



Half-Yearly Report Back to Members

A great deal has once again happened during the first half of the year and it is once again appropriate that a half-yearly report be submitted especially for those members who are not permanent residents. We are constantly being faced with challenges which we endeavour to address with great discretion but unfortunately often with disappointing results.

Since the **Draft Budget** was released in April, the Association has actively engaged the Overstrand Municipality on certain aspects of the proposed sharp increases on rates and tariffs. Whilst we appreciate that the municipality has had to compile a budget under very difficult economic circumstances they also have to appreciate that these increases are likely to impact adversely on retired folk who are already feeling the pinch. The sad reality is that there are an increasing number of pensioners heading for poverty in retirement. They are caught up in the trap of low interest rates and increasing costs, particularly for health care and administered prices such as petrol, electricity and property rates.

Despite our ongoing assertions about certain aspects of the budget the municipality persists with certain increases which we regard as not only unfair but also unjustified. Although our views were ‘heard and noted’ we have failed to make an impression on them. The budget received quite a lot of adverse publicity in the media which also led to unprecedented protest action.

The final budget was subsequently tabled on 29 May with slight adjustments. The average rates increase on developed residential properties has been set at 4.05% and at 6.03% for business properties. Exemptions and rebates will be available on residential properties to lessen the plight of the poor while there are also rebates for guesthouses, B&B’s and agricultural properties to stimulate economic development. Unfortunately an unreasonably high rate increase of 63.4% is to be levied against undeveloped land which the municipality insists it is entitled to do. The municipality conveniently appears not to have taken cognizance of the fact that undeveloped properties are already being charged ‘availability’ tariffs for water (incl. infrastructure), sewage (incl. infrastructure) and refuse removal and now face a further 63.4% increase in rates. It remains our contention that it is unfair for the municipality to arbitrarily impose a different rate against undeveloped property. We are of the opinion that the municipality must adopt a policy consistent with the Municipal Property Rates Act on the levying of rates on rateable property. The Act does not differentiate between developed and undeveloped Ervin but the municipality unfortunately has a different interpretation. We also requested the methodology used to determine such a high rates increase as it is our assertion that they arrived at this unrealistic figure so as to generate additional revenue to balance the budget. The reasons given by the municipality for the introduction of a new category of rateable property of ‘vacant land’ which will be rated more highly than the category ‘residential property’ is inter alia, the following:

- To encourage property development.
- To encourage densification in line with the integrated development plan.
- It is preferable to the municipality to have properties within its jurisdiction which are developed and occupied.
- The need to encourage residential occupation of properties, as this is a municipality where many people seek to retire.
- The category of vacant land will be in line with the actual use and not just the permitted use.

The municipality however fails to address the important issue of whether our ailing infrastructure has capacity to sufficiently maintain and efficiently cope with such additional development that it now encourages and the fact that it will place a further burden on the financial constraints of the budget, which is likely to attract additional taxes.

Water tariffs will increase by 18.23%. The free 6kl water allocation which we enjoyed in the past will fall away and would only now apply to registered indigent households. Consumers would in future have to pay R3.50 per kl for the previously free allocation.

Water consumption scales are estimated to be as follows per kilo litre:

> 6	= R3.50	
7-18	=R 9.25	8.8% increase
19-30	=R 15	9.7% increase
31-45	= R23.10	9% increase
46-60	=R30	4.6% increase
> 60	= R40	39.4% increase



The tariff for sewage will increase by 18.83% and refuse removal will increase to R140 per month, an increase of 8.53%.

As can be seen most increases are way above the inflation rate.

Municipal Accounts. Attention has been given to the discrepancies in municipal accounts since the appointment of the new Contract Meter Readers who appear to be operating at random as readings are not being taken on a regular monthly basis. Accounts consequently fluctuate from month to month. The Municipality appears to be charging an average but when readings are eventually taken it shows a much higher consumption of water which will attract much higher rates as it is determined on a sliding scale. To charge residents with a lump sum after a couple of months will surely lead to much higher rates being charged at the top of the scale. This problem did not exist with the previous meter reader. The municipality acknowledged that there were problems with the Contractor and that the matter was under **investigation**.

