

RIEBEEK VALLEY RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

YEAR END REPORT: 2023

Dear Members

On behalf of the Riebeek Valley Ratepayers Association (RVRA) Committee, please accept my sincere apologies for the long delay in this report.

During the last few months, we have experienced a number of material challenges with the administration of our website. This dysfunction has prevented us from accessing and processing communications from our members, communicating with our members, and loading Minutes, reports, or municipal and other important documents. We are now back in cyberspace! So please do email your concerns, queries, and suggestions regarding any issues related to municipal services.

Currently, the Committee is short-handed which is impacting our capacity to effectively meet our mandate. We urgently need to fill the positions of Secretary and website administrator. The RVRA Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month, between 18.00 and 20.00. Ons is tweetalig! Candidates must be able to attend a minimum of 8 meetings annually. If you know of a suitable candidate, please send us an email by the 5th of January 2024, to info@rvra.co.za

Despite our communication and human resources hurdles, we continue to hold our monthly meetings, ensure good record-keeping, and are making progress on several issues.

CURRENT ISSUES:

1. Property Valuations.

As you are no doubt aware, the Swartland Municipality has published the 2023/2024 Property Valuation rolls for Riebeek Kasteel and Riebeek West. You can access both documents on our website by clicking on the "Resources" tab at the top of the landing page, and then selecting the "Documents" option. Hard copies are available at the local municipal offices.

Further, we have posted a short guide on how to submit an objection and the appeal process on our website under "Documents".

The valuations have provoked considerable discussion and concern amongst Valley homeowners. The following are the main comments and queries from RVRA members:

i. What are the criteria that are used for the valuations?

ii. The valuations are irrational.

- Property on which there are one or more dwellings are described on the roll as "vacant land" and therefore have been given a lower valuation than a developed property.
- Substantial homes in excellent condition, on large erven have been given lower valuations than much smaller, more humble dwellings on smaller erven, in the same street.
- Recent realised sale prices have been ignored.

Action taken: We have requested meeting with the Municipal Manager before the current deadline expires to discuss the valuation process, outcome, and homeowner concerns.

iii. **Objection deadline.**

The Municipality recently notified property owners that the deadline for submission of objections has been extended to the 15th of January, 2024. However, many property owners in the Riebeek Valley are away on their end-of-year leave. Further, during the municipality's shutdown period, ratepayers may not be able to access the relevant officials to assist with their queries regarding the valuation process.

Action taken: We have submitted a letter to the Municipal Manager requesting a further extension to the 31st of January 2023. Further, we have also requested both Ward Committees to urgently petition the municipality for an extension. We will notify our membership of the outcome of the extension request.

iv. **No public engagement sessions** were held to explain the rationale for the valuation and the methodology to be used in the decision-making before the publication of the valuation roll.

Action taken: Ward Committees have been asked to report back on why there was no public engagement on this critical matter.

v. The valuation roll fails to show the **percentage increase/decrease** or the Rand value difference between the 2018 valuation and the 2023 valuation.

Action taken: Request to the municipality that the valuation roll be reissued showing the percentage change and the Rand value thereof.

vi. **How do we submit objections?**

The prescribed form must be used. You can access the prescribed form online: <https://www.swartland.org.za/pages/english/documents/valuation-rolls-2023.php>

Hard copies of the prescribed form are also available on the reverse of the valuation roll document available at the Municipal offices.

Email your objection form to vandersluysh@swartland.org.za

vii. **What is the difference between a supplementary valuation and a general valuation?**

The Development Services department has responded as follows:

"The first supplementary valuation 2023/2024 was done in November 2023 and is still based on the 2019 Valuation. A Supplementary is only done on the properties where new building work took place, sub-divisions, consolidations etc. Only the affected owners received notifications of the supplementary valuation. The General Valuation 2023 was also done during the year on all properties within Swartland and published on

10 November 2023 on the Swartland Municipality website, social media and local newspapers. The notices were emailed on 1 December 2023 or posted. 2 Different processes run at the same time. The General Valuation 2023 will be implemented on 1 July 2024.

The General Valuation is done every 4 years of all the properties in accordance with the Municipal Property Rates Act 6 of 2004 where it stipulates that the valuations should be market related. The valuer will use recent sales in all the areas in the year of valuation (2023) and compare the sales to the properties to determine a market related valuation. Should an owner not agree with the new valuation, the owner may submit an objection form with their opinion of what the market value should be."

2. Finances.

A reminder that that the yearly subscription fee is R100. Thank you to those who have paid their fees. The fees collected during the year are our only source of income.

Our primary expenditure has been on the establishment of our website, securing our domain, and renewing our license and domain with our website host (*GoDaddy*).

In addition, RVRA funds were used to host the 5 Municipal officials who attended the building guidelines site visit (see point 5 below).

Income Statement - 15th December 2023:

Income: R 7000.00

Loan (MS) R 700.00

TOTAL = R 7 700.00

Expenses:

Bank costs R 1 213.76

Go Daddy R 4926.67

Lunch R 1 200.00

TOTAL = R7 340.73

Bank Balance = R 359.57

3. Traffic and Roads.

A persistent concern is the increase in road misuse and traffic violations in the Riebeek Valley. It is therefore a key focus area of the RVRA Committee's work.

Progress to date:

- i. In October 2022, the Swartland Municipality invited the public to submit their comments regarding municipal services, via an online questionnaire, the purpose of which was to inform the draft of the 2023 Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for the Swartland. The IDP is a 5-year strategic plan which guides the socio-economic and spatial development and service delivery budget and plan for the region's towns.

At the time, the RVRA submitted a problem statement (with suggested solutions) regarding road misuse and traffic violations. Since then, we have made several requests to the Municipality for provide quantitative feedback on the results of the survey. The final IDP was finalised with no reference to the problem and therefore, without the attendant budget and plan to meaningfully address this burgeoning issue during the next 5 years.

More recently we again requested answers to the following:

- Why is there no comprehensive traffic management plan for the Riebeek Valley towns?
- Frequent non-compliance with road and traffic regulations: Stop signs, speed, and tonnage limits (where they exist).
- Heavy vehicles, and other motorised vehicles use residential streets as "rat runs", or to crisscross through our towns.
- High levels of disturbance and a threat to safety from daily and nightly drag-racing through the residential streets of both Riebeek Kasteel and Riebeek West, and along the R311 between the two towns.
- An inconsistent and irrational approach to tonnage limit signage for residential streets.
- Lack of a standardised approach to the allocation of funds for traffic calming measures. Seemingly, ward councillors have the authority to motivate or veto the budget for these measures. Ward councillors are not qualified to make objective, informed assessments of the need, nor the Civils expertise.
- Lack of a regular presence of Law Enforcement on our streets, neither day nor night.
- Lack of consistent application of sanctions for ALL incidents of municipal road misuse and other violations of traffic regulations.
- Why are there no dedicated bicycle lanes in our towns?

Please refer to the communication from Mr. Roman Steyn, the head of Swartland Traffic, in response to the above, posted on our website under "Documents". Few if any of the issues raised have elicited a satisfactory response.

- ii. The RVRA Committee will continue to apply pressure on the Municipality to provide a more regular presence of Law Enforcement officers in our Valley towns. In the interim, I urge those who experience traffic violations in their areas, or any other contraventions of by-laws, to contact Law Enforcement to investigate. On these matters, I have found them to be a lot more responsive and solution-orientated than the SAPS, albeit that our local police are required to fulfil these duties in the absence of Law Enforcement.

Law Enforcement is the municipal authority that enforces traffic regulations and by-laws. They patrol the Swartland region until 22.00 on weekdays and 00.00 on weekends.

I also suggest that you become familiar with our by-laws. An easy-to-reference, bilingual extract of the main by-laws is available on our website under “Documents”. Having the by-laws at hand is useful when requesting the SAPS to intervene or to open a case.

Important contact numbers:

Swartland Law Enforcement Services: 022 487 9411

Emergency after-hours (traffic, by-laws, fire and emergency): 022 487 9479

4. Traffic calming measures – ACVV Deo Gloria, Kasteel.

Vehicles regularly speed through Sarel Cilliers Street, outside the ACVV’s Deo Gloria retirement complex, without complying with the stop street, or the pedestrian crossings. This poses a high risk to residents crossing to and from the community hall and dining-room.

Koos Erasmus has taken on the responsibility for creating a safer pedestrian environment in this area and has been engaging with numerous officials in both the traffic department and the civils department to install a speed hump and appropriate signage. As there has been no tangible response to this urgent safety issue, Koos has now appealed to the Ward 12 Committee to take action in resolving this matter.

