
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Nature's Valley Ratepayers' Association
held in the Nature's Valley Church Hall at 17:00 on the 22nd December 2009.**

1. **Welcome.** The Chairman, Jeanne Biesenbach, welcomed everyone and asked for permission to hold the meeting in English, the language used in all official dealings. Discussions held under General would be dealt with in the language of choice.
2. **Attendance and Apologies.** Apologies were accepted from Doug Blaine, Julia Shires, Pieter Vorster and Robert de Muelenaere. The attendance register was signed by 86 members.
3. **Minutes of the AGM of the 22th December 2008.** Due to time constraints it was not possible to distribute these minutes with the November newsletter. Printed copies were available at the door. The minutes had been circulated at the 17th December NVRA Committee meeting and found to be in order.
4. **Matters arising from the 2008 AGM minutes** would be dealt with under the relevant portfolio reports.
5. **The Chairman's Report.**
 - 5.1. **Copies** of the full Chairman's report in English and Afrikaans were available at the NVRA office.
 - 5.2. **Thanks.** The Chairman thanked those who look after Nature's Valley during the year and also those who made special arrangements for the holidays.
 - **The NVRA Committee** were thanked for their unwavering loyalty and commitment. The committee members who are resident throughout the year bear the brunt of the daily workload. Co-opted members through their expertise provide formidable support. The open spaces subcommittee continues to look after our open spaces throughout the year.
 - **The Nature's Valley Trust.** The Trustees and Daniël Cloete, the project manager, were thanked for excellent collaboration and unstinting support.
 - **SANParks**, the backbone of the Contractual Park Area, were thanked for their close and valued collaboration and for the arrangements put in place for the summer season.
 - **The Community Liaison Officer (Mornay du Plessis) and Ward Representative (Paul Zietsman)** were thanked for their valuable cooperation and support throughout the year which had led to positive outcomes. The Waste Transfer Station had been upgraded and the life savers hut renovated. The signs at the entrances to the beach had been replaced and lagoon parking temporarily improved. The remaining gravel roads were graded or paved. In particular, the CLO ensured that arrangements made by Bitou for the holiday season were carried out. Both the CLO and the WR had kept the NVRA informed of all municipal correspondence, notices, minutes and agendas relevant to Nature's Valley.
 - **Bitou Municipality** were thanked for the comprehensive holiday arrangements put in place for Nature's Valley. In particular Isak Heynecke was thanked for his diligence in looking after our water supply and for the good quality of our potable water.
 - 5.3. **Drought.**
 - This has reached critical proportions and the Coastal towns of the Southern Cape have been declared drought disaster areas. The drought is the worst in more than a century.
 - The situation in Bitou is dire. Everyone has received copies of the water restrictions. Consumption must be reduced by 40%.
 - The Groot River is our only water source and the inflow has dropped to 65 l/sec. The reservoir holds one day's supply. Please adhere to the water restrictions.

5.4. **Phyl Martin Park and Fynbos Reserve.**

The most important matter the NVRA dealt with this year was Bitou's proposal to alienate erf 429 and 460 for development purposes. The Chairman thanked everyone for their overwhelming support in opposing the alienation. To date there has been no response from Bitou.

The following actions have been taken:

- 773 written objections were hand delivered to Bitou.
- The NVRA and NVTrust submitted formidable, authoritative and comprehensively researched documents to Bitou opposing the alienation.
- The NVRA's formal objection to the alienation was tabled at the Ward Committee meeting to ensure that all internal municipal processes were followed.
- The NVRA and NVTrust objections were sent to the Western Cape MEC for Local Government and Development Planning. In the covering letter the NVRA voiced its concerns at the proposed actions of the municipality and enquired if these actions merited intervention at provincial level. We have had a reply from the MEC's office stating that the matter is being investigated.

The way forward will depend on Bitou's actions. If Bitou proceeds with the alienation we have the right to appeal to province and all 773 of us will have to go through the same process but this time to the Provincial Administration. If Bitou continues with the sale by tender we shall be forced to obtain an urgent court interdict preventing this. Our lawyers are aware of this possibility and are prepared to act. We are being proactive, not negative. We do not want to take legal action unless we are forced to. Bearing in mind the complexity of the issue the legal costs may be high as it could be a protracted matter.

