



P.O. Box 333 Rondebosch 7701

Minutes of the 15th Annual General Meeting
held at 18h30 on Wednesday 7 May 2008
at the Cape Town Environment Centre, Valkenberg Estate

Present: the Chairman and 42 people

Apologies: Maureen Archer, Frank Chevallier, George Davis, Louis de Villiers, Angels Gilbert, Monica Goldschmidt, Robert Hector, Councillor Owen Kinahan, Joanna Marx, Sister Maud, Maya Stauch, Val & John Stinson, Jenny Travers, Debra West

1 Welcome and apologies

Kevin Winter as Chairman welcomed those present.

2 Confirmation of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 9 May 2007

The Chairman signed the minutes following Hazel Bowen's proposal, seconded by Beth Reitz, that the minutes be taken as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Matters arising from the minutes

A member stated that the typeface was not easy to read. No other matters were raised.

4 Chairman's report

In place of a written report, Kevin screened a series of slides, beginning with an image of the Liesbeek at Bishopscourt below the Arboretum. He remarked that, despite attempts to persuade the Archbishopric to find other means of raising funds, the property had been sold. The area will lose a seepage zone into the river and, once the plots had been built on, reinforcing the river bank would result in a loss of biodiversity for that stretch. The next slide was a view from higher up the river towards the mountain, that Kevin felt was possibly the most beautiful slide yet taken. This was contrasted by a picture of a detention pond covered with duckweed and surrounded by tree ferns.

Slides of activities included a group walking down river, local schoolchildren at Liesbeek Lake surrounding the Mayor during a clean up supported by Toyota and the Soul Foundation. Following these was a series of slides on the Acucap Rondebosch parking area development. After delays, the developer and the Friends of the Liesbeek had signed a Memorandum of Agreement setting out their mutual responsibilities. The contractor had taken careful measures to prevent soil ingressing the river. Catchpits around pipes draining the parking area would polish the water before it entered the river. On 26 July 2007 the one in five flood had brought the river centimetres below the canal wall; as surfaces upriver were hardened, the parking area was likely to be flooded more frequently.

In 2007 an American environmental studies postgraduate had surveyed water quality along most of the Liesbeek. The water quality in the stretch below Kirstenbosch is the best for an urban river in South Africa, but where it enters Rondebosch the quality deteriorates because of human contamination.

The Liesbeek Maintenance Project was depicted with the Team clipping canal vegetation and a shot of Liz next to an informative sign. Kevin stated that, besides workshops and training, for three days each week Liz maintained hands-on management of the Team. He pointed out that she could

not be expected to continue this and asked the audience whether they knew of any likely replacement.

Kevin thanked the Committee members and noted that Kirsten Dewar had resigned due to pressure of work. For the future, he stated that the flow of information to, and communication with, members would improve, and members would be offered more for their subscriptions. The Committee was likely to become more involved with developers' projects. The content of information for schools would improve. An urgent need was more funding and staffing for the Liesbeek Maintenance Project.

Replying to a question about signage, Kevin stated that the existing signage needed to be revamped and upgraded. Six months after it had been installed, 60% of the signs had been vandalised. Signage could be expected to last about three years; it was a small investment for the return it gave to the public in the form of information.

5 Liesbeek Maintenance Project

Liz reported that since last year's AGM the Project had been fortunate to have had only two changes of staff. Siyanda had gone to full time employment at Silver Mists at Hout Bay. Thanks to Men on the Side of the Road Malibongwe Mzananda, a twenty-three year old matriculant from Makasa, had joined in November. Sadly his mother had died in February and then his father had had a stroke, and he had to care for a school-going nephew living in his home. Sipehele had moved to a full-time post with City Nature Conservation as of 1 April. He had been invited to apply for the job and our congratulations and very best wishes go to him.

The Team continued to work three days a week: David Nyathela on Tuesdays and Fridays at Footprints Environmental Centre and Malibongwe on Tuesdays at a Children's Home in Athlone. He needed work on Fridays and over weekends.

The area of work had been extended from Protea at Bishopscourt to River Park in Mowbray. It was a long way but a river was a continuum and needed to be cared for as such. For three months the Project had had only two workers on duty due to leave and not finding a suitable supervisor / manager. The City had no workers permanently assigned to the entire river. The main task of picking up of litter was never ending and extremely time consuming, especially in water. The vagrants' mess in the Newlands and Rondebosch Central Business District was untenable and it was a disgrace that people were permitted to continue to foul the area, light fires, defecate and drink in public, use bad language, fight, etc and nothing was done about it. There was the legislation but no or little enforcement. Dumping was particularly bad in the Arbor to Roslyn Road reach, and was arguably a worse offence as old computers, TV's, garden refuse, cardboard boxes etc emanated from residents. Much of this was probably because there was no united and really active residents and or business association and many absentee landlords. Towards the end of 2007, through Shirley Aldum the chairman of the Rondebosch Community Police Forum and Sam Vos of U Turn, the Forum applied to the City Social Development Department for a grant to employ a social worker part time in Rondebosch. So far there had been no response.

Other tasks included watering by bucket, clipping and cutting back vegetation, removing invasive vegetation, sweeping the trail, unblocking drains, painting out graffiti, propagating and planting, weeding, walking the elderly safely home, rescuing pets, retrieving handbags, painting warning signs on the trail for runners etc. etc. At least six large trees had fallen this past year and the cutting up, removing and carrying out of the debris was another arduous task. Often items have to be carried a long way before a pickup point for a lorry was available. The good news was that there were six trees to plant out thanks to the generosity of Rosvita von Dewitz. People frequently commented on the River Team worker's politeness and helpfulness, so it was no surprise when an eighty year old came to share her birthday cake with them.

