist to clear away the sand; the jetty disintegrated and was in need of replacement – our Association with the assistance of Estuary Care ensured that the jetty was replaced before the busy season; (Our thanks to Estuary Care for the kind donation); we also thank Rotary for a monetary contribution to this project; although the municipality undertook to repair our public toilets, and because this did not occur, we obtained the services of a contractor and repaired to toilets at the slipway at our own cost. We are also employing a staff member who is keeping the ablution block neat and tidy from 08h00 to 15h00. During the past year, we employed the services of a contractor to clear the park areas, walkways to the river and cemetery on a monthly basis. Be assured, if we did not do these things ourselves you would have found a very shoddy Bushman's upon your arrival in December. Corris had a number of meetings with officials to attempt to improve service delivery: recently our streets were attended to and road signs improved; our objection to the establishment of a caravan park on the beachfront where the picnic area is situated was successful.

There are a number of projects that must still be attended to and your committee intends pursuing these matters during 2010. Members who have submitted requests and ideas to us can be assured that the matters of concern are still on our to-do list. These matters are either on our list submitted to the municipality together with all other associations through the NRF or will be dealt with by committee members as best we can at every available opportunity.

Once we commenced our positive approach to do things ourselves, members of the community jumped in and became involved: Stoffel Kotze cleaned all the street name boards that were vandalized; Corrie Swanepoel repaired the pavement along the slipway and other areas; Frans Wessels assisted with river signage; others offered their services freely. Gary Loader donated a number of indigenous trees which we planted in the Village and Riversbend.

Fanie will deal with our financial statements shortly. However, you will notice that we need funds to embark on all the projects which we have committed ourselves to. I urge members to dig into your pockets and add a naught or two to the membership fees of R 100. Our membership increased from just over 100 to 266 members. Yet, there is much room for improvement in order to widen our membership base. Please note that, apart from property owners, the following can also become members of BRRAG:

Visitors and other people residing outside Bushman's River Mouth who, because of their presence in Bushman's River Mouth, make use of services or facilities provided by the local authority. This allows for all regular visitors to become part of us and to assist us with our endeavours to improve and maintain Bushman's River Mouth. Please ensure that we have your correct email address. It can be forwarded to info@brm.org.za.

Committee: Most members understand that being on a voluntary committee is a thankless job at the best of times and tasks are often carried out at a great personal sacrifice of time and energy. I thank all my co-committee members who served with me in 2009 for their counsel and diligence in our cause, often at a cost to themselves. They receive no remuneration or benefits and very little acknowledgement. We thank all loyal members of BRRAG for the interest, praises and commitment which ensure continuity and improvement of our facilities – it is an important source of encouragement in order to maintain our active involvement in the Bushman's affairs. I enthusiastically commend all these committee members to you for re-election.

A special word of thanks must go to a long standing member of this committee, Charles Sprong who has been a committee member for longer than I can remember. Charles has finally decided to take a rest from our local affairs and we extend our sincere appreciation for his sterling efforts over the years.

I also wish to thank all members who donated funds to the Association this past year. The list of donors is available for inspection. But one member funded the construction of both the skinderboom renovations and wooden walkway over the gabion wall – to Pieter Mouton, our sincere thanks for this generosity.

Thank you to Annabelle Northrop for standing in as secretary whenever it was necessary.

Being an out of town chair does make it more difficult to attend to all the meetings and matters that may arise. It did however, ensure that I visited Bushman's no less than seven times during my tenure as chairman this past year – a pleasant benefit indeed. I extend my sincerest thanks to our vice, Sheila Swanepoel, who stood in for me wherever it was necessary and also for her counsel and assistance throughout the year.

"We Make the Difference".

Lötter Wepener
(Chairman)

"LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS" MINISTER FOR COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, HONOURABLE SICELO SHICEKA