Closure of Beach Boulevard. This has emerged once again after some 3 years. The municipality is now seeking to amend conditions set down by the Provincial Minister in 2010 but never adhered to. Deep concern is being expressed by affected parties about the latest developments. We have had several meetings with affected parties and municipal officials. Several letters of objection to the amendments have been submitted to Council. Affected parties are also questioning the reason for wanting to rezone the area to an Open Space III Nature Reserve. The notice does not clarify much but the definition of 'nature reserve' may include 'accommodation facilities for tourists or holidaymakers'.

Management of Dunes and Sand Drift. We previously reported on the case brought by a group of homeowners of Nerine Crescent against the Overstrand Municipality applying for an order for the OM to keep clear the road and verges of any beach sand. Judgment was handed down in March and the court ruled in favour of the OM. Feedback from the Municipality was requested especially after the recent ruling that in terms of the Road Ordinance the Municipality would only be obliged to maintain roads classified as either "**main**" or "**divisional**" roads "**in so far as funds permit**". In other words it would appear as if the Municipality would not be obliged to do what it cannot afford. There also appears to be no obligation to maintain "**minor**" roads. Most, if not all roads in Betty's Bay are classified as "**minor roads**". The Municipality also maintained in its submission to the court that it is "**struggling with a dwindling capital and operational budget**" and did not have the financial capacity at present to stabilize the sand dunes. It is important for the community to know how this is going to impact on the rest of our roads and verges especially if the municipality does not have the financial resources to maintain them.

The Municipal Manager has emphasized that the municipality would not be insensitive to the problem and was committed to assisting home owners where necessary but would confine itself to budgetary constraints.

The Manager also drew attention to the Integrated Development Plan of the municipality where mention is made of certain areas in Betty's Bay that are affected by Driftsand which is threatening the existence of residences and that the municipality is in the process of drafting an appropriate management plan for the dunes. They have also delivered inputs with respect to the placement of setback lines in order to promote the ecological management of the dunes and to protect private property from coastal processes. Area management teams will be clearing road surfaces of dune sediment as an interim management measure.

Information is that affected parties are in the process of establishing an interest group of affected property owners in the Nerine and Morea Roads so as to speak with a combined voice.

Crime. We continue to be plagued by increasing incidents of housebreakings on a week by week basis despite us having an active involvement with SAPS and the CPF. The Neighbourhood Watch system has been very active. More Wardens are however desperately needed to be recruited if we are ever to reduce crime in the area. A few Wardens simply cannot win this battle alone. Many areas remain unprotected simply because they consist mainly of unoccupied holiday homes.

Unfortunately, many residents mistakenly believe that crime does not exist in the village. It has to be recognized that in most cases it may be possible to minimize and control crime but it will never be removed altogether. This is where property owners need to take responsibility to minimize their risk and look after their possessions. If everyone takes due care it minimizes opportunity and temptation. For example, do not leave items of value exposed in the car, lock doors and install adequate alarm systems.

Due to continued suggestions that Betty's Bay seriously consider a CCTV system we established a steering committee to test the market and came up with alarming results. We are looking at anything in excess of R1mil per year to equip and administer the area not to mention monthly levies. We would have to get the entire community to



buy into it to make it affordable to each household but this would by no means be an easy task especially because we have many absent homeowners who are not particularly interested in even taking simple precautions like installing intruder alarm systems. To achieve this we would also have to involve the municipality who would also charge an admin fee to deduct monthly levies. There are certain reservations about the effectiveness of CCTV in a township like BB which has numerous entrances and exits. We also have other organisations whose prime objective is to combat poaching but do not seem to want to invest in any measures of their own. A public participation process would in any case have to be undertaken and we would have to get a 50+1 support before we can even contemplate such a move. Pringle Bay spent in excess of R350,000 on their installation of 4 cameras and software which came from donations. Also they are faced with a monthly administration fee of R1000. Despite their installation they are still experiencing housebreakings which are gradually increasing. Accesses by perpetrators are now on foot and not by vehicle. Perpetrators easily learn how to circumvent security measures.

This matter will need to be discussed in more detail at our AGM in December.

Protest Actions. As mentioned, the budget received quite a lot of adverse publicity in the media and also lead to unprecedented protest action in front of the municipal offices in Kleinmond by predominantly white pensioners where a petition was handed over to Councillor Appelgrein. There was also a protest march by Xhosa residents from the informal settlement demanding improved service delivery. A petition was also handed over to Councillor Appelgrein. A third protest action by Proteadorp residents took place on Youth Day when they marched on houses identified by the community as houses allegedly involved in the sale of drugs. These actions all in the same month are a clear indication of the discontent that currently prevails in the Hangklip-Kleinmond area.

