



## **Quarterly Report - September 2019**

There has been relative calm in Hermanus in recent months and this is to be welcomed. National politics, the Brexit fiasco, the antics of the Trump administration and the revelations of state capture at the Zondo Commission have taken centre stage. This doesn't mean that nothing has been happening in Hermanus and we will unpack the issues in the narrative that follows.

Whenever I return to Hermanus from a time away I am reminded of how nice a place it is to live and work. We are often very critical of our municipality and how we perceive it to be managed but any trip to neighbouring towns and provinces serves as a reminder that Hermanus can sometimes take itself a bit too seriously.

Yes, we have issues, but we also have a deep reservoir of talent and creativity that needs to be drawn from if we are to fulfil our potential as a community and as a world-class tourist destination. I see little green shoots of hope pushing up in a number of areas, which seem to indicate that we have turned a corner and that better and happier times lie ahead.

In the words of Henry Ford "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success".

### **Safety and Security**

Since July the dynamic around the establishment of a Special Rating Area (SRA) has changed and the process is well underway. The steering committee meets every 2 weeks and by the time you receive this letter the municipality will hopefully have given approval for a perception survey to be conducted.

This survey will be an opportunity for you to indicate clearly what your concerns are on a range of issues. The feedback will translate into a business plan which, if approved, will lead to the formation of the SRA. The main concern of those managing the SRA will in all likelihood centre around Crime Prevention and a top up of Cleansing and other municipal services.

Interestingly both Kleinmond and Onrus/Vermont are also in the process of establishing their own SRAs.

At the Hermanus Public Protection (HPP) AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> August a new interim board of directors was appointed. The new board made a commitment to call a public meeting after a period of time at which a comprehensive business plan would be presented for comment. We look forward to the meeting and to evaluating the plan some time soon.

Much of the discussion around HPP is whether or not the available funds of some R4,3 million will be sufficient to provide continuous service until the establishment of a SRA. In parallel with this process the new board is tasked with winding down the operations of HPP once the funding is exhausted. Our fervent hope is that this will not be before June 2020.

The Sub Sector 3 Community Police Forum (CPF) recently held its AGM and has a new chairperson, Alan Davidson. David Worrall, a member of the HRA EXCO, was elected as one of the joint secretaries. The new committee looks forward to forging better communication between security services in facilitating closer cooperation and to evaluating its effectiveness in executing its action plans.

The AGM of the main Hermanus CPF will take place on 8th October 2019 at 18h00 in the Municipal Auditorium and all are encouraged to attend.

### **Management of Social Cohesion and Tensions**

The Private Public Partnership initiative mentioned in the July 2019 report has been extended to other communities in the greater Hermanus area and is now being conducted in Mount Pleasant. This is a slow and painstaking process of careful consultation within communities that seeks to establish what the difficult issues are and to find solutions.

At a meeting of the Zwelihle Stakeholders held on the 8<sup>th</sup> September it was announced that the Province has acquired the Schulphoek land and that the process of engagement around proposals for its development is continuing. The most optimistic view is that development will commence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020. This is a very optimistic view and we hope it will be achieved.

In a further development the community of Zwelihle has served notice on disruptive elements that they have had enough of protests and stay-aways and the resulting loss of jobs and damage to businesses. Taxi owners and other local business people recently intervened in and stopped a planned march and shutdown in early September. This has led to new consultative forum labelled the UFR, drawn from the communities in the greater Hermanus area, being formed. The forum includes religious and community leaders and seeks to promote the interests and wellbeing of all communities as well as peaceful coexistence and economic upliftment. While detail is scarce at present we look forward to more comprehensive communication in the near future.

## **Baboon Management**

Following a lengthy process of negotiation between the Mayor and the provincial government responsibility for the management of Baboons in the Overstrand has finally been granted to the municipality. A budget of R2 million has been granted for the current financial year and pilot projects will soon be launched in Pringle Bay and in Vöelklip. The existing virtual fence infrastructure in Vöelklip will be utilised by Human Wildlife Solutions and as soon as troop leaders have been tagged they will be able to monitor troop movement and begin to mitigate problems.

The management of baboons is an emotive and complicated issue and all of us who live in affected areas have an important role to play. In a collaborative effort between the Hermanus Baboon Action Group (HBAG) and the municipality an informative pamphlet dealing with baboons has been created. An electronic copy of this very informative communication is attached to this report and you are encouraged to read it and share it as widely as possible.

## **Water Security**

As was the case in July 2019 winter rain continues to be below average and the level of the De Bos dam, although relatively static at around 44%, is still too low for comfort. This emphasises the importance of ground water sources and in the last two months two new boreholes have been sunk in the Gateway area in anticipation of an increase in future demand. As there is no likelihood that restrictions will be lifted for the foreseeable future we should all continue to use water sparingly.

## **Preservation of Fernkloof Nature Reserve**

I think it is safe to say that no subject has elicited more comment or more column inches in the local press than Fernkloof Nature Reserve, and appropriately so. This is one of Hermanus' most precious assets and is worthy of preservation at all costs.

The latest iteration of the management plan is an improvement on previous versions but it has a fatal flaw. Under the OS1 zoning accorded by the municipality it allows for "consent use" in defined development areas. As long as we have a council that is environmentally sensitive Fernkloof is relatively safe but if that situation were to change one cannot predict what may be perceived as being "acceptable" development. At the heart of the issue is a narrative that says "no development of any kind, now or at any time in the future" and so the debate rages on.

We encourage you once again to support the Hermanus Botanical Society both financially and by visiting as often as you can. A reminder that the Hermanus Flower Festival takes place from 21<sup>st</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> September at Fernkloof.

### **Quality of Public Participation in Municipal Affairs**

The HRA continues to be represented on a number of forums in Hermanus including the Ward 3 Committee, Sub Sector 3 CPF, Water committee, CBD Revitalisation group and more recently with the establishment of the SRA steering Committee.

We engage the municipality frequently on what we believe are issues of concern. In keeping with our constitution we try to do this in a cooperative and constructive manner and this has had the effect of keeping channels of communication with the municipality open and on a mutually respectful footing.

### **CBD Revitalisation**

As a result of a number of technical and procurement issues the revitalisation project that was due to start implementation in May 2019 has been delayed by twelve months and the capital budget has been rolled over into the new year. It is debateable whether the delay has been to the advantage of business or not. The view of your EXCO is that the entire project has been handled unprofessionally and should now be nearing completion.

As was stated in July 2019 the businesses in the CBD are in crisis and the situation is hardly improving. There are empty premises in many places and shoppers continue to be siphoned off to the mall. Despite some establishments reporting marginally higher sales and improved visitor numbers 2018 is hardly a good basis of comparison.

There is a groundswell of feeling that a wide-ranging view needs to be taken in relation to the sustainable future of the CBD. Having had discussions with a number of business owners it seems clear that simply fixing the storm water drainage in High Street and in Main Road and resurfacing High Street is not going to be enough to encourage the return of business or meet the needs of tourists. We need a vision that we can all work towards. Watch this space!

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