

## **Chairman's report on the affairs of the Marina Da Gama Association**

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2022 at the Masque Theatre, Muizenberg**

Welcome one and all, with a special mention to our esteemed guest speaker, Abdulla Parker; our councillor, Aimee Kuhl; our auditor, Ian Mackay; our long-serving nature reserve and waterways champion, Kyran Wright; and our resident architect, Gordon Hart.

We are exceptionally lucky to live in such an amazing place and yet we have a small handful of members who spend an awful lot of time finding fault.

This speech is dedicated to the silent and vast majority. The people who spend their time walking their leashed dogs along our streets without fear, picking up their pets' droppings as responsible residents; playing with their kids and grandkids in our waterways and public open spaces. Those who empathise with neighbours who are not doing well and assist them wherever possible. These are the Marina residents that your ExCom works for – *tirelessly*.

ExCom comprises a group of highly accomplished professionals including surveyors, engineers, security experts and communicators. If we don't have the skills in-house, we are connected well enough that we are able to call upon outside professionals for one purpose

and one purpose alone: to make the Marina a better place today than it was yesterday.

Some downsides are here to stay – even with the best will in the world. Every year, we will have algae blooms, pond weed growth, sewerage leaks, and one or two breakdowns of the Kingfisher – old or new – just as we have had for the last five decades. Undoubtedly, we will continue to encounter these problems in a man-made water body with all the complications that come with it.

So, what do we do about them?

As your ExCom, we are fully engaged with people at the highest levels in the City of Cape Town – as borne out by Mr Parker's presence here tonight. The City is re-purposing its direction with waterways being the top priority, and we quietly take pride that our efforts may be a small part of the reason for this.

Here are some of the other actions we have taken to further professionalise our office and ensure that the MDGA's financial affairs run on a sound and secure basis.

- We appointed a professional bookkeeper who reconciles receipts and subscription accounts, mails all MDGA statements, inputs data into Pastel and produces monthly financials within a week of month-end. These financials are then published

through our various communication channels. We also made this appointment to help relieve Marcia of her very heavy workload.

- We upgraded to the latest version of Pastel to access automated bank reconciliations, among labour-saving features. And to eliminate disruption in the office, we bought a UPS to ensure we remain connected to the internet during load-shedding.
- We appointed a payroll management company that charges a nominal fee to pay PAYE/UIF while maintaining a leave register and issuing monthly payslips – a legal obligation.
- We have taken the position of Public Officer for SARS away from the non-ExCom member and brought it in-house. We are currently appointing Marcia as our Public Officer.
- We now email and hand-deliver subscription statements monthly, so no members can claim ignorance of their respective status.
- ExCom meets every month with our debt collectors to follow up on collections and plan for action in the upcoming period. A massive ongoing improvement in debt collecting ensured we recovered R339,000 in 2021-22.
- We have improved camera monitoring by changing from iTrak to Navic, the best-connected service provider in the Southern

Peninsula. We have completed the installation of cameras protecting the road reserve north of the Uitsig wall and the canal coming into the Marina at Uitsig. We have installed two cameras at Battleridge and cleared the bush along the Battleridge wall, giving us excellent line of sight and security access, if needed. All these cameras have 24-hour monitoring and armed response.

- ExCom members meet with the SAPS Station Commander every six weeks, which has been a bit problematic over the last few months; and with the Marina's island security teams every two months or more frequently, depending on circumstances.
- We have appointed a six-member gardening company, whose owner has work permits, while complying with the AGM commitment to employ SA citizens whenever possible. Under the supervision of volunteer residents on each island, the Marina Gardeners have made massive improvements to our public open spaces.
- We have ramped up our contacts with senior managers and politicians at the City of Cape Town. We hosted a delegation of 11 managers and a councillor for an onsite inspection of our waterways, the Kingfisher and at least one pump station.
- We have three representatives on ZPAAC, where we maintain a strong and constructive presence, especially with local councillors, City officials and Kyran Wright.

- We are active in the Vrygrond community and meet regularly with community representatives to discuss local issues as well as the proposed Vrygrond low-cost housing plan.

## **Communications**

- We understand that the world's rapid acceleration into the age of digital communications is irreversible. The MDGA could not sit idly by and allow this significant opportunity to pass us by. Accordingly, we have leapt into the digital communication space and fully embraced the challenge and opportunities it brings. Here, we owe Patrick McKenna a great debt of gratitude for his tireless efforts and focus on professionalising our communication function, expanding our communication footprint and raising the frequency of the updates we send to members. We also have a highly professional website that holds all our historical memories as well as all monthly financials and ExCom reports and minutes. Meanwhile, the open rate for our email newsletter is around 40-50% versus an average for email newsletters of between 25-30%. We distribute around 1,543 copies of the email newsletter at least twice a month, often more frequently. Yes, our communications do miss a few members who are still not online. But we have made a commitment to hand-deliver printed communications and updates whenever requested.

Unfortunately, this is Patrick's last ExCom event as he takes time out to refocus his efforts on his business career. Thank you, Patrick, from us all.

In closing...

My last four years on ExCom have been a wild rollercoaster ride. It is difficult to replicate the joys of living in the Marina with its beauty, peace and safety. And it has been an honour to lead on your behalf the ExCom that we cherish. But, as with all things, there is a time to move on, hand over to new blood – and not lurk in the shadows throwing stones.

Ulf Martz, my successor, is a remarkable person with an abundance of energy and professionalism. He will take the MDGA to the next level and I will always be there to assist – but only when asked. I will never interfere.

Ulf, I wish you and the ExCom well and I have utmost trust that you and your colleagues will go from strength to strength.