

Minutes of meeting of the visit of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to Noordhoek on September 5th 2022 at Monkey Valley Resort

info@nrpa.org.za
www.nrpa.org.za

PRESENT

- City of Cape Town : Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis
Deputy Mayor Eddie Andrews
Speaker and PR Councillor for Ward 69 Felicity Purchase
Ward Councillor for Ward 69 Patricia Francke
Ward Councillor for Ward 61 Simon Liell-Cock
Other City of Cape Town officials
- NRPA presenters : Chairman Brad Bing
Member Lynn Brown (Noordhoek 2030 Vision)
Exco Rep Jonathan Mills (Equine and Tourist economy)
Planning Bas Zuidberg (Development and Spatial Planning)
- NEAG presenter : Chair Dr Andrea Marais (Climate Change, Wetlands)

WELCOME

Brad Bing welcomed the Mayor and his team and the Noordhoek residents that came out in high numbers to the meeting.

PRESENTATION

A presentation (See Attached presentation file) was given by various speakers addressing what is being done in Noordhoek and how the 2030 Vision drives these activities, as well as the issues that NRPA and NEAG request assistance from Council for:

- Lynn Brown introduced the Noordhoek 2030 Vision, how it came about and how it is being implemented. The Noordhoek Community has always understood the value of protecting nature for nature's sake because what is good for nature, is good for us.
- Brad Bing introduced various organisations in Noordhoek and how their valuable work ties into the Noordhoek 2030 Vision.
- Jonathan Mills presented the importance of the equine and touristic economy for Noordhoek, the jobs they provide for the surrounding communities and the importance for the City to preserve them.
- Dr Andrea Marais presented how Noordhoek, together with surrounding communities, has been looking at the challenges of climate change and how these will affect the valley. This has led to an update in the Noordhoek Vision to include Climate Change activities.

- She then zoomed in on the Noordhoek Wetlands, the biodiversity in our valley and the specific challenges that this area is facing, as well as the reasons why these are problematic for the city.
- Bas Zuidberg presented the challenges that the community is facing with the pressure of developmental densification. While there is alignment with Council at policy and spatial development framework the daily reality of planning decisions is very different.

CONCLUSION

Finally, 3 issues were laid before the Mayor with a request for Council to take them up:

1. Climate Change:
 - a. Funding is needed for alien clearing on council land in the valley to reduce drought and fire risk.
 - b. More should be done to promote the increase of household solar SSEG to curb carbon emissions as well as reduce the economic effect of loadshedding.
2. Wetlands:
 - a. A holistic wetland management plan is needed with input from all stakeholders so that the wetlands can be retained and protected.
 - b. Stop the Houmoed phase 1 road extension which will create irreparable damage to the wetland ecosystem.
3. Development and Spatial Planning
 - a. The consistent overruling of community objections to planning applications is proof that the public participation process is failing.
 - b. The planning department should be directed to uphold the Municipal Planning By-Law stringently so that the long-term goals for Noordhoek as outlined in the Spatial Development Framework are reached

Mayor's reply

The Mayor thanked NRPA and NEAG for the invitation, Noordhoek residents for attending as well as Monkey Valley and Team Cape Town members who came in support of the Mayor.

He acknowledged that there were a lot of issues raised so he wanted to give a brief response to the very well-presented document from NRPA/NEAG.

Issue number 1 (Climate Change)

The Mayor stated that the issues raised are very real, that they are important to us as a Community and that they have given a lot of food for thought. He re-iterated that he did not want the impression to be created that there is not a lot happening from the side of the City and that they are ignoring the issues being presented to them.

City are working very hard on the water security throughout Cape Town. The second or third largest capital program that the city has going over the next 6-8 years is the water security program to deliver adequate water supply over the coming decades.

With regards to Alien vegetation, the City has committed to spend R50 million rand per annum to clear alien vegetation for the next 3 years. This is focussed on our water

catchment areas as it's an important part of securing Cape Town's water supply. Approximately 14 000 hectares have been cleared – they honoured their high-altitude rope access team (170 people) who clear vegetation on very dangerous areas.