5. Update: Building Development Guidelines.

Recap: Towards the end of 2022, the RVRA Committee commenced drafting a set of building guidelines for all new developments in the Valley in a quest to encourage owners, buyers and developers to maintain the style, sense of place and character of our Valley towns. These guidelines will be supportive of municipal building regulations and relevant legislation e.g. The National Heritage Resources Act.

Please note that the guidelines are not intended to block development and change. The overarching objective is to ensure that new builds, renovations and land-use development is sympathetic to the general architectural ambience, style and appearance of the Valley’s aesthetic footprint.

This project is stewarded by Henk Bruwer, and Basil Friedlander, long-term and actively involved Valley residents

Progress: At the end of June this year, the RVRA hosted officials from the Swartland Municipality for a site visit of Valley’s good, bad, and questionable buildings and developments. The interaction was positive and collaborative, culminating in the building guidelines being given the green light by the Swartland Municipality. Experts in heritage and architecture have been consulted and will play a prominent role in drafting the technical aspects of the guidelines.

A key outcome of this initiative is the agreement that the Municipality’s planning department will issue the guidelines to all those who submit re-zoning and development applications and will use the guidelines to assess all plans submitted.

Once the first draft of the guidelines has been completed, the public will be consulted for their input.

6. Update: Erf 828 (Springbok Hill) Development – Riebeek Kasteel.

We receive regular requests for updates regarding the progress of the plans to develop Springbok Hill. In short, those who are registered as Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) will receive updated communication from EnviroAfrica Overberg, the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) appointed by the developer.

The RVRA Committee will also inform our membership of any updates.

Feedback received several months ago indicated that the specialist reports (water, heritage, etc.) had not been concluded. Once these are concluded, they will be included in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), which will then be issued for public scrutiny and commentary.

It is worth noting that this particular Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process has been unusually protracted which *might* suggest that the development has possibly been put on hold, or scrapped, or scaled back, which will require a resubmission of the application to the authorities. As you are no doubt aware, an EIA cannot be authorised without a full public participation process, which has not yet commenced.

7. RVRA Membership.

We currently have approximately 100 ratepayer members. We aim to triple that number within the next 6 months to better leverage our influence on the Municipality and Ward Councillors.

We will be launching a robust membership drive from February 2024. Part of our drive for new members is to engage with newcomers to the Valley and encourage them to join the RVRA. If you know of anyone who has recently bought a home in the Valley, please ask them to visit our website: <https://rvra.co.za>

8. RVRA's Radio Show.

In October, the RVRA launched *On Point*, a live-on-air monthly radio show on Riebeek Valley Radio. The show airs on the last Wednesday of every month between 11.00 and 12.00, and is repeated on Fridays and Sundays at the same time.

Hosted by members of the Riebeek Valley Ratepayers Committee, the show invites ratepayers to share their opinions, their suggestions and their complaints related to municipal services and service delivery.

Each month the show will target a different burning issue regarding our roads, traffic, state of our streets, sidewalks and gutters, rates, cleaning, greening, maintenance, tariffs, waste management, traffic and roads, planning and development, heritage, street-lights, the by-laws and how to use them. Municipal officials, topic experts, and ratepayers will be invited to join

us in the studio. If you would like to be a guest on the programme, please let email us and tell us what “burning issue” you would like to share with the listeners.

So tune in, try it out, talk to us. We promise you an entertaining, informative and solutions-orientated show that raises awareness of your rights, your responsibilities, who does what, how it works, and what’s possible.

9. Eskom Pre-paid Electricity Meters.

Although this falls out of the scope of the RVRA Committee, we have received queries from members with pre-paid Eskom meters regarding where to get their codes to recode their meters before the deadline of the 24th of November 2024. Failure to recode will result in the prepaid meters becoming inactive after the deadline.

According to Eskom, customers will receive a receipt with three 20-digit numbers when purchasing a token for recoding and instructions for the recoding.

For more information, please visit

<https://www.eskom.co.za/eskom-provides-update-on-its-meter-recoding-initiative-for-all-its-customers-and-is-on-track-to-meet-the-november-2024-deadline>

Wishing you all a joyous, peaceful and restorative festive season.

Warm regards, Jennifer Kamerman.

Chairperson: Riebeek Valley Ratepayers Association