The kind donation of rucksacks by BECO (Institute for Sustainable Living) had made working on the river much more pleasant and easier. Small tools weren't mislaid, food was kept clean, clothing

kept dry, etc. The investment of long handled loppers had also helped the Team reach higher when cutting overhead or over wide areas. Also the loans of ladders from The Josephine Mill and Albion Place had made more work possible. Thanks also went to St Michael's Church, Ceri & Neville Rowe, Anne Terblanche, Joan Parker and Joy Humby for their donations of plants and Ros Weir from Rosan Agencies for the donations of rubber gloves and masks.

In June the River Team had participated in a three-day cleanup of Liesbeek Lake and surrounds. This had been instigated by the Soul Foundation, professionally arranged by John Kieser and sponsored by Toyota Culemborg and involved Observatory Primary scholars on day three. Using an inflatable boat and the Mayor's visit were highlights.

June also saw the Team as proud owners of certificates after attending the *You and Your Money* course where they had learnt about budgeting, hire purchase etc. Sincere thanks to Westerford School for sponsoring the Team and to Dawn Jackson and her team for the wonderfully enabling lectures. During the school holidays Richard Tait from Marist's College joined the Team to do community service. Another successful training morning was spent helping the Cape Bird Club do their August count in the lower reaches. During Water Week the Team visited De Oog and the Silvermine River and learnt how to do the mini-SASS river health test.

SA Breweries had been the major sponsor and Tuffy Brands had supplied their tough plastic bags since the inception of the Project. Since May 2007 Tuffy had also paid for Mondays work. The really generous donations from Friends of over R15 000.00 had been invaluable in tiding the Project over lean periods. The Project finances were handled by WESSA who had not been without their problems of staff and systems. The Chairman, Sharon Bosma, had given assurances that the liesbeek Maintenance Project money was safe.

All those living or working in Wards 62, 58, 59 & 57 were also extremely fortunate in the calibre of councillors of Neil Ross, Ian Iversen, Owen Kinahan and Cedric Thomas, all of whom had made money available for paths, bollards and benches along the Liesbeek. Ian and Owen had been instrumental in setting up the Project and their help and support was still forth coming. Weekly contact with Talcott Persent from the Roads, Stormwater & Rivers Dept. got the bags removed. Neil Fortes from Parks Dept. had also been a support and advisor, as had Joan Parker who had led the development of the Riverine Park on the Bishopscourt Village reach. Era Steer Constantiaberg had paid Mathew's salary this past year but would not be continuing it in 2008. Thanks to Trevor for being on standby periodically. Then lastly but by no means least my helpmate, technology backup and partner, Dave Wheeler. I sincerely thank all of you.

Two reports each year for SA Breweries had more detailed information and any paid-up member or donor / sponsor was welcome to copies. The benefits of the Project are a real win-win situation. However, Liz regretted to that she would be stepping down from the management of it by August 2008. New challenges lay ahead but the future depended on the present not the past.

6 Financial report

Grant Irlam presented the financial statements. The Friends of the Liesbeek had 11 corporate members, 46 family members and 44 single members. Referring to the Income Statement for the Friends of the Liesbeek, Grant made the following points:

- Income was slightly up to R14 757 from R13 907 in 2007, due mainly to an increase in interest and in donations for the Liesbeek Maintenance Project
- Subscriptions had decreased; more members needed to be recruited
- The presentation of R2 000 had been made to Liz for her work as unpaid manager of the Liesbeek Maintenance Project
- The income for the Liesbeek Maintenance Project included R600 from Janette Schelpe had been for work done by the Team on her property adjacent to the Liesbeek
- The current assets at year end 2008 were R29 335, up from R24 591 the previous year

Grant thanked SA Breweries, Tuffy Brands who supplied bags and were sponsoring the River Team to work on Mondays, the Newlands Residents' Association, the British Council, the BECO Institute for Sustainable Development which had covered postage costs for a number of years, Aileen Rendall, John Raimondo, the Soul Foundation and in particular members for their support.

The meeting accepted the financial statements following a proposal by Hazel Bowen seconded by Patrick Hurly.

7 Election of Executive Committee

Following a proposal by Kevin, the meeting unanimously endorsed the re-election of the Committee.

8 Closure

The Chairman deferred discussion to allow the speaker to address the meeting.

9 Speaker

Kevin introduced Cliff Dorse, the City of Cape Town Biodiversity Manager, whose passion was veld management. The textbook definition of biodiversity was the totality of variety of living organisms, the genetic differences among them and the communities and ecosystems in which they occurred. Biodiversity had many values, ranging from the intrinsic through the economic to the spiritual. The Cape Town area made up 0.2% of the Republic's land surface, 9 (38%) of the flora were critically endangered, six of its natural vegetation types were found nowhere else in the world, 190 plant species were restricted to the area, and it had 13 extinct threatened plants and 318 threatened plant species – the highest for any Metropole. Threats to the area's biodiversity included the direct loss of 12 km² annually, invasive alien vegetation, sand mining, crime, inappropriate fire regime, mowing and overgrazing.

Di thanked Cliff for his spirited and positive presentation.

The meeting retired for refreshments. Members expressed appreciation to the Wild Fig Restaurant, the Courtyard Hotel, Di Mellon and Beth Reitz for the delicious viands.

Confirmed and signed

Chairman:

Date: