

The Saxonwold and Parkwood Residents Association ("SAPRA")

Annual General Meeting - 4 November 2020

Chairman's Report

This has been an "interesting" year, giving the old Chinese curse new meaning. This at the World, National, Provincial and at our parochial City levels, which is the level at which we operate. The COVID19 pandemic which has had a profound impact on all of South Africa and also affected every single nation of the world. South Africa has also moved into recession followed by the downgrade in our national debt to junk status, massive unemployment, State Capture and a change in the political leadership of the Johannesburg City. All of this has had an impact on our local service delivery.

Yet SAPRA has withstood these misfortunes and at this AGM I am able to say that our membership numbers have increased, our subscriptions are up, our bank balance is good, and we continue to monitor service delivery and argue the case for our residents.

Membership

As at writing this report our membership numbers are as shown below, compared with the same time last year.

	5 October 2020	Previous Year	June 2019
Paid up Members	254	234	206
Family Members	29	16	15
Paid up Pensioners	49	20	20
Corporates	1	2	2
Subscription Payers	304	256	228

These numbers should be compared to the total possible membership in the two suburbs. We estimate that there are some 2 500 dwellings in SAPRA land. This means that the 303 paying members (excluding Corporates) represent 12% of those that could be members. It is our

intention to try to increase this percentage as, quite simply, the more members we have, the more finances we will collect and the more we will be able to achieve for everyone.

This year we have adopted a policy of providing certain services to only those who are fully paid up members. We consider that those who are prepared to support the common weal should be entitled to preferential attention from SAPRA. Thus, certain web pages which reflect information for which SAPRA has had to expend money, are restricted to members only. Other services, such as advice on heritage, is given to members on a preferential basis. We do this unashamedly as we believe it unfair that some members of the community who do not subscribe should benefit from services and advice for which paying members pay indirectly through their generous subscriptions.

As in the past, all the committee members are volunteers with the exception of our hard-working Secretary, who receives a small stipend.

Town Planning

Your association has been ably assisted by Craig Pretorius from Urban Terrain, who we retain as town planner expert to examine all matters relating to town planning and to negotiate with the city on behalf of our residents.

A number of applications for rezoning have been received and reviewed by Craig. Where necessary he has filed an objection with the City and negotiated the result. Details of the various applications, objections and results may be found by members of SAPRA on the SAPRA website. In particular, SAPRA lodged an objection to an application for rezoning for Ashford House (46 to 48 Bolton road, which is a site bounded by Bolton, Oxford and Ashford roads) and which had contemplated the erection of a building of ten storeys for mixed use.

Notwithstanding the objection, the City approved the application and SAPRA launched an appeal. This appeal was partially upheld and certain uses were excluded from the approval and a splay on the height was ordered.

The Nodal Review Policy 2019/2020 will have a big impact on our suburbs. In particular, it extends the Rosebank Metropolitan Node for heights of up to 10 storeys into the North Eastern part of Parkwood. This will change the character of that part of Parkwood that is bordered by Bolton and Oxford roads, so that we will start to see the extension of the Rosebank Urban development into an area that previously had a suburban character. This is, I guess, inevitable, in any growing city and we must be prepared for this change.

Heritage

During the year we welcomed Mila Ravid to the committee. Mila is an architect who lives and works in Saxonwold and has a keen interest and past experience in older (heritage) buildings.

Mila has agreed to provide heritage advice to all residents of the two suburbs pro bono. Thank you, Mila for this important service.

Mila has replaced Lorin Burgoyne who has always provided good advice on heritage matters in the past. Our thanks go to Lorin for all the work she has done for SAPRA in the past. It is always appreciated.

There have been 14 submissions to SAPRA, seven each for Saxonwold and Parkwood, so far during 2020; all for alterations and additions to existing houses. All were given a 'no objection' from SAPRA.

Unfortunately, only five applications (35%) came from SAPRA members. A reminder that non-member applications must wait for the following SAPRA committee meeting for discussion whereas SAPRA members are entitled to an expedited response (turn-around for members has been within a week - and often less).