Biodiversity loss – The City are to engage in a contract for aerial surveillance which has its main focus on violent crime prevention in gang ridden parts of the city. The idea is that for 12 – 14 hours of the day there will be aerial surveillance of the city which will give the City the ability to have hi-resolution imagery of any part of the city within minutes for accidents, incidents, a fire or whatever the emergency may be. They have specifically written in that document to provide aerial oversight over the National Park to catch Protea pinchers, poachers, and to protect the biodiversity of the National Park. This is an extremely expensive contract, in the region of R6 million rand per month.

The City is also very passionate about cleaning up in the city. They have launched their Spring Clean Cape Town campaign with an enormous amount of resources. They are also calling on citizens around the city to get involved and the Mayor is inspired to hear the story of the amazing team that does regular clean ups of Ou Kaapse Weg and around Noordhoek. There is such a need for more groups to start helping to change the culture over time. It can't only be up to the city to try to change this perception. If you visit Rondevlei, Zeekovlei or Rietvlei you will see that all the litter ends up in the vlei, wetland or ocean therefore cleaning in our communities is an investment in cleaning up our water bodies.

Issue number 2 (Wetlands)

The biggest capital program happening over the next 5-7 years is improving sewerage infrastructure. It is very important as it will give people dignity and important to protect Biodiversity and wetlands, as the biggest reason that so many of the Wetlands around the City are dying is because of the intrusion of black and grey water into those water bodies. An example he highlighted is the Milnerton Lagoon. They have quintupled the budget for sewage pipe replacement around the city that will see us upgrading or replacing approximately 100 km of piping per year for the next few years. Billions of rands were spent on water treatment works upgrades and on sewer pump station repairs and upgrades that will really make in meaningful difference to the dignity of people's sanitation and to the health of our water bodies.

Issue number 3 (Planning)

In his time as the Final appeal authority, he cannot recall offhand seeing any appeals put forward from Noordhoek but when the matters come before him, he reads them afresh, he applies his mind to try to make the best and most well informed and balanced decision. Once it gets to the Mayor as the final appeal authority it has already gone through the entire town planning process as well as the MPT which has had an opportunity for us, the community and for the Ward Councillor to have interviews, then to Planning Appeals advisory panel where there is another opportunity for interviews if needs be so he does need to take serious account of decisions made leading up to his final decision. He does sometimes differ with them. He has already overturned a number of these decisions. He cannot comment this evening on individual cases regarding Noordhoek specifically, but he does take this responsibility very seriously and reads all of the comments and documents

thoroughly. It is hugely time consuming because almost every planning application in the city is appealed. The point about balancing rights - everyone will know that planning decisions in Cape Town are hugely contentious so tries constantly to have a balance of rights with the pressure that is being put on Cape Town with the enormous amounts of people moving to Cape Town. The initial results from the recent census which is not audited or published as yet show that migration to Cape Town is accelerating.

The mayor loves to visit Noordhoek and says it is hard to find available Airbnb's so we talk about increasing tourism in Noordhoek and job creation but in order to do that there needs to be more restaurants, there needs to be more accommodation, and more facilities to do things which does put pressure on planning and application system. He deeply appreciates Noordhoek and says it is certainly an essential part of the city and understands the value it adds. We should be assured that they are working to try to protect the natural environment as much as they can, trying to improve the infrastructure and to protect it for future generations of Capetonians.

The Deputy Mayor asked about the shelter application that was made - his directorate is spatial planning and Environment Directive. Next year they have their review of the municipal planning bylaw and are keen to engage. With regards to the Wetland - it is extremely difficult to respond to without being accused of shifting responsibility but it is not their responsibility. They have just recently rekindled their relationship with SANParks and they have an ever increasing list of items that they would like to engage in - they have commenced their baboon management meetings and are also having a meeting with SANParks about a number of various things but including how they respond from a repairs and maintenance perspective whether it be removal of Alien Vegetation or just basic operations.

The Municipal Planning Tribunal is composed of various different departments who make long and hard conversations before they make a recommendation.

The erven in coastal regions are very important points which are taken really seriously. It is their absolute intention to ensure that Biodiversity is protected. All decisions are not made from the top down, they engage on them. The Deputy Mayor thanked the NRPA for the amazing work that is being done and are in full support of Noordhoek's 2030 vision.

QUESTIONS FROM RESIDENTS

After this, questions were presented which had been curated from various questions that were raised by residents in advance.

