

## MINUTES OF MIDBRAK CONSERVANCY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held at Reebok Hall, Reebok on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Present: Matthew Thorpe (Chairperson - MT), Robin Fick (Treasurer - RF), Sharné Thorpe (Secretary - ST), Anton Dellamijn (Counsellor Ward 5 - AdeL), Thys Gillomee (Municipal Manager), Jan Burger (JB), Stella Logie, George Nezar, Wendy Wiles (WW), Brigit Maritz, Des Muller, Robyn Rowlands, Jeff Rowlands, Coligny Nel, Chris Botes, Pieter Le Roux, Val Thomson, Antoinette Kruger, Johan Muller, Sias Meyer, Johan Maritz, Sue Muller, George Bell, Louis Cook, Joy Cook, Johan Nel

Apologies: Mr Fred Orban (due to time constraints, Mr Orban could not make the meeting which started later than expected).

### 1. Welcome by Chair (MT)

- Conservancy founded in the 1990s
- Believe the reason people have come here is twofold: (1) the welcome break from rushed city life and (2) the incredible nature that is evident here – this is IMPORTANT to consider because it determines what the area becomes or remains and the emphasis for property investment
- The time if we want to save what left is now
- If you are at this meeting then, then hopefully that is because you want to preserve the little that is left

### 2. Reason for choosing AGM as meeting type

MT explains reasons for choosing AGM under current constitution.

- Conservancy had gone dormant. Any route that was to be followed to revive it, had to comply with the routes offered in terms of its current constitution.
- Facts: it was clear that the Conservancy had only fallen dormant, as no resolution has been passed dissolving with a 2/3 majority as required by clause 13.
- An AGM made sense for the following reasons considering facts, and legalities of constitution:

- (1) By process of deduction an amendment of the constitution would require a members' meeting (see clause 10);
- (2) An AGM needs to be held within 3 months of the closure of the financial year (end October), so it would have to be held anyway (clause 7).
- Notice was given in terms of the current constitution:
  - 21 days
  - Cape Nature was notified timeously
  - Members list provided by previous chair were all called
  - Notices were dropped in post boxes or delivered by hand to members on the said list
  - Notices were e-mailed to the e-mails provided on the said list
  - Previous members known to MT were contacted and notified
  - The notice was posted more than once on the Facebook page of the Conservancy
  - The Conservancy meeting was announced 3x on Hartenbos SFM
- The manner of achieving notification was discussed and accepted.

### 3. Quorum

- Announced that R10 being paid to establish new members that could vote. Several new members signed up as a result.
- MT states that those who already in the past became members by paying the then once-off subscription fee, will remain members.
- Accepted at meeting that have a quorum.

### 4. Nature of Conservancy & Pillars

- MT raised the topic of the Midbrak Conservancy/Bewarea being autonomous with a specific purpose. It is important to know that the conservancy needs to be run with a separate set of accounting records and is an autonomous voluntary association of persons with legal personality.
- MT thanked the Chair of the ratepayers, Mr George Nezar for making this point clear at the Ratepayers meeting.
- MT encouraged us to work together with the Ratepayers Association as well as the Neighbourhood Watch.
- What makes the Midbrak Conservancy exciting and unique is not only the number of biomes (4 in total), but more importantly the fact that they co-exist:
  - (1) Dune
  - (2) Fynbos
  - (3) Coastal thicket
  - (4) Estuary
- MT examines the for 4 Pillars that the Conservancy should be focused on (C.R.A.B.):

- (1) Conservation: goal first and foremost – this requires that we involve experts and foster good relations with Cape Nature, funding institutions such as Casino Trust etc. We have also been monitoring the beach for nurdles and require the assistance of the community in spotting this toxic waste as two people cannot be responsible for finding all the nurdles that are possibly on the beach. Mr Johann Muller said he has found nurdles on the Midbrak area beach, so please keep an eye out and inform us should you find any. JM also state while patrolling with the Neighbourhood Watch at night they see plenty of wildlife. MT states that we are very aware of the fauna (Bush buck, duiker etc) that occurs in our area, again we need the support of the other groups as well as the community, and this is not a one man show. Anton Dellelijn also reminded all that there other initiatives like SMART who help with injured and stranded animals, please check our Facebook page and you will see this group has been made aware of such initiatives already.

Erf 271: This is an important subject with regards to which municipality owns this piece of land and what their future plans are for it. Currently there is an intergovernmental dispute between Eden District Municipality and Mossel Bay Municipality as to ownership of this green lung;

- (2) Restoration: this is the most labour intensive on the operational side, and will involve the proper removal of rooiputjie and other invasive species.
- (3) Awareness: here we need to integrate our presence. MT mentions and thanks Wendy Wiles for her initiative and work to get the Conservancy's Facebook page going and maintained, as well as garner so many Facebook members. ST has taken over those reigns from WW. Signage at key entrances to Fraaiuitsig, Reebok, Tergniet, Little Brak and Riverside will be needed to compliment and underpin awareness of the Facebook page. The Facebook page, is a closed group but all who are interested in investing and preserving our conservancy are welcome to apply to join. We hope to develop a website containing all future initiatives such as birding, hiking, park runs, full moon walks, open air exercise classes, ranger election and educational resource centre to mention but a few ideas;
- (4) Benefit: without showing benefit to residents, holiday and other visitors, we will not succeed, or at not at the level that should be our goal. Here MT refers to erf 271 (identifies the area that it covers), and that the vision should be to develop that into an indigenous park where people can go for walks in nature, do birding or mountain bike. MT mentions that if one looks at the situation and the development that has already encircled erf 271, then it is ideal for a 'Central Park' type use. The community needs to be made aware of the benefit of the few green lungs we have left over. Not only will

this benefit the community but it will encourage tourism within our area and support local business.

- MT then discusses some points that Fred Orban would have presented. Mr Orban needs little introduction as a conservationist with the successful Franschmanshoek Conservancy. Mr Orban was recently interviewed in Country Life where he discusses the important role conservancies have to play in ensuring conservation of the little we have left of our natural flora and fauna. . He was the first person in South Africa to open an eco-estate with solar power.
- MT raises the point that property value is also increased by conservancies maintaining the aesthetic natural value of traditional holiday areas. The community needs to be made aware of the benefit of the few green lungs we have left over. Not only will this benefit the community but it will encourage tourism within our area and support local business.

## 5. Initiatives

MT informed those present of what the interim committee had be involved in so far.

May 2017 to present:

- Collating the large body of legislation that applies to various segments within the Conservancy and who has authority, jurisdiction and what their powers are.
- Several lengthy meetings with past Chairs of the conservancy about historical initiatives, environmental reports etc
- Redrafting the constitution to be more up to date, technology friendly and to facilitate the decision making process (similar to latest Companies Act 2008). Although the constitution has increased from 7 to 25 pages, this detail should make running the Conservancy smoother and more certain.
- Meeting with scientific and conservation initiatives in this area, for instance CREW, Garden route Casino Community Trust and Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve.
- Meetings with Fred Orban of Franschmanshoek Conservancy for guidelines on improving our approach to making our conservancy successful.
- Media coverage:
  - Obtaining Conservancy exposure in the Holiday Edition of the Mossel Bay Advertiser;
  - Interview with SFM (Hartenbos Radio) with Fred Orban (*Kus tot Kruin*);
  - Regular Facebook posts.
- Meeting with the Environmental Officer of Mossel Bay Municipality.
- Walks through Conservancy to check on condition, beach clean-up and removing traps.
- Obtaining financial records from Mr Frik Nel in order to take over bank account signing powers.

- Meetings with concerned residents regarding dune and estuary condition.
- Assuming responsibility for the Facebook page. Relaying important information concerning other conservation initiatives in the area such as S.M.A.R.T.

#### Future initiatives:

- Clearing of alien vegetation. Made contact with Casino Trust for monies for the clearing of alien vegetation (rooiputjie/ acacia). Here WW and Jeff have already been instrumental to open up erf 928 again.
- Possible boardwalk construction towards the collapsed end of erf 928.
- Dune integrity will need to be dealt with. MT refers to Jeff's discussion at the Ratepayers about the run-off water from certain new properties in Kusweg that is causing dune damage.
- Fire training similar to the very effective voluntary fire fighters operating in the Cape Peninsula area
- Informal employment for clearing teams or contractors to remove invasive vegetation (EPIP)
- Nurdles clear
- Educational outings with universities and schools
- Park runs
- Bird hide
- Rangers (hence connection with Fred Orban)
- Website for Midbrak Conservancy
- Ms Brigit Maritz asked whether the Riverside Estuary was included in the future Conservancy initiatives as this area also forms part of the Bewarea. MT confirmed this is indeed the case and explained the boundaries of the Conservancy to include from Riverside in the West to the border with Souwesia in the East and also over Impala road. This was seconded by Mr Robin Fick.

#### **6. Selecting of MidBrak Conservancy management committee:**

All present at the meeting agreed to the following appointments to Midbrak Conservancy Committee. MT introduces the interim committee members:

- Matthew Thorpe: commercial attorney background – current interim chair;
- Robin Fick over 40 years at SARS – current interim treasurer;
- Sharné Thorpe: background in events organisation, NGOs – current vice-chair and secretary.

Anton Dellemijn suggested we keep the committee as is for now:

- Matthew Thorpe agreed to be nominated chairperson and was elected as such;
- Robin Fick agreed to be nominated as treasurer and was elected as such;

- Sharné Thorpe agreed to be nominated and was elected to be secretary and vice-chair.

## 7. Financial Statement & position

- MT and RF to join Mr Frik Nel at the bank to sort out signatories on the second bank account. The one account has already been sorted, there is a possibility of a second, and this will be looked into to see if any funds present.
- The amount in the 32 call account as at 10 November 2017 is R17 066.89. MT states that the Conservancy's financials are available to inspect at meeting.

## 8. Adoption of new amended constitution

Proposed amended Constitution was published on the Ratepayers website as per the Notice for the AGM. MT lists key features of the new constitution and the reasons for the changes:

- Calling member and committee meetings easier
- Adopting resolutions easier: Skype meetings or round-robin decisions similar to the current Companies Act 2008
- Quorum adaptations
- 'what if' situations catered for
- Although already largely NPO compliant, made sure of all elements should we wish to go this route

Mr Jan Burger stated on the new constitution that we need to co-opt members. The executive committee can then oversee issues, but we need experts and members to guide and action the Conservancy's purpose. MT undertakes to make this change to the constitution. All are in agreement that the constitution can be amended as proposed with JM's additional amendment.

## 9. Other

- Mr George Nezar requested for the Conservancy to give feedback to the Ratepayers to keep the group informed. MT agreed to meet with all the Chairpersons of each group to do so. MT states that the three BBBs need to work together to ensure each functions effectively.
- Klein Brak has an estuary forum that meets regularly.
- There were no dates confirmed for the new year and will keep all informed as soon as we finalise dates for the next social meeting.

Meeting is adjourned.

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