Both the Provincial Heritage Resource Authority Gauteng (“PHRAG”) and SAPRA encourage submissions to the resident's association before submission to PHRAG. This allows SAPRA to help ensure that the character of our suburbs is preserved, and we are better able to keep an eye on development from within the neighbourhood. We encourage residents to continue to engage with us on their proposed renovations and alterations.

Security

Costa Qually is our ‘go-to’ man for security matters. He is the chairman of the Rosebank Community Policing Forum and works with the Rosebank police to monitor and report on crime in the two suburbs.

The Rosebank precinct continues to experience low levels of crime in comparison to other precincts within Gauteng. However, that statistic is of little comfort to anyone who has been the victim of a crime. One crime is one crime too many! The ability to have an adequate level of visible policing is dependent on having sufficient officers available.

The Rosebank police station continues to have a shortage of police officers. Whilst this has been acknowledged by SAPS provincial management, no remedial action has been taken. The reason advanced is that there is a general shortage of police officers and preference is given to those police stations in precincts experiencing high levels of serious crime, particularly murder, house and business armed robberies, hijacking and assault.

This situation is mitigated by the continuing high level of security company involvement in the suburbs within the precinct. Regular joint operations between several security companies and SAPS have taken place and are planned for the future. I must mention at this juncture that

CAP Security have been enormously supportive of the work done by SAPRA and where possible have contributed to the efforts being made in the fight against crime.

The coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the precinct. Meetings of the Community Police Forum and weekly security meetings were put on hold from the start of the lockdown. The Rosebank police station has been closed on two occasions after an officer had tested positive for the virus and the station had to be sanitised. A further adverse impact has been an increase in the number of unemployed people. This, in turn, has contributed to a noticeable increase in cell phone snatching, muggings and home robberies. Residents are urged to be extra vigilant, not to wear expensive watches and jewellery when shopping or dining out and to take all reasonable precautions such as ensuring driveway gates are kept closed and avoiding using cell phones in open areas.

Rosebank SAPS and our security companies are to be congratulated for managing to keep crime to a low level in our precinct despite the challenges they have faced.

Parks - Zoo Lake

The Zoo Lake Users Committee ("ZLUC") - a voluntary group of active citizens who give of their time and money led by Fran Haslam - report in to SAPRA and this report is from that committee. We are extremely grateful for the huge amount of work that this committee does to try and rehabilitate the Zoo Lake.

Erosion project

This has been a successful project conducted entirely by this committee and with regular care and monitoring will add greatly to the park. Phases one to six, of eleven have been completed and weeding and mulching of the completed phases continues. The ZLUC have recently upgraded the sprinkler system on the rehabilitated areas and intend to complete the paving, hopefully before the end of this calendar year.

Maccaferri Engineering has agreed to assist the ZLUC with gabions for phases seven and eight. These blocks are used to build the banks and break the strength of flood waters that scour precious topsoil which ends up in the lake. It is also hoped that this will be completed before the year end.

SAPRA are also grateful for all the plants and assistance from the community and the hard work from the ZLUC gardening committee.

Coronation fountain

The fountain has finally been repaired, painted and a new pump installed. A huge thanks to Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo for the assistance in getting this done. This is not only a picturesque feature, but an absolute necessity in assisting with the aeration of the lake.

Zoo Lake Play Park

The New Dawn Rotary club has committed to assist the ZLUC with the upgrade of the children's playground area opposite the Zulas (old Moyo's) car park. They are hoping to upgrade the area and turn it into a fun play park. This will also add a great value to the area and encourage more families to enjoy our green open spaces at Zoo Lake.

Gardening Committee

The gardening committee has started rehabilitating various flowerbeds around the entrance, in the erosion project, and adjacent to the boathouse.

