

RERA 2024 Report

My first and most sincere hope is that all reading this or attending our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 28 December can agree that the RERA 2024 Exco has conducted itself with openness, care, tolerance, honesty, pragmatism and timely and tactful communication. And as a result we have allowed all who communicated with us to feel heard, responded to and respected. Especially those who might not have agreed with something we did or asked for our help. That was certainly our intention and focus throughout.

The key enabler of this collaborative and fully representative approach becoming normalised in the future is our new constitution we will vote on at the AGM. Rooiels is indeed fortunate to have the energy and support of Achim Halpaap leading us through the many consultative and iterative steps needed to get us properly to a place where our association has a chance adopt an up to date and more inclusive constitution that addresses expressed concerns, and meets the criteria members laid down at our last AGM. Anyone who has paid attention can only be in awe of the thoroughness of the steady, step by step process that took the best of all the many previous efforts and enabled a workable operating system for the volunteers who are prepared to serve our community.

But nothing is perfect, and our proposed Resolution members will vote on at the AGM therefore encourages to identify lessons learned and make possible further adjustments in 2025 if needed based on feedback received. Our hope is that given this flexibility members can allow next year's Exco to operate under the new constitution while working through finessing it if need be.

But if the new constitution is the enabler of a much easier and simpler future, much more in keeping with the small size of our village population, it is the hard work of problem solving that has kept your Exco busy through the year. Perhaps unexpectedly we've had fun doing it all and, thanks to th many kind messages of thanks and support, felt well supported by the community. And perhaps because of that have achieved an amazing amount. For a full list of all we have worked on, achieved and failed at you can view our monthly minutes on our web page. But here are the highlights past and ongoing:

With Christoph Weichsler leading us, we joined a joint working party with RESA and REC to properly consider the development of a Special Ratings Area, SRA, whereby all in the village can contribute to maintaining our mutual security against crime. The plan was fully developed and presented to the municipality (OM) only to fall foul of an unsuspected issue: OM will not support an SRA in an area where more than 5% of erven are behind in their rates. We are much worse than that, we suspect because Rooiels has an unusually large number of empty plots whose owners are under no effective legal sanction if they don't pay their rates. We will nonetheless continue to work with RESA and REC and all ratepayers and residents to try to make progress through 2025. The benefits are more than worth the ongoing effort.

If crime is a key threat, fire is another, and RERA has sought through the year to work with REDI, RESA, and REC to improve our village's fire-prevention and, when the time comes, as surely it will, our fire-management. After recent rapid progress, next year's Exco will, we propose, work with the other bodies specifically to develop our Firewise policy to sit within that of the very well developed and led Pringle Bay Fire Fighters. We will propose that they lead our fire prevention, giving their much bigger scale and resource and proximity – close enough to be swiftly on call, far enough to make it very unlikely one fire will threaten both simultaneously. The SRA effort shows that our village bodies can work together in common cause and we hope to encourage more of this. In this regard we would like to pay tribute to the wonderful efforts of Rooiels Outreach in uniting us all in helping those far less lucky than we are, and those of the Rooiels medics, who

are now ready and able to react to calls for help from those in the village in emergency first line medical support. Next year's Exco will make every effort to work with all the other village bodies, each of which is able to be represented at our meetings.

Beyond the existential threats of crime and fire, lies the balance between maintaining the historic 'wildness' of our Biosphere village and best serving the needs of all who live here, particularly the increasing number who have made Rooiels their permanent home. We are again very fortunate to have an absolute expert on property and planning law and related infrastructure issues on our Exco and serving all in our community. Nigel Burls is a highly regarded professional in the field and has worked all year with OM to ensure all developments – yes, even the 2 huge ones on Roella Road – are conducted within planning rules. Along the way he has curtailed or forestalled several that weren't. All without rancour or controversy or division in our village. And though the rain did it's best to return our roads and storm-water drains to nature, with the cash and resource-strapped OM unable to respond in a timely fashion, Nigel has ensured that the worst damage has been repaired. Even Roella Road is currently navigable. Next year we need to tackle the fibre debate, and are considering how best to support another cross-village working party to deliver a solution acceptable to all, within the Rooiels vision. There's nothing to say that RERA has to lead this, but in most communities the equivalent would, and though we do not have relevant expertise, we will look to enable those in the village who do, to plot the right path for Rooiels.

