

ANNUAL REPORT (March 2015-June 2016)

It is with pleasure that the Directors of the Richmond Hill Special Rates Area Non-Profit Company (RHSRA) bring this first Annual Report for the period March 2015 to June 2016 to the Members of the Company.

Introduction

The RHSRA came into being after a long process of introduction, consultation and clarification with the stakeholders of Richmond Hill, the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA) and the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality (NMBMM). The company was the natural successor of the now defunct Richmond Hill Residents Association (RHRA), an informal association formed by a number of individuals living in the area who had serious concerns about the deterioration of the historic suburb, thereby having dire consequences for their investments.

The company had to comply with a vast number of statutory requirements before acknowledged as a fully fledged SRA:

- Registration with CIPC
- Bank Account was opened
- A Financial Agreement was signed with the municipality
- Registration on the Municipality's Vendor Registration Database
- BBEEE Certificate
- SARS Tax Clearance Certificate
- Billing Clearance Certificate

Founding of the Company

In terms of the NMBMM the objectives of the RHSRA can be surmised as:

- Prevent the degeneration of the area and consequential decay.
- Facilitate the upliftment, economic growth and sustainable development of the suburb and
- Encourage investment in the area.

Activities Undertaken

In terms of the company's Memorandum of Incorporation, discussed with the property owners before incorporation of the Company, the following areas of concern are some of those addressed by the Company.

- Enhancing and supplementing the municipality services.
- Facilitating investment in the area.
- Facilitating a cooperative approach between the private sector and the Municipality.
- Halting the degeneration and facilitating upliftment of the area.
- Protection of the general safety of the general public, particularly the traders and residents.
- Conducting and promoting clean-up to the effect that the SRA area is clean, tidy and well-maintained.
- Facilitating community development for poor and needy persons.

To pay effect to these objectives the company embarked on the following activities in during the past year:

Most assets of the RHRA including radios, torches, pepper-spray etc were transferred to the SRA.

A half-ton bakkie was acquired for general purpose patrolling and cleaning services. This enabled the Company to render a 24-hour patrol service of the area and have rubbish removed from open and neglected spaces.

It was soon realised that this vehicle is effective but utilised beyond its capacity. A sedan for patrolling purposes was acquired later during the year.

Both vehicles are highly visible with applicable SRA decals and both are equipped with sophisticated tracking devices to keep track and control of the patrollers' movements.

The company recruited and three PSIRA registered patrollers on a permanent contract. This ensures a dedicated, 24-hour patrolling service for emergencies that may occur. They are issued with SRA emblazoned uniforms to make them identifiable.

In view of the workload accompanying the smooth operation of a Non-profit company, it was decided to employ an administrative assistant to attend to the daily operations of the company.

An office is rented at 15 Stanley Street which is open during week mornings where the Administrative Assistant is in attendance for SRA-related matters.

It was clear from the start that extensive cleaning operations will have to be conducted to bring the suburb to an acceptable level of tidiness, therefore cleaners are employed on a part-time basis for the cleaning operations that are still ongoing. Recently a Cleaning Supervisor / Community Liaison Officer was appointed on a permanent contract for coordination of the cleaning operation and to interact with the residents on cleaning related matters. The Supervisor and cleaners are issued with a different colour emblazoned uniform to identify their role in the organisation.

It was decided that a separate fund will be created as buffer to any unforeseen difficulties, in particular when circumstances does not allow for funds to be transferred from NMBMM. This fund has now reached the target stage where the RHSRA will be able to meet obligations for three months.

Management Activities

The Directors have decided to compile a Management Team comprising volunteers who can assist with time, skills and expertise to achieve the objectives of the Company. The team have regular meetings to coordinate efforts and do brainstorming about the various projects.

The Management Team assist and manage many different aspects of the operations. This include but is not limited to the rosters for patrollers, financial records, employment contracts, a community based WhatsApp project, webpage and social media, wild park development etc. etc.

A relationship with the local Khulumbani School has been established to address concerns raised by residents about the school grounds and the scholars. Future concerns will be addressed directly with the school management.

Many departments at NMBMM have expressed their support and cooperation with the SRA after they were approached by directors or members of the Management Team.

The cleaners do regular rounds in the suburb to ensure that rubbish is removed or perpetrators are warned and/or fined by the municipal Rangers. An average of 1300 refuse bags are removed from Richmond Hill by the cleaners. This is garbage that would have been accumulated due to inefficiency of the municipality Cleansing Department.

Successes

Despite numerous challenges in this previously unknown territory, the SRA can boast a number of success stories since inception.

Although the patrollers are not replacing any security function in the area and are rendering a patrolling function only, their presence has had a significant effect on the crime rate in the suburb. Their efficiency is enhanced by the 1ARH WhatsApp project assisting with a response time of about 2 minutes anywhere in the neighbourhood.