Marketing Team

A marketing team has been established consisting of local residents who will be marketing the ZLUC using social media and setting public relations strategies. A new website has been established and is ready to be activated. A donation website has also been designed and incorporates a Customer Relations Management system. The ZLUC is hoping to launch these within the next few weeks.

Parks - Fearnhead Park

Fearnhead Park was kept closed most of the year due to the lockdown and the fact that it was not regarded as a “exercise park”. Towards the end of lockdown, however, the bases of all the playground equipment were rubberised and the park was opened. CAP Security have agreed to lock and unlock the park every day. My thanks to Tracy Davies who has single handedly worked hard to maintain the condition of the park for all of the residents.

Suburb Cleaning

SAPRA purchased and installed wire rubbish baskets that are installed on street poles strategically placed in the suburbs. This, to encourage people to dispose of their rubbish in a responsible way.

The green team started up again on 11th June after lockdown. They have been very busy cleaning and clearing up the area and have worked really hard. We have received good reports on the work that they have done.

We have kitted out the green team with new SAPRA branded overalls, boots and gloves as well as tools, so they look smart and professional. We are, however, experiencing issues when it

comes to Pikitup collecting the black bags on the street and clearing the SAPRA bins, but we keep persevering and contacting them on a daily basis.

If anyone notices an area that needs a clean-up, please contact Caryn so that she can add it to the list.

Saxonwold Water Pipe Replacement Project

This project started in January and the last few reinstatements are occurring at the date of this report. We are very aware that this project has not been smooth sailing and the patience of all residents have been sorely tested. It has been a big learning experience for us too and hopefully next time the City embarks on a project of this size we will be more prepared. Please note that SAPRA is using the City's Alternative Dispute Resolution framework to engage with the City on the poor quality of work that was done. We are currently waiting for a date to present our case to the oversight committee.

Pressure Valve Project

We are aware that there are still reinstatements outstanding. This project has been split into three different areas, Parkhurst, Parktown North and Parkwood and, with the reduced team available, it has taken longer to complete. I am happy to report that as of Monday the 12th of October the team were actively working on this.

Woolworths Parking Lot

We are engaging with the powers that be to improve this parking lot, namely, to repaint traffic lines and arrows, have a massive clean-up, install SAPRA rubbish bins and install better lighting. This parking lot is used by our residents on a daily basis and is really looking run down and shabby.

Social Media

Our communication with members has had a quantum leap forward with the introduction of the member WhatsApp group. Caryn has been a stalwart in providing information about the suburbs on an instant basis and in the current period of water and electricity outages, information is king. This initiative is clearly a winner as a number of residents have elected to sign up as members in order to be put on the list. Members who allow their membership to lapse are assumed to have left SAPRA land and are removed from the list.

Database

Our membership database is maintained as part of the website and it automates the collection of membership dues from members. Members should receive timely reminders by email, and if

this does not happen please let Caryn know. The database has been designed to be maintained by the members themselves (they have the best information about their own details) and consequently the data quality is better now than it has ever been.

Committee

As was announced at last year's AGM, Tessa Turvey has resigned her position as chairperson but has kindly stayed on the committee to share her knowledge and experience. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Tessa for her invaluable contribution to the committee and to the residents of our two suburbs. She has been a stalwart leader and advocate for the community.

Costa Qually took over the reins from Tessa for six months on the basis that we would have a rolling Chairman, so when he resigned after his six months, I took over this role. I also, therefore, want to thank Costa for his role for the first part of the year.

Malcolm Jewell has been a strength in keeping the books and maintaining a strict discipline on spending and its associated corporate governance. Thanks Malcolm.

Also, to all the others of the committee who have shared the load during the year, I pass on my thanks for their support and help. Gratitude may be considered to be the lively anticipation of future favours and so I trust that I can continue to rely on their support.

Finally and importantly, I want to make special mention of Caryn, our Secretary. I believe that she truly represents the soul of SAPRA and is loved by so many of us in SAPRA land for all the care and support that she always provides. Thank you, Caryn. You are an absolute star!

W.J. Haslam

20 October 2020