

Constantia Ratepayers' and Residents' Association

2019 AGM – Chairperson's Report

Introduction

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to this 69th AGM of the CRRA. A particular welcome to the Ward Councillor for Constantia Liz Brunette (who will address you later) and Penny East, Ward Councillor for Tokai and Richard White (the Sub-Council 20 manager). Also our guest speaker, Kier Hennessy who is a Spatial Planner for the City.

Treasury

As you heard from our treasurer Robert Thorp, the Association made a net loss this year and we have had to dig into our reserves to cover costs. The problem is on the income side in that although approximately 100 new members joined, non-payment by existing members was substantially higher.

The CRRA is registered as a Nonprofit Organization and we are in the final stages of registering as a Public Benefit Organization with SARS for tax exemption.

Marketing and Communications

Personalised letters promoting what the CRRA are all about were sent to all 3500 households in Constantia in 2018 and early 2019. This resulted in approximately 150 new members which is a pretty dismal response. We believe that word of mouth is a far more effective marketing approach and again appeal to existing members to encourage their friends and neighbours to join up.

ExCo recognizes that social media plays a more & more important role in communicating, particularly with the younger generation who are moving into Constantia in increasing numbers. To this end we have re-engaged a marketing assistant Jess de Jager, kindly sponsored by ExCo member Peter Stenslunde. She posts daily snippets on Facebook about what is going on in the valley and, judging by the increasing number of followers and comments, it is being well received.

The mid-year event which we held here at Groot Constantia where Tony Leon spoke was a great success and we intend to do the same again next year.

Land Use and Heritage

The continued contribution that ExCo member and Land Use Subcommittee Chair Chris Rousseau has made in preserving Constantia was recognized today in him being awarded a Community Service Award by the City. (Round of applause)

Given the continued trend by City planners and decision makers (i.e. Municipal Planning Tribunals) to promote densification with a 'one-size-fits-all' mind set, ExCo decided that the only way to change things was to try to influence planning policy and legislation through positive interaction with the City. Hence our vigorous involvement in the Southern District Plan review process being spearheaded by Kier Hennessy and we have appointed well known and respected urban designers Piet Louw and Prof. Dave Dewar to guide us. Our guest speaker Kier gave you an insight into the many factors and different dynamics which make this review process a real challenge.

During the year we had a fruitful meeting with the new Mayco member for Spatial Planning and the Environment, Cllr Marian Nieuwoudt. She does recognize that there are certain 'special places' such as Constantia and that it's value as one of the top 6 tourist destinations in Cape Town should be supported and boosted. She also acknowledges that certain planning policies have not worked and supports the CRRA's collaborative approach established with the City in reviewing the Southern District Plan. This after all will shape the form and feel of the Constantia Valley into the future.

Some of the more high profile cases we have dealt with during the year are:

- The Checkers shopping centre on Ladies Mile now named 'The Constantia Emporium'. Our High Court judicial review of the MPT decision was not successful however we did manage to have the costs order awarded against the CRRA withdrawn. We did our best to have it downscaled, however the end product is there for all to see.
- Mount Prospect Retirement Village is on hold pending a decision by Province on the CRRA appeal
- The Purple Rayn Boutique Hotel continues to operate unlawfully without planning permission or a liquor license – a group of neighbours intend to lodge a court interdict to challenge this.
- Constantia Uitsig applied for some major changes to their site development plan. After some vigorous negotiations they have brought it in line with our requirements. They have now been granted a Water Usage License for the new dam – this is being challenged by a group of concerned neighbours.
- The number of halfway houses (rehabilitation facilities) in Constantia continues to grow – there are now 8 that we are aware of. The City consider them as providing a positive social service and so generally approve them regardless of what the neighbours want
- There is a proposed commercial development at the, Constantia Sports Complex (Claremont) Cricket Club. The leases of all the sports clubs expire at the end of the year and the City are changing their 'Sport Facility Policy' whereby clubs need to become more financially sustainable and thus need to find alternative revenue sources. CCC have proposed this commercial development which the City support, however the other sports clubs appear to be opposed to it.

On the positive side, a number of things are coming together which could see the old Constantia Post Office building (just before Chardonnay Deli as you head up to Constantia Nek) being restored. We have met with the reverend Terry Lester who founded the Constantia Heritage and Education Project (CHEP) and his daughter Claire-Anne. CHEP needs a permanent home and so we have teamed up with them to restore this old building which would serve as CHEP's base where they also want to establish a 'Constantia Museum'. We need co-operation from the City who own a portion of the building to make it happen. The Simon vd Stel Foundation have indicated that they may be willing to sponsor this as a project.

Water Management

Thankfully the water crisis feared in late 2017/early 2018 was averted. However the threat did result in many property owners sinking boreholes and often connecting this source to their domestic water supply. A repercussion of this earlier this year was that the municipal water supply was contaminated by borehole water in a certain small pocket of Constantia Hills due to an owner not fitting the correct non-return valve. The problem was isolated and resolved and the City have now inspected most properties with boreholes to ensure compliance.

Fire Protection

An informative public meeting was held in July where representatives from various authorities and a private company spoke about different aspects of wildfires. A summary of this as well as useful tips on how to 'firescape' your property are detailed in our September newsletter. A video was shown simulating a wildfire starting above Rhodes Drive in a south easterly wind and the devastation that could be caused in the whole Constantia Valley if the wind changed to a north westerly.

ExCo member Gordon Chunnnett, who chairs this portfolio, has been trying for some time to persuade SANParks to create firebreaks in the fynbos/forest areas above Rhodes Drive and they have now done this in Cecilia forest.

Green Environment

After 23 years of service handling the Green Environment portfolio, Brian Ratcliffe has decided to 'hang up his hat'. Brian also served on the Land Use subcommittee and is a committee member of the Friends of Constantia Valley Greenbelts which has provided a very useful link between the two organizations. He will be greatly missed.

Brian was instrumental in the De Hel rehabilitation project and his persistent approach to getting things done has certainly kept Parks Department on their toes! He has been responsible for liaising with Growthpoint for the re-cycling facility at the back of Pick 'n Pay and the proceeds are a major source of funding for Friends of the Greenbelts.

So an enormous vote of thanks to Brian for his contribution to the Constantia community for many years.

Constantia Village Servitude Agreement

Growthpoint are understandably concerned about the impact that the new Checkers shopping centre will have on Constantia Village. To this end you have probably noticed a few upgrades, particularly at the main entrances. The CRRA have often suggested improving the landscaping however we are told that budget constraints prevent this. We have also asked that the parking area trees be allowed to grow but apparently this would drastically impede the sight lines of the high level security cameras.

A new proposal for a parking deck adjacent to the Courtyard was emphatically declined.

Roads and Traffic

Thanks to constant pressure from ExCo member Peter Stenslunde, Constantia continues to be allocated an equitable portion of the Southern District budget for road re-surfacing. The new traffic circles at Ladies Mile/Spaanscemat River Rd and Vinyard Rd (near the Alphen trail) are working well and traffic flow has definitely improved. The CRRA have for many

years met resistance from City engineers to use circles rather than traffic lights at critical intersections (as is the trend in Europe and USA)- perhaps the success of these new ones will change this aversion.

We receive many complaints from members regarding minibus taxis – the issues are perennial and not confined to Constantia. In a bid to look for solutions, we had a meeting with senior Metro Traffic officers however what we heard was not encouraging – in a nutshell they are under-resourced so cannot have a sustained presence in any one area. Hopefully changes to legislation whereby the City have more autonomy in the issuing and the administration of operating licenses will improve matters.

Security

With the changes at Constantia Watch earlier this year, the CRRRA has fortunately been able to have 2 of our ExCo members (Gordon Chunnnett and Peter Stenslunde) appointed to the CW management team. This will allow us to get direct feedback on security issues and deal effectively with matters where the two organisations overlap.

Closing

Thanks to our hard working Executive Committee for their contributions and support during the past year. People often forget that this is a voluntary service for the sake of sustaining and improving the Constantia lifestyle for the community.