

Chairman's Report: Southbroom Ratepayers Association

4 September 2023

NB. These are notes for the chairman's report. The report was not delivered verbatim from these notes; items may have been added or left out.

WHAT WE DO WELL

There is much that the SRA does well, with the limited funds available: library, beach maintenance and cleaning, monitoring of developments, village wide events (June 16) , keeping the village clean, support of the Conservancy, preventing gratuitous commercial signage, road markings, attendance at RNM monthly cluster meetings, bi-annual meetings with RNM management, monitoring verges, refuse clearing, illegal dumping, College Road development, maintaining the database, sending out newsletters, watching social media, website and FaceBook, engagement with the tourism authorities, water testing and monitoring, tidal pool clearing and cleaning, street lights, dustbins, solar lights at the beach, speed humps, staff control and payments, meeting and monitoring with SANRAL and highway development, pink rescue buoys, pavements in the village centre, jungle gyms, health issues, emergencies, fallen trees, litter, sewerage issues, paving, gardens, trees, water for the tanks at the police station and main beach, upgrading the library, upgrading the ablutions, fixing the life savers building, redoing the Roost parking.

And so it goes on and on. Your baby subscription of R525 annually is made to work really hard and is well spent. You need to make sure every friend, every neighbour and every person sitting next you is contributing the way you do. Thank you!

I am not going to dwell further on what we do well. But I ask you to salute your committee members who do this work. And I thank the many people who have made generous donations to the SRA, in particular for the library, for the main beach ablutions and for the Roost. And there have been may many smaller donations which are greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Before I carry on, I need to ask you about Padel Courts.

Who has heard of Padel?

Who has played Padel?

There are currently two proposals for padel courts – one here at the Golf Course and the other at the Tennis Club.

WHAT ARE WE DOING BADLY

Potholes: we maximize what we get from RNM on a quarterly basis and we fix the urgent and visible ones as best we can. With lack of money and resources we don't have a sustainable business plan – primarily because in order to fix a pothole properly requires equipment, material and manpower trained to do the job. And we need money to do that. Right now we have relied on the volunteer efforts of Richard Bridgeford and latterly Didi Klein. I thank you for your efforts. Once we get the new UIP in place we will develop proper team to do potholes. Hopefully with the increased UIP levy as discussed in the SPOA AGM we will have the money to do that. It is certainly one of the important areas of Southbroom life.

Dustbins and garbage collection: yes, I know the frustration and we all know the problems, which seem intractable and require simple instructions to be given. Regrettably not that simple and we need to work harder in this area. The mess in the village centre needs to be resolved and Paul Longmoor has been charged to do this. We have installed a camera to catch the culprits and this will be resolved.

Speeding trucks.

And with the proposed increase in the UIP levy I think we can do so much more.

WHERE WE STRUGGLE

Social Media: How do we live with WhatsApp? How do we live without it?

I'm entirely unconvinced that WhatsApp is the way to run the world. But it seems sadly that is what is happening. It is powerful, yet abused. It is useful but transitory. It is quick, but often too quick. You can put your self out there, but yet you can hide behind your cell.

We tried this year to slightly harmonize the various groups. The Southbroom Ratepayers group is the only ADMIN only group with validated edited information passed through a little marketing sub-committee manned by me, Jacke Pratt, Martie Bothma and Deanne Purtell. While you see only Martie's name, as she posts everything, all posts are vetted.

Then there is the UGU, RNM, Eskom and Internet group which is open, with piles of anecdotal and useful information. Sadly occasionally abused. There is Pets and Chats and the CPF crime group. Particularly the latter is tightly controlled so that ONLY crime information is posted there.

The Carte Blanche group – well anything goes, including lunatic conspiracy theories and occasional screaming and shouting. It appears that the tolerance of free speech trumps all – and I suppose that is OK.

WhatsApp is great to communicate with your family and your various groups and clubs and many other things. BUT to imagine coherent debate and thoughtful examination of issues is possible on the abbreviated transitory medium of WhatsApp is possible is just fantasy.

And good ideas abound. There are just plenty of them. Every keyboard warrior has them and thinks they are new and unique. And they may well be and I appreciate everyone thinking of solutions. But a good idea is useless unless you are prepared to do something about it. Come to the meetings, bring the plan, bring the resources, bring the manpower, bring the money! I don't think there has been a single idea on WhatsApp where I receive a follow up call, an email, a call to a meeting. Nothing. That is sad!

I'm not sure if there is anything we can do to change things; all I can ask you is to be polite. Do not think the medium can answer all your questions; and do NOT post after 5 o'clock in the evening!

