

The Saxonwold and Parkwood Residents Association ("SAPRA")

Annual General Meeting - 30 November 2022

Chair's Report

I have pleasure in reporting to the SAPRA membership on the activities of the Association for the past year.

Membership

We have been aware of the growing number of Complexes within our community and historically we have not been able to attract many of the residents of these complexes to become members of SAPRA. In order to attract residents from these complexes, this past year we introduced a new class of member to target this sector of our community which would attempt to address the specific needs of that community. This would allow such complexes to join SAPRA for a fixed levy, depending upon the number of dwelling units that exist in that complex, and allow their residents to become members of SAPRA for no extra levy (in the same way as the family members of an existing SAPRA member become members of SAPRA).

	30 June 2021	30 June 2022	Increase	Latest (30 Oct 2022)
Members	279	271	(2,9%)	282
Pensioners	50	48	(4,0%)	45
Corporates	3	4	33,3%	5
Family Members	29	37	27,6%	36
Complexes	0	1	-	1
Total Subscription Payers	332	324	(2,4%)	333

Total levies received during the financial year amount to R206 104 (2020: R207 195) which represented a small decrease of 0,5%.

The question remains: How does the current membership compare with what we could reasonably expect? In the past we compared the total membership against what was the common unchallenged assumption of the possible universe from which we draw our membership of 2 500 households. However, to my knowledge this assumption has not been verified and accordingly we elected to try and confirm this statistic. We counted the total number of erven within our two suburbs using the latest information from the City of Johannesburg ("CoJ"). The total came to 1 339 erven. To this we added the total number of dwelling units within the 25 complexes for which we have records, of 565 and

subtracted the 25 which would have been double counted. This gave a total of 1 879 households as our estimate of the current universe. On this basis, our penetration rate at the end of October stands at 17,9%. If I were to ignore complexes, as this has only recently been opened to their residents, the penetration rate would be 25,6%. This is better, but we believe that it is still very low. So we will continue to vigorously encourage residents who are not members, to join SAPRA.

There were 2 653 visits to the SAPRA website during the year which was an increase of 15% over the previous year.

Contributions

Many of the tasks that SAPRA could take on, are limited by the amount of money that we have in our kitty and the revenue flow that we obtain from our members. As shown above, the revenue flow from our membership levies has disappointedly remained static for the past year. With this in mind, your committee has reviewed the membership levies and has made the following observations:

1. The current levies were last set in June 2019 and have remained unchanged since then.
2. The comparable levies of other residents associations (namely, Parktown North, Craigpark and Westcliff) are well in excess of our current levies.
3. We need to allow those residents that are unable to afford to pay the levies, latitude to join SAPRA on a reduced levy basis.

The committee consequently elected to increase the levies with effect from 1 January 2023 to the following:

	Current	Proposed	% Increase p.a.	Increase in Revenue p.a.*
Members	R 650	R 800	6,1%	R 43 200
Pensioners	R 400	R 500	6,6%	R 4 700
Corporates	R 1 000	R 1 200	Recently introduced	R 800
Complexes	Variable depending on number of units	Unchanged as this has only just been introduced.		

For those residents who are unable to afford the levy, we have agreed that, on receipt of a written request and justification for a lower fee, we will accept any amount that can be afforded by that resident. It is far better for us to be inclusive and make allowances for unfortunate individual circumstances.

Town Planning

Saxon Square

Last year I mentioned in my report a proposed development named The Saxon Square, on the corner of Worcester and Oxford roads. Members are probably aware of the steps taken by SAPRA to object against the proposed development and details on this matter may be found on our website. This matter has finally reached the stage where SAPRA and the resident of an adjacent property, have filed papers in the High Court for a review of the administrative action taken by the City together with an application for an urgent interdict to prevent the developer from commencing building. We are pleased to report that the CoJ and developer have settled the urgent interdict matter together with costs. The matter will revert to the situation prior to the appeal, which will then have to be reheard.

SAPRA's policy on New Town Planning Applications

There has been a huge number of new development applications submitted by developers as a consequence, we believe, of the passing of the disastrous Nodal Review by the bureaucrats at the CoJ. Their sole intention appears to be densification, regardless of the reasonable wishes of residents, and having no regard for existing infrastructure which is already in a state of disrepair and will inevitably collapse completely with the vastly increased demand.

This pending disaster has been taken up with the CoJ, in a response to the latest SDF (Spatial Development Framework) but, to date, this initiative has been ignored.

SAPRA's policy on dealing with new property developments on behalf of residents has had to change mainly due to the limited availability of our funds and volunteer force. We have simply been unable to responsibly process all those application.

The new approach makes residents primarily responsible for defending the integrity and value of their own properties, using and paying for professional advice as required.

For these reasons, the SAPRA Committee will now only respond to development applications as follows:

1. All newly gazetted applications received from SAPRA's town planner, will be posted onto the website, now open to all residents.
2. Developers lodging applications are required by the regulations to:
 - 2.1. Advertise the application in the Provincial Gazette
 - 2.2. Post a notice in a visible position on the affected property
 - 2.3. Advise neighbours of the details of the proposed development
3. If residents wish to object and/or appeal, SAPRA suggests that they consider using Steve Baylis, the Association's town planning consultant, probably most effectively as a "class action". His contact details are: steve@vbhplan.com.
4. How SAPRA applies its discretion to join an objection will be determined by:

- 4.1. Whether a particular development could set an unacceptable precedent.
- 4.2. The balance of SAPRA funds and other commitments at the time.
- 4.3. The availability of designated committee members.
- 4.4. Its opinion of the likely success of the objection and/or appeal.

Security

The crime situation over the past few months exhibits the normal patterns and within normal parameters and there is nothing unusual to report. Crime generally in our two suburbs is low in comparison with that of other suburbs. Consequently, there are few complaints and the Rosebank CPF consequently consists of a very small volunteer group of three people, chaired by Dr. Bruce Young.

CPF meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at the Rosebank police station at 17h00. Any community member is welcome to attend if they wish to raise any issue. Alternatively, they can communicate directly with the CPF chair, Bruce Young (bruss.young@gmail.com, 082 650 8660) should they have any query.

In addition, Bruce attends a fortnightly Rosebank security meeting 08h30-09h30 on a Thursday where the CPF, the police and security companies exchange information and intelligence.

Parks - Zoo Lake

Erosion project

During the year the South Eastern sector of the lake perimeter and most difficult part of the Erosion Project was completed. This involved the pro bono help of two engineering companies and substantial donations from the surrounding community. This project had required the rebuilding of the lake perimeter which had become seriously eroded and barren. New soil was laid and, in the case of the South Eastern sector, necessitated the construction of an engineered barrier and stabilisation media to hold and stabilise the newly laid soil. Plants, all of which had been donated by the community, had to be introduced to bind the soil and to prevent further erosion. All in all, it was a major construction. Our thanks go to the Zoo Lake Users Committee and their team of volunteered gardeners.

The envisioned Erosion Project has now been fully completed and everyone is invited to view the result of the newly installed indigenous flowers and greenery where previously the banks of the lake were bereft of any greenery being simply rock-hard soil and the roots of the trees protruding from the eroded soil.

Flood protection

Construction on the berms, needed to stop and divert storm waters that flow from flash floods, has commenced. Fran wishes to express her and the community's thanks specifically to Linda Spies who as an engineer, has volunteered her time and money to help establish these berms. At the time of writing this report, the berms have withstood some early-season heavy downpours. Work is continuing to stabilise the soil by introducing indigenous plants that will serve to bind the soil.

Recycling Project

This project which I discussed in last year's report, was successfully implemented during the year. Unfortunately, litter continues to be a problem but now all litter that is gathered in the Zoo Lake park is sold for re-cycling and a part of the proceeds is donated back to the Zoo Lake Users Committee. This has become a material source of income for this organisation. Every dark cloud has a silver lining!

Parks - Fearnhead Park

During the year SAPRA spent some time and money cleaning up this park and pathways, removing the weeds, trimming the trees and cleaning the beds. There has been some disquiet voiced by some in Eastern Parkwood that SAPRA doesn't care for that community. This hopefully will still those voices, but I would like to encourage those that have these feelings to get involved and become part of the solution. Thanks are due to Tracy Davies for organising this cleanup.

In keeping with SAPRA's policy of building a community spirit, the Events team organised an Easter Egg hunt for families in our community with small children at the Fearnhead Park. This was well attended and everybody had fun. Our compliments and thanks go to Alison Levesley and her Events team (see below for more details of this team).