This is just one area where, as I noted in Die Bries, "RERA's key points of focus have shifted in recent years, perhaps reflecting the stresses caused by our village's ongoing change from being a collection of holiday homes and weekend cottages, to being one of South Africa's more desirable places to make a permanent home." Another such area is our co-existence with our Baboon troop. We are in no doubt that the majority of our members and residents in Rooiels are in favour of the status quo, which can be described as "trying to manage the humans, not the baboons", and proud of the recognition we get for the relatively peaceful co-existence we foster through our collective tolerance. But there are an unknown number in our village who do not agree. Some vociferously. In Pringle Bay a project is underway to see if it is possible to permanently drive their troop from the village. While this has resulted in many cruelties and much conflict among Pringle Bay residents, RERA decided at outset, that while individually many of us supported those who protested against the project because of the inevitable cruelties to baboons that would ensue; we as an organisation would wait until the project concluded before making any comment. That conclusion has just been postponed for another 6 months. We have in the interim co-funded with REC, a larger and better trained and more impactful team of Baboon Information Officers to help visitors manage their behaviors to better avoid incident particularly near the shops.

I've noted 3 key Exco members above, but it's Lesley Lundie who not only keeps us financially sound, but is able to invest our members funds, profitably in the re-issue of the Rooiels book, (just about sold out) as well as through donations to the Medics and funding the BIOs and the gardening done by Ruben Barnardo and contributing to the fees of the graphic artist whose work you will already be seeing in the R44 safe-driving campaign on social media. And Steve Mullins, despite the pressures of a full-time executive job gor our membership mailings and WhatsApp links out in a very timely fashion. The 6 who started the year attending EXCO meetings became 7 when, in his capacity as Chair of the Boat Club, REBC, John Biesmann-Simons joined us in an often important and valuable non-exec role. Pieter Labuschagne who had joined to do the vital OM Ward 10 liaison job had to resign in order to care for his father and business at home in Tshwane, but Anuta Scholz kindly stepped in to reprise her long standing experience of that role,

as a co-opted member. Achim of course served as above in the same capacity, and Mike MacCarthy helped us make great progress on R44 safety where the rumble strips remain a goal, but the speed camera on the hill is now working and thanks to the campaign, police motorbikes are now often seen at weekends and bank-holidays, when we have also called for breathalyser units to be deployed by OM SAPS.

While the success of that campaign will hopefully follow, another has been successfully completed. OM revised their policy on plot and road verge clearance to allow indigenous flora to remain intact while all aliens must be removed, this is a huge improvement as a result of long term lobbying by many, including RERA.

The loud music on Sunday afternoons at the Drummond Arms following its otherwise successful change of management, caused protest from their village neighbours, and RERA has sought to intervene to reduce the volume and period of the music so as to mitigate that disturbance, while still allowing the many locals who spend time in the pub to have fun in what is a long-standing and popular village amenity. That's taken close contact with the owners, and we hope to extend that to the other 3 fine businesses in our CBD too. RERA feels Rooiels is lucky indeed to have our business owners. There is no easy money and we need to work with them to help them succeed by enhancing village life.

But if those are the highlights of the much we have achieved, there are as I noted in "The Breeze", for which creation, editing and production we all need to thank Willie du Plooy, many things we still need to get right. "There is still a huge amount to be done in road and flood repairs, and only the independent good work of a few has helped maintain the village walkways. Our co-operative stance towards the OM, through regular attendance at the Ward 10 meetings and courteous though demanding engagement with management, has helped us achieve what we have, but much more needs to be done and pushed for. And we have not held open meetings nor produced the quarterly newsletters nor updated our website or polled our members on some of our decisions, as we should have."

So we need to strengthen RERA's ability to get things done, and also ensure that full-time residents are properly represented. Last year 4 out of 6 exco members were full-timers, and it would be good to maintain that 2/3 majority if possible.

Throughout the above, when I've talked of the future, I should have said, "if elected for 2025". Nigel and Lesley and Christoph and I have agreed to stand for election and we form a happy, diverse and effective team. While others are prepared to put their name forward, we'd really like to broaden recruit more full-timers. So if YOU would like to play a part next year please get in touch immediately. Your village needs you!

Over to you RERA members, and Rooielsers all!