WHAT WE CANNOT DO

Currently there is no hope for us to anything about:

- Rebuild the collapsing roads
- Resolve the bulk water supply
- Rebuild the broken water reticulation system in Southbroom - but we can plan for it.

WHAT BOTHERS US ALL THE MOST: WATER

We are ALL frustrated and angry. This is we know.

And we have made little progress. This we know.

- The utility is a disaster – that we know. And they are your supplier. Not me. Not the SRA.
- There is not enough water – this we know.
- There is not enough electricity at Umtamvuna – this we know.
- There is no certainty regarding the supply of electricity to Umtamvuna – this we know.
- And we know everything we hear is likely to be untrue and just another rumour. It is never validated reliable information.
- In the SRA we have no skills and no money and we have run out of ideas – this we know.
- Our pipes are old and corroded – this we know.
- And the spaghetti of pipes below us that feed water one minute to a neighbour and not us and then *visa versa* – this we know.
- Most valves are buried, rusted and no one know where they are – this we know.
- Rates boycotts are useless. Anyway UGU is sperate to RNM and won't care one jot if you don't pay. All that will happen is that you will get disconnected ensuring properly that you will never receive wate in case there is ever any.
- Legal action has been extensively investigated and there is ZERO prospect of that working for many reasons – this we know.
- And what we don't know – how sustainable is the water supply below us. What happens when we deplete the ground water that feeds all of Southbroom?

What is happening at Umtamvuna – self-explanatory slide. Every day another rumour and I'm not even sure of the veracity of this information, spelling errors and all. Rumours abound.

Excellent work performed by

SWAT 1 under Walter Robinson investigated boreholes, desalination, water reservoirs

SWAT 2 under Craig McDougall have investigated every avenue and possibility.

We have done some work: reservoir got cleaned and 5 air valves were installed. And yet we don't know if they are properly working until we get enough water.

Darryn and Richard continue to work with the local plumbers repairing leaks, monitoring the reservoir and trying as best as possible to work out if, and when, and why, we are getting water!

We attend every meeting and grouping outside Southbroom that has been held:

SWAG, UGU Alliance, KZN LSC RRA, UGU Social Compact meetings, meetings with senior management. Ongoing interaction with the local plumbers.

And via Gerhard van der Merwe soliciting directly into UGU to resolve bulk water issues and the reopening of the Sea Slopes line into Southbroom.

I have a raft of documentation available to anyone who wants to have a look. SWAT 1 and SAWT 2 have done what they can – lots of effort, lot of work but here we are with not much to show for it. All to no avail. And that distresses me and the committees greatly.

The light flickers at the end of the tunnel and often goes out. So it is dark.

So quo vadis?

"Quo vadis?" is a Latin phrase that means "Where are you going?" It is a question that has been asked by many people throughout history, and it is a question that we should ask ourselves.

We are faced with intractable problems here and throughout the country as infrastructure and municipalities collapse. There is scant reward in knowing that we are not the only ones in distress and difficulty. But in the face of extreme pessimism we cannot give up and hope and we cannot give up trying and we all have to be part of the solution. We have to work together – not be the problem – be the solution.

So let's all ask ourselves "Quo vadis?", and let's choose to be part of the solution.

The age of bountiful and cheap water is over. This has become abundantly clear and we must adapt. Our behaviour has to change: from our gardens, to our cars, to our baths, to our consumption. And regrettably how much we pay.

Everything else has been privatized, solar panels save 2 levels of load shedding, education, health, post office, we even pay for couriers. Regrettably we must privatize water – and here fortunately it is simple: install rainwater tanks; install extra rainwater tanks.

- Install rainwater tanks.
- Vote out cadre deployment at the next elections
- Get your staff and their family to do the same thing!
- We will and you must continue to apply maximum pressure on UGU at every available medium and forum.
- SWAT 3 – as we have run our course we need new energy, new people and perhaps even new ideas. Craig will be calling together SWAT 3 which will include himself, Dick Plaistowe, Bob Carmichael. We need new ideas and new energy – if you believe you can contribute, please let me know.
- Pass the increase in the UIP levy at the SGM. We will then have some money to plot how the system works, find the valves, plan for a rebuild of all the reticulation.

Craig McDougall as Chairman of SWAT2 is here to answer your questions. As is Gerhard van der Merwe who knows UGU intimately and has been consulting to us, Alan Bosch our RNM

councillor and Piet Breedt our UGU councillor. Please address your comments and questions through the chair and I will get one of them to answer.

Thank you to all of you who faithfully support your SRA year in and year out.

If you want to join us in the battle to make Southbroom liveable and great I invite you to join us!

Thank you.

Eric Annegarn
Chairman
Southbroom Ratepayers Association