This park has recently been the venue for the Movie Night at the beginning of Spring - an event which was well attended. Proceeds from this event have been earmarked for future developments of this park. Thanks to the Events Team - Alison Levesley, Bronwyn Crosse, Lenore Beilings, Tracy Davies and Marcelle Ravid for all their hard work. Not only was this a success financially, but for SAPRA the event was a success in our drive to build community spirit.

Committee

I am pleased to welcome Jonny Bagg who has elected to join the Committee and taken over the role of Treasurer from Malcolm Jewell. Jonny is a well known actuary and will be a very able, competent and responsible manager of our funds. We thank Malcolm Jewell for his hard work in the past and for spending time handing over the batten to Jonny.

We also welcome Terry Rensen and Ronald Ennik, both of whom have agreed to take on the challenging portfolio of Town Planning. Terry agreed to chair a Town Planning sub-committee and has invited Michael Gristwood and Paul Barron onto that committee. Steve Bayliss continues to act for SAPRA as its Town Planning consultant and provides professional support for this sub-committee. Thanks to all for their invaluable work in this problematic portfolio. Terry has elected to resign from the main SAPRA committee so that he can concentrate his efforts on investigating and possibly introducing a Precinct Plan. I will pick up the responsibility for temporarily chairing the Town Planning committee pending a new appointment.

I am pleased to report that Michael Gristwood has made himself available to join the main committee and I welcome him on board. Thanks Michael for your support and help.

Sadly, we have had to say goodbye to Tracy Davies who has been such a stalwart looking after Fearnhead Park but who has now agreed to spend more time with her husband in their very successful, growing and demanding business. Thanks to you, Tracy, for all your hard work and your support which you gave so willingly in the past.

In addition, we say farewell to Ilan Sparrius and Mila Ravid both of whom have increased demands from their day jobs. Ilan, you will remember, was the person who planned and delivered on the big job of repainting all the road signs in our two suburbs - a job that was extremely well done. She was also involved with Tracy in arranging the regular Blood donations set up for our community. Thanks, Ilan for your contribution.

Mila Ravid has been our mainstay for Heritage advice and has given this advice freely for the benefit of our community and for that we are extremely grateful. Thanks Mila, we wish you well.

Every now and again one finds a bright young star and in Alison Levesley, we have found such a star. Alison has joined the SAPRA Committee and agreed to form an Events sub-committee. She has appointed Bronwyn Crosse (another such star!) and Lenore Beilings to her committee and we can all see what an incredible team this is in setting up and running the Easter Egg hunt, Movie Night and the Halloween event to rave reviews. As I have often mentioned, I see that one of SAPRA's important roles is to actively build the community spirit within our two suburbs and these events are important to that end.

I must also mention Bronwyn's help in maintaining the SAPRA membership. I provide her with a list each week of those members who have lapsed and those that have joined. Although she is a very busy person, she finds time to phone each of those lapsed members to find out why they lapsed, to hear their reason and to hopefully provide a solution where possible - A very valuable resource for SAPRA indeed.

Our Committee needs and has in Marcelle Ravid, a very capable and knowledgeable Secretary to make things happen. Thanks, Marcelle, for what you do for the community, the Committee and for me. It is always appreciated.

State of the Suburbs

Last year I spoke of the deterioration in the level of service delivery provided by the CoJ. Whilst there have been some improvements, the latest chaos in the Council has indicated that we can expect that this deterioration will continue. Whilst we all feel the frustration that this elicits, we cannot simply complain and expect this to change. I don't want to hear complaints - I want to hear you getting involved. SAPRA simply needs more people to help. We all have the ability to help solve some of the problems by getting involved. It doesn't have to be hours of your time - every bit of support is helpful in whatever way you feel you could contribute. Let's work together to engender a spirit of a successful community. You would be amazed at how this potential for positivity can gather strength and literally create miracles.

Finally, as I mentioned in my report last year, I wish to step down as Chair. I am very aware that service in a voluntary organisation has an implied 'sell by date' of seven years. This will shortly be my ninth. I have made my feelings known to the Committee and have asked it to find a new Chair. I will continue to be part of the Committee, if required.

W.J. Haslam
30 November 2022