Question 1: "[The question] relates to the run-around/refusal to reply by numerous Planning officials of my request for basic info about the City's own internal reference numbers on a development/building expansion. The more they avoid answering, the more it seems as if they are trying to cover up errors and/or corruption. What is the point of all the good PR when it's undone by terrible experiences dealing with City officials?"

Deputy Mayor - At the beginning of the year the city had its first engagement with developers in the city of Cape Town. The Mayor said the following "Please send me an email and advise which department has not responded so I can follow up" so if you have

any concerns please pass on with Case ID and he is more than happy to assist you with your query. The Mayor was in agreement with what the Deputy Mayor said and has been taking time to personally call staff members to check that their phones are being answered at all times – but he has learnt from personal experience that there are some residents who will make a complaint and not back up their complaint with a valid reason and will call time and time again without a valid case. The correspondence has to be reasonable and if it is, officials do need to be responsive. Felicity Purchase advised to bring the issues to the ward councillors or the sub council first.

Question 2: “The City of Cape Town claims it is the City "that works for you". It doesn't, it dictates to us. Hundreds of people objected to the subdivision of the caravan park into tiny plots, the Generation school which will only serve the mega wealthy, and the cell-phone mast in Dunedin Avenue. Yet the council rode roughshod over the wishes of all these people who are going to be adversely affected. Why?”

Two specific cases were presented – one being Generations and the other being the Caravan Park to which the Mayor said it is difficult to comment as they did not have all the relevant case information available. Each case has to be dealt with on merit. The decision of the Mayor is published publicly for anyone to comment and if you disagree you have legal recourse – in his time serving as the Mayor, he personally has not worked on any cases with Noordhoek – he has received cases with hundreds of objections and he sees this often and has read every objection. A lot of objections are “we just don’t want it”, which is not a valid reason.

Resident commented from the floor – in the case of Noordhoek I can assure you that there is a lot of thought given to the objections, and the objections are never based on desirability. It’s not ‘do we desire the park to be chopped up into 50 x 475 m2 erf’s’. It is, simply, is this breaking the City’s rules? If the answer is yes then submit an objection. The claim of a balanced approach does not stand strong as 100% of all objections submitted based on the fact that they are breaking the Cities own rules are denied. There is a magnifying glass being put to the city saying these are your rules and you are breaking them. There are a lot of things that go through that we hate to see but it’s not breaking a rule so we don’t object. So, the objections are not based on desirability, they are not based on option or emotion, they are simply based on “is it breaking their own rules? Let’s help them”. We have an amazing number of experts. Bas who presented the Planning document is not emotional, he is very technical and every single time an objection is submitted, it gets thrown back.

The first time the (previous) Mayor came here we were left with a present which was a development which under any magnifying glass was illegal. It was put there. The second time the (previous) Mayor came he showed all sorts of enthusiasm then walked away and did nothing – I just hope that this is the third time lucky.

Mayor GHL responded by saying the reason there is a planning procedure is because Cape Town has many erven and you cannot possibly have only applications that confine themselves strictly to the municipal planning bylaw. This is why the process allows for application for deviations. The idea that something doesn’t strictly confirm to the bylaw or the overlay or the zoning scheme is not automatically a reason to reject the application.

Resident – Would then your suggestion be that they stop wasting their time or money on objections?

Mayor: No – not at all. This is not a reasonable comment.

Question 3: “How can we get CoCT planning prioritisation and execution of a safe pedestrian walkway/cycleway along the length of Noordhoek Main Road to the Ou Kaapse Weg junction?”

The Mayor strongly supports more cycle or pedestrian pathways. The major public transport expansion project happening in the South East of the city is the My City rollout and there will be pedestrian and cyclist components of the rollout too.

Council official Hilton Scholtz added that this would be a formal request even if it comes from the residents which will then be put through network planning staff that would look at the feasibility then look at what is possible bearing in mind that not all the cases would be the road authority, it could also be a provincial road so we need to look at all the linkages, and see what is possible at the end of the day

Question 4: “Why is the City still spraying herbicides and/or pesticides in public open spaces, verges and along roads and what is being done to stop this practice which is damaging the environment, insect populations and impacting wildlife?”

Felicity Purchase: every day we get correspondence about the poison being used to spray the weeds. The city is busy working with NEAG and have set up a potential pilot project for the next 18 months to not spray the Noordhoek catchment of the Noordhoek side at all – it will require some tolerance from the residents in the area for that reason until we are able to get manual labour to weed but we are going to watch the impact of not spraying glyphosates on our roads and hard surfaces. When we have received the response from the survey that will be completed along with Glenn Ashton and team input, we will then decide on how that will influence our policy going forward as we have been talking about this for years. The reality is, it is the cheapest way of dealing with weeds, but we are looking at ways beyond this. Whatever happens with the pilot project will determine the way forward. NEAG will be working with UCT and On the Verge which will create jobs. There is an article available on the website – Neag.org.za.

Question 5: “Why, if tourism, the coastal zone, agricultural land etc are all identified as key City goals, is Planning so intent on “densification”? Is Noordhoek condemned to 1000m² plots? Where is the diversity that makes a City so much more interesting?”

Mayor: The city cannot continue to sprawl outwards – it is unsustainable and expensive to provide bulk services like sewage and water and electricity. Densification allows the number of people moving into Cape Town on an annual basis to move into the urban inner core. Over the next decade 1 million people will move to Cape Town over and above the number of births within Cape Town. The way to accommodate them all is primarily through densification.

Question 6: “My primary concern about the City is that they do not or are unable to implement the necessary monitoring required of conditions in EIAs and planning

approvals. A case in point is noise. The City relies on neighbours etc to keep noise in check. The City does not have the wherewithal to monitor or measure noise, yet it forms an integral part of any EIA along with light pollution etc. Why if the City cannot do it, is the liability being put on the community rather than the developers?"

Felicity Purchase: The City has a noise enforcement unit that follow up on each of those complaints. There are only 2 machines that can measure the decibel readings, so capacity for monitoring is problematic. The most complaints are about churches and industrial areas. City encourages people to log all complaints onto the system so that they can motivate to get one noise machine in our region.

Bas Zuidberg adds – the issue here is different. Planning decisions are taken based on mitigating measures, but these are consequently proven to be ineffective and not monitored by Council.

Question 7: "Each year large volumes of plastic enter the ocean and some of it washes up onto Noordhoek beach impacting environmental health and jeopardising local tourism industry and employment. Project Noordhoeked has instituted programs to clear and remove this waste but receives no compensation for cleaning up a continuous "leak" in the CoCT's land-based waste management system. What is being done to either plug the leak or compensate those who are dealing with this City liability?"

The Mayor is genuinely committed to trying over time to get a change in attitude from Capetonians as that is the only thing that will work. There are 1800 solid waste cleaning staff in Cape Town which is a really big team. These people are cleaning every day – beaches, rivers, canals, litter etc. We cannot carry on employing people to clean up litter. People need to understand it takes each of us to pick up our own litter, to tell those around you to stop doing it when we see it and to report it. Council is rewarding people who send videos of people illegally dumping with R5000. The Mayor is personally taking the metro officers who write the most fines for littering and illegal dumping out for lunch. The Mayor will also now recognise the officer who impounds the most vehicles each month.

Council has a tollfree line you can call 24 hours a day but all Capetonians need to respect their community and city. Noordhoek Beach is managed by SANParks so Council cannot manage that part of Noordhoek. SANParks do however, have a team picking up nurdles.

Questions from the floor

Q: Is it possible to build a micro clinic or police station in Noordhoek making it easier for the elderly to have access. On average people need to wait between 2-4 hours at local hospital?

A: Not practical as the city has been trying since 2002 to get the SAPS station up and running in Masi and not been very successful. The local neighbourhood watch is really good in our local area. Jonathan Mills reported that False Bay Hospital is making changes to their waiting facilities. They have raised R500 million and that money is being used to reconfigure outpatient and unbooked appointments services at the hospital - an entire passageway is being reconfigured and made weatherproof. There will also be 2 nurse-led

consulting rooms as well as 2 GP consulting rooms. The elderly will be directed to the front of the line.

Deputy Mayor commented that the City Strategy Communications policy is also under review simply because it is dated and we need to understand health implications.

CLOSING

Brad thanked the people of Noordhoek. He thanked the NRPA and NEAG team for the presentation and all their hard work. He thanked the surrounding communities for attending as well – Masi and Ocean View. To all the Ward Councillors, Felicity Purchase, Deputy Mayor and Mayor thanks for all the hard work you are doing in the community.