The NVRA have been opposing the development of the open spaces for 5 years and it may take a long time before the matter is resolved. We must be prepared to continue to oppose this development with everything in our power and will keep our members informed.

5.5. **Property Valuations.** The much higher market related property valuations came into effect in July 2009. Research showed these valuations to be fair and given Bitou's 0,327 cents in the rand levy there has not been an appreciable increase in our rates.

6. **Portfolios Reports.** The portfolio system works well.

6.1. **Infrastructure.**

- **Water purification plant.** The question of repairs has not been resolved and the flood repair monies allocated have not been spent. This matter will receive urgent attention.
- **Sewage plant.** No progress was made in 2009. Bitou have taken no action in accordance with the court order which stated that they must appoint consultants to investigate a site for sewage works outside the residential area. If such a site is found they can alienate the service erven (335 & 336). The NVRA did not pursue the matter as the issue of costs incurred in obtaining the court order was still outstanding. Bitou have now paid a settlement of R45 500 which is • of the amount claimed.
- **Reservoir.** A new water reservoir has been planned for in the 2010-2012 Bitou budget.
- **Waste Station.** In March 2009 Bitou repaid the R27 000 spent by the NVRA to clean and service the WTS in December 2009.
- **Roads.** Despite efforts on the part of the Ward Representative the condition of the roads continues to deteriorate and no money is available for repairs.

6.2. **Built Environment.**

- **Phyl Martin Park and Fynbos Reserve.** The proposed alienation of these open spaces dominated the activities of this portfolio.
- **Building Control.** Despite excellent cooperation between the NVRA and Bitou illegal building activities continue in flagrant violation of building regulations. This is a grave matter.

- **NV Spatial Development Framework.** The final draft of the NVSDF was completed and includes all responses received from ratepayers. It has been submitted to Bitou for formal perusal and comment. It conveys the wishes of the people of Nature's Valley and includes the protection of the Open Spaces and Single Residential status. When approved and incorporated in the Bitou SDF it will have legal status and these key aspects of NV will be protected by law. Our thanks and appreciation to Conrad Wiehahn for completing this mammoth task.
- 6.3. **Finances.** The audited financial statements for the period ending 30 June 2009 are available at the NVRA office. Members' contributions for the 2008/9 year were lower than in previous years. Our total income was R161 694 and expenditure was R209 494 with the shortfall of R48 000 being funded from reserve funds at a time when we should be building up a war chest. The budget for 2009/2010 shows a provision for expenses totalling R139 500, a marked rise as a result of increasing activities. The NVRA is dependant on contributions and the Chairman urged all present to act as ambassadors and ask family and friends to support the NVRA financially.
- 6.4. **Environment.** Due to dry conditions the Estuary mouth has been closed for most of the year. There are well researched reasons why the mouth is only opened by SANParks when it reaches a certain level. The public are urged not to interfere.
The Groot River and Estuary are amongst the most pristine systems in South Africa. In order to maintain its health the Estuary needs an essential part of the water from the Groot River. We are obliged to cut our water consumption by 40% to support these natural processes.
The volunteers of the open spaces sub-committee were thanked for their work and a contribution of R7000 has again been made to cover their essential expenses.
- 6.5. **Safety and Security.** The committee are investigating various short and long term security options. Affordable solutions will not be easy to find as, being surrounded by a National Park, access to the residential area cannot be limited. The regular contact maintained with ADT management by Peter Harpur is showing positive results and they intend to establish a mobile office in Nature's Valley. SMHart have an employee on duty living in the Valley. While there has been a decrease in the incidence of theft, homes without alarms are targeted.
- 6.6. **External Communications.**
- **BRRRA.** Bitou Residents and Ratepayers Association meetings are attended every month and this remains an important forum for the exchange of information.
 - **NVTrust.** We continue to co-operate closely on matters of mutual concern.
 - **Bitou Municipality.** Meetings were held with department heads about service delivery issues.
 - **CLO and WR.** We have a close working relationship which has shown positive outcomes.
 - **SANParks.** Regular contact is maintained especially through Contractual Area Meetings.
 - **Covie.** The children's Christmas party organised by Ina Brand and Engela Muller at Covie on 21st December was a great success. Thanks to the NV owner who donated funds. The NVRA sponsored school uniforms and other necessities for Covie school pupils.
- 7.7. **Administration.** Our thanks to Marie Joubert, the hub around which we all revolve. The office is worth its weight in gold as proved by the amount of work handled during the alienation process with the help of staff, committee members and volunteers. Please read the handouts distributed to you at the start of the holidays and save the emergency numbers on your cellphone.
- 7.8. **Special Projects.**
- Groot River Pass.** The Committee has established an excellent relationship with Goba Consulting Engineers, the project managers of the repairs to the pass. Our input has resulted in the repairs commencing on the eastern side of the pass to limit disruption at the busiest time of year. Further certain heritage elements will be retained. Tenders for the repair of the Bloukrans Pass will go out in January 2010 and the NVRA is a registered I&AP.