Membership. As we have informed you in the past it is not our practice to send out invoices annually in respect of membership fees. The reason for this is to save unnecessary costs to your organization.

Our year begins on 1 November annually and the constitution states that you have until the end of April to pay your subs. To our mind this is too long a period and we intend to propose an amendment to our constitution at the next AGM to make membership fees payable by the end of January annually.

This will enable us to begin sending out reminders to members at an earlier stage. From a cost perspective we would prefer to utilize E-mails for this purpose and therefore appeal to members to ensure that we have your E-mail addresses on record if you have not already supplied them. Additionally please advise us of any change in your E-mail addresses.

Please refer to the inside of the "Buzz" for payment instructions.

For your information here is the position with regard to membership as at 10 June 2013.

- 395 Members

80 Members have yet to pay their current membership fees as at this date. Queries have been sent out as follows:

- 51 by E-mail
- 19 by Letter
- 10 by Phone

Those who received letters were given until 15 June 2013 to effect payment. The balance will be again contacted and should we not received payment by 30 June we will unfortunately have to remove their names from our membership list.

Come on guys we need to have as many members as possible to give us clout in dealing with the authorities. At the moment Betty's Bay Ratepayers Association has the largest membership of any such association in the entire Overstrand area.

Financial Report. The Treasurers Financial Statement is attached separately.

Farewell. After many years of loyal service, more than one can care to recall, we have bid farewell to **Avril Nunn**, a long standing executive committee member. Her enthusiasm and energetic service to the community of Betty's Bay was greatly admired and we are very sorry to have bid her goodbye. She has relocated to a retirement village in Somerset West.

Street Numbers. The municipality undertook an exercise to allocate street numbers for houses in the three villages. This exercise has been completed and homeowners will have noticed that both their Erf and Street numbers appear on their monthly accounts. However, some properties especially those on corners or on the boundaries of two streets may have been allocated two street numbers. In this case owners will need to advise the municipality under which street/number they would prefer to be registered.



Fire and Emergency Support Services. Wendy Tawse reports: The hot dry summer season has elapsed yet this seasonal change does not mean that we may rest on our community fire awareness. Winter brings relief by increasing the water load in our fynbos causing it to burn slower than in the heat of a dry fire season, therefore an ignition should be easier to contain and hopefully full suppression is achieved before it becomes a wild run away fire destroying our homes and causing serious injury.

The Betty's Bay Volunteer Community Fire Fighters were kept busy during the first half of 2013. In total they responded to no less than 8 fire call outs, 1 motor vehicle accident and 1 sea rescue.

In the earlier hours of 14 February a call-out was received to respond to a fire that was purposefully ignited by an arsonist in 'old-veld' threatening our village at large. The weather conditions of a gusting north westerly wind and the density of the ignition site caused the fire to run. The response of the night watch crew from Kleinmond and the few members from the Betty's Bay Volunteer Community Fire Fighting team united to put to rest a daunting task. Crews were on the flanks with water-lines. It was a scenario that evolved quickly and the team effort of those involved including community traffic wardens and security made the formal chain of community service grow stronger. The hydrant was the key resource to combat this threat on that early morning. It was visibly well demarcated, no vegetation engulfed the aid and it was easily accessed. This was one of but a few call outs the Volunteers had to attend during the season. Although they are only a hand full, they all work well together as a team and I am extremely proud to be their Team Leader!

During the January, February, March and April, the Betty's Bay Volunteer Community Fire Fighters were very busy (when we weren't busy fighting fires) at the Fire Station, giving it a face lift. We are very proud to announce that the station has been painted out, tiles laid, ceiling boards put in and we even have shower and toilette facilities, although not 100% complete yet due to funding. We still need to give attention to the paving outside the station, which needs to be filled up with gravel and levelled out, but due to a lack of funding, this is still outstanding.

During May and June the Overstrand Fire and Rescue Services as well as the Betty's Bay Volunteer Community Fire Fighters will be embarking on their annual hydrant mechanical checks. Help to entrench the FireWise Community spirit and clear around your nearest hydrant, as it may be used at any time to save your home and/or your neighbours. In the case of a fire be ready to guide the responding teams to your hydrant – it could save lives.