The following examples are only a small indication of the success the patrollers had in the reduction of deviant behaviour:

	March 2015	October 2015
Theft from motor vehicle	10	6
Housebreaking	14	1
Theft out of motor vehicle	5	6
Robbery from person	7	3
Theft common	2	0
Business robbery	1	0

At the April 2016 community meeting the SAPS reported the following crime related statistics for the period March 2015 to March 2016:

Aggravated robberies down	11%
Robbery with firearm down	10%
Robbery with other weapon down	13%
Robbery Business down	45%
Robbery Residential down	36%

The SRA has acquired 15 dustbins and placed it strategically around Richmond Hill. These carry the SRA logo as an indication of a company asset. They are emptied by the cleaners on a regular basis and prove to be both popular and can be regarded as a great success.

In effort to improve our public spaces, the SRA has arranged with the Parks Department of the NMBMM to have a number of benches installed in Richmond Park. These will enhance the park as a space for families to enjoy. More work will be done to improve this and other open spaces.

A pamphlet, "Welcome to Richmond Hill" was dropped at every household in the suburb – to explain the purpose and services of the SRA. The pamphlet proved its usefulness by the number of phone calls received at the SRA office with a variety of enquiries and suggestions.

A second pamphlet, explaining the collection of garbage in the suburb, was recently distributed. It is hoped that that this will reduce the number of garbage bags left overnight and on non-collection days.

Challenges

Due to the nature of ownership in Richmond Hill (approximately 70% of properties are rented), the Company experiences a serious challenge to get property owners involved in the operations of the Company. In fact, there is little interest from non-resident owners to become involved or even register as members of the company. The Directors face an uphill battle to change this situation. More strategies will be pursued to change the attitudes.

Generally, there is a good relationship with most departments in the NMBMM. However, the most problematic is with the Human Settlements Department who is also responsible for acting against illegal businesses and re-zoning issues. At the moment the residents have identified a large number of illegal operating business concerns and these were all reported to said Housing Department.

Feedback from this department indicates that the businesses were issued with compliance notices (some as far back as two years ago) but no further action against these is on the horizon. The businesses have a detrimental impact on the historical and residential character of Richmond Hill. Not only is the detrimental effect on the property investments a concern, the illegal businesses contribute to health concerns (rats have been known to be attracted to the amassed quantities of rotten food) and social degeneration have been observed. Schoolchildren are buying cigarettes from them, drug dealers and beggars are frequenting these illegal shops.

Road surfaces and pavements need urgent attention. The NMBMM and the Ward Councillor have been approached in this regard on many occasions. No action in this regard has been forthcoming.

A cause for concern is that the NMBMM has not appointed any functionary to deal with SRA-related matters, making coordination between the SRA and municipality rather fragmented.

In April 2015, with the establishment of the RHSRA, the Directors requested the Private Security Industry Regulating Authority (PSIRA) for exemption from certain requirements of the Act. The Regulator acknowledged receipt of said correspondence but has not replied since. This put the RHSRA in the precarious position of rendering a general patrolling service to assist the community with emergencies but is regarded as an “unregistered security service”. The situation is under discussion.

The Future

The RHSRA is working with the municipality on a SRA tip in the Richmond Hill area and this will be help greatly to reduce the number of times the patrol vehicle needs to leave the area. We need approval for use of the quarry site in Richmond Hill Road. Negotiations to this effect is ongoing.

The Company will soon begin with rehabilitation of road markings in Richmond Hill. This will be a long term project due to the resources required for the work. The Environmental Supervisor and his team will be tasked with this responsibility.

An arbour day is planned in spring. The community’s participation will be requested and the project will kick off in Richmond Hill Park.

The need for enforcement of traffic and municipal by laws is a priority for the Directors of the RHSRA. We have a patroller who is a qualified Law Enforcement Officer, but due to bureaucracy has not received the official authority from the NMBMM. This authorisation will go a long way to eliminate perpetrators of by-laws in the area.

The Richmond Hill Wild Park was established at the bottom of Irvine and Mackay Streets. The park will be developed and cleaned on a regular basis to eventually become an open space to be proud of.

Plans are in place to advertise and promote the RHSRA more visually in the streets of Richmond Hill. The RHSRA logo, phone numbers and website will be displayed on the SRA dustbins and possibly on billboards on lampposts. This initiative will be complemented with notices for dog owners to clean up after their pets.

The Directors have decided to support an Albany Street NGO, named “Love Story” to comply with the company’s social responsibility obligations. It is a well-managed, deserving organisation with impeccable financial controls. The Directors will communicate the exact extent of assistance during the course of this year.