8. Approval of the previous minutes. The Chairman asked that the minutes of the AGM of 2008 be taken as read and accepted. This was proposed by Stef Naude and seconded by Diana Woode.

9. General. Questions were taken from the floor.

9.1. **Vote of thanks.** Ina Brand proposed a vote of thanks to Vernon Peters for maintaining the dog boxes at the entrances to the beach and for his donation of doggie bags.

9.2. **Vote of thanks.** Richard Haxton proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, Mrs Biesenbach for the work which she does for Nature's Valley.

9.3. **Lifeguards.** A member questioned the fact that the lifeguards are permanently stationed at Beach 4 although this is not necessarily always the safest swimming beach. The Chairman pointed out that the guards do move the flags designating the approved swimming area according to the currents; there were too few guards to cover the entire beach area and a permanent storage facility had been set up for their equipment at beach 4.

9.4. **Partying at lagoon.** A member complained about a rowdy group who spent all day drinking and camping at the lagoon. The Chairman pointed out that overnight camping was not allowed and rubbish bins were available for litter. She undertook to inform SANParks and the CLO of the problem being caused.

9.5. **Debit Order System.** Dr Barnes of 216 St Andrews pointed out that the road ahead would be difficult and proposed that a debit order system be instituted. It was suggested that a nominal R100 be deducted monthly from each ratepayer in order to maintain a steady income for the NVRA. The Chairman, supported by Stef Naudé, made a counter proposal that this be discussed at the next committee meeting and put to the ratepayers via a newsletter. Cheryl Walker proposed that those present be asked to show approval or otherwise through a show of hands at the meeting. The meeting was reminded that many members were pensioners who would not be able to afford a substantial increase in their contributions and that there were two organisations as both the NVTrust and the NVRA deserve to be considered. The Chairman pointed out that she had assurances from a number of ratepayers that in an emergency they were prepared to contribute substantially in order to cover legal costs. On a show of hands the majority of those present clearly supported the motions.

10. Election of Committee.

10.1. **Re-election.** The following 9 members of the Committee are available for re-election for a further term: Jeanne Biesenbach, Ina Brand, Doug Blaine, James Martin, Juan le Roex, Stef Naudé, Anton van Wyk, Johan Grobbelaar and Michael Perlman. They were nominated as a block by Diana Woode and seconded by Geoff McIlleron.

10.2. **Additional member.** Conrad Wiehahn was nominated as a committee member by Jeanne Biesenbach and seconded by Stef Naudé.

10.3. **Completing 2nd year.** The remaining committee members would complete their second year. They are Roe Venter, Peter Harpur, Engela Muller, Abrie du Toit and Pieter Steyn.

10.4. **Further nominations.** There were no further nominations from the floor.

10.5. **Co-opted members.** The following people with special expertise will continue to serve as co-opted members.

Sewage sub-committee: Geoff McIlleron, Frans Kapp

External Communications: Gordon Paterson, Marina Niven, Roy Parkhurst

Built Environment: Bertie van Zyl, Robert Kleyn, Jan Strydom

Database Administration: Maaike Murphy

11. The meeting closed at 18:30 with thanks to all who attended.