On Wednesday 5 June, a meeting was held with residents staying between High Level Road and Seaview Drive, who have requested that a control burn be done above their properties for ecological reasons as well as for safety. Also present at the meeting was the Overstrand Fire and Rescue Services, Overstrand Municipality, CapeNature and Betty's Bay Ratepayers Association. All seem to be in favour of the burn but agree that proper planning needs to take place. A steering committee was elected to meet and continue with the planning for the control burn.

The Betty's Bay Volunteer Community Fire Fighters wish to make an appeal to all members of the community to note the nearest hydrant too your home and assess its key component – its visibility. Winter in the Cape means heightened vegetated growth – so please, if bodily able, cut back, dig-out and remove the new growth before it becomes too well established.

Rooiels, Pringle Bay and Betty's Bay are part of a FireWise Community. What is a FireWise Community? ***It is when every property owner works to reduce their Personal Fire Risk as well as the Community Fire Risk.*** What can one do to reduce the fire risk?

- Remove All dead vegetation from your property and verge;
- Remove all fast burning Alien invasives (Rooikrans, Pampas Grass, Port Jackson, Black Wattle, Gum Trees, etc); and
- Remove bushes close to windows, glass doors, wood decks or beams, etc.
- A well maintained garden will reduce the fire intensity and help slow down the fire's progress. New gardens can be laid out as FireWise gardens and if yours is an established or natural fynbos garden, you should work towards achieving a FireWise garden.
- It is vital to be properly insured.

As fire is a constant danger to our village it is advisable to stick to the FireWise Rules:

NEVER:

- Light a braai if there's the danger of sparks flying
- Leave a fire unattended
- Discard cigarette butts or fire coals randomly
- Burn garden rubbish (unless with a permit)



- Set off fireworks (unless in a designated area)

ALWAYS:

- Braai with a hosepipe on hand
- Extinguish our braai fires completely
- Keep our gardens free of alien vegetation and dead wood
- Keep tall vegetation away from windows and decks

If proven liable, you can be held responsible for all the costs of damage caused by a fire you start! Fire-fighting costs alone could run into millions of rands. The Overstrand Municipality Fire Department consists mainly of volunteer fire-fighters. So you can see that it is vital that the Municipality, property owners and voluntary fire-fighters work together to reduce the fire risk. Report a fire immediately to the Overstrand Emergency Call Centre (028 312 2400) or myself on (082-442 8005 / 076-643 9767)

“Fire prevention is a far better option than fire fighting!”

Baboon Matters – The Present Situation. Adrian de Kock reports that following on from our previous communications in this matter we have had a meeting on 19 June 2013 with the Overstrand Municipality to establish the present position with regard to our various concerns.

Here are the matters which were discussed and the outcome:

Municipal Dump Site

- The “dump site” at the Betty's Bay Municipal offices is manned seven days a week from 08H00 to 16H00 by a dedicated official but this service is sometimes interrupted through absences due to sick & annual leave. This service has definitely improved the situation and we appeal to residents/visitors to use this site responsibly when it is not manned and not to just dump their refuse outside the bins.
- We have discussed the ineffective locking system on the cages and the fact that the trailer has no wheels which poses a health risk and is counterproductive when emptying the trailer. The Municipality has undertaken to examine the possible solution of replacing the trailer with “industrial bins” such as used in Pringle Bay.

Refuse Collection

- Bags removed from bins are now collected without delay.
- Bins are closed after collection preventing egress by rain water.
- The order of collection of refuse at egress points into the village has to be constantly changed as the baboons change their points of entry in line with these movements.

Baboon Proof Bins

- All households are required to utilize such bins in terms of Municipal by-laws. Letters were sent out to transgressors and subsequently Law Enforcement has issued some official warnings. The next step for those that do not comply will be the issue of fines.
- The locking system on “baboon proof bins” is ineffective. The Municipality no longer supplies such bins but property owners may obtain them from “BouHandel” or “Buildit”. These bins do not come with locking systems and it is up to purchasers to have suitable systems installed. Those property owners who already have bins would have to see that suitable locks are installed.
- It is up to property owners to ensure that those renting or occupying their properties comply with the regulations.

All these matters will be kept on the forefront of Ward Committee meetings and progress will be monitored.

Dan Fick, Betty's Bay Ratepayers' Association