



Neighbours and friends,

Thank you to all of those attending this online AGM – the legacy of our emerging post-covid lives- though we fully intend to have an in-person AGM in 2023 with additional online access for those that prefer to stay at home.

It has not been an easy few years for Parkhurst nor for the City in which it is situated. The lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 forced us all into our homes and into ourselves- straining and sometimes severing links with neighbours and the community at large. 2022 was a year of tentative rebirth but into a world much changed in so many respects. What has not changed is the sad trajectory of our City - with coffers exhausted after years of paying staff to do very little, already strained budgets further stretched by the enormous backlog of infrastructure issues that accumulated during the lockdown years and political instability ever present. The days of “business as usual” or hoping for things to improve for residents and their associations are certainly at an end, for the time being.

A return to worrying mostly about whose dog may have made a mess of someone’s flower patch would be a welcome turn of events but until then a far more actively engaged citizenry is going to be required to arrest the decline of our suburbs. Our roads remain potholed and our streets unmarked. Our curb inlets have not been cleared in a decade. Our substations are old, unkempt and mostly insecure and our streetlights work intermittently at best. There are ongoing issues with displaced peoples and the many social ills related. None of this is going to improve without far more engagement with various city structures and an increase in a willingness to do it ourselves where the city resources cannot.

Our chief aim for 2022 and early 2023 was to review our structures and constitution to ensure PRABOA is fit for purpose as well as adequately resourced, as we face up to the increased requirements being demanded of us. I am pleased to say that we have initiated several constitutional amendments to finally bring us in line with SARS requirements for PBO’s and should be able to take advantage of this status in our future fundraising efforts.

A new PRABOA structure that considers the increased workload and need for far better communication with stakeholders has been drafted and is in the process of being implemented.

After an extended period of relative quiet PRABOA initiated a series of re-engagements with residents via online Q&A sessions and meetings at the Moth Hall. A fantastic result of which has been the formation of a new Parkhurst Volunteers Group, with nearly 50 residents putting their hands up! This group possesses amongst its members some much-needed skills for Parkhurst, be it civil or electrical engineering, local government liaison or marketing and

communications. Members have been involved in the Spruit Day Clean-up in October and the more recent suburb-wide infrastructure audit that is giving us a granular sense of the task at hand and will later form the basis of our new Infra Structure Committee.

We have initiated a pilot project with a local NGO that will provide Parkhurst with a clean-up and works team on a regular basis. Focus will be on the spruit, parks and public areas and will expand to cover more as our ability to fund this grows.

On the crime and safety front it has been a mixed bag this year. There was a period of upheaval with the sudden exit of Cortac – our appointed public space security provider, in May but this has thankfully stabilised. The appointment of 24/7 Security in the wake of Cortac's exit has been very positive however, with significant improvement in service levels and the use of technology deployed. SafeParks has also begun securing larger substations with 24/7 managing access, to guard against vandalism and theft.

As a result of these efforts all of our tracked crime indicators are down substantially year-on-year and we do hope that those residents not currently supporting the SafeParks initiative will now be convinced of the merits of the scheme and sign up!

We have recently launched an appeal for increased financial support for PRABOA beyond the traditional membership fee. PRABOA has an average operating cost in excess of R15000 per month but this is expected to rise substantially as we look to appoint a full-time administrator, pay for regular clean-ups and stormwater maintenance, initiate smaller fixes and maintenance of our electrical infrastructure and begin to manage the repainting of our own street markings etc. All of which requires ongoing financial support – made all the more sustainable if that load is shared amongst our 2000 households and 200+ businesses.

So, though not without its challenges, Parkhurst remains one of this city's shining residential lights when the lights are on! There are very few other suburbs that can boast a combination of the vibrancy of a high street like 4th avenue, the well-used and attended parks as well as the relative safety and walkability of our suburb. It is up to all of us to ensure we keep it this way and to support PRABOA as it endeavours to do so.

Though increasingly frustrated with the City's inability to help, PRABOA works with and remains grateful to Cllr Tim Truluck who brings much relevant information to our attention that we might otherwise have missed. His is not an easy job in the current climate.

Comings and Goings

With the passing of time, the pressures of lockdown, the general grind of volunteering and the new requirements of PRABOA there has naturally been change within the committee itself.

I have not yet been in the Chairpersons position for a year and would like to take this opportunity to thank those committee members stepping down for their many collective years of dedication to the suburb and to a job often thankless and frustrating.

To Cheryl Labuschagne our previous Chair for many years of staunch leadership. To Chris Diamond our legal eagle for his scrupulous attention to detail and willingness to hold us all to account. To Ryan Hawthorne our technical and technology whizz who will remain semi-active in the background. To Gabriella Seco who has led our Town Planning team for some time in the face of constant planning pressures and resident demands. Finally Paul Johnson who has earned his retirement to the coast and without whom Verity Park would no doubt be a weed-infested mess.

Thank you all for your service and the many hours freely given to trying to improve the suburb for the benefit of all residents.

With all the goings there are also several new members to consider. We welcome:

Pat Sullivan, a long-time resident with excellent experience in the government and NGO sectors who will take an active role in stakeholder engagement and liaison with Parkhurst Primary.

Paul Booth, who will be assisting with organisational strength and sustainability as well as taking over the Parks and Environment portfolio from Paul Johnson.

Laura Strydom, an architect who has been a member of the Town Planning committee but now is welcomed as a full committee member.

Rogan Swart, a certified accountant who will be assisting in the finance and funding function

Please join me in welcoming our new members. We hope to add more during the course of 2023 as some of our more active volunteers and other residents are hopefully convinced to become more formally involved in the mission to safeguard our suburb.