

HIGHLANDS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (HRA)

Minutes and Notes of a Meeting held on 28th February, 2019 at the Highlands Presbyterian Hall

PRESENT: 70 Residents
Ward Councillor, Mr. K. Charumbura
Head of Zone, Mr. S.I. Sithole
District Officer Ms. S. Mpeta
Ivan Zhakata from the Suburban newspaper

1. **Welcome**

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and stressed that this meeting was an opportunity for residents to raise and discuss issues and concerns. The Council needs to move to an era of transparency and accountability. Money is being badly spent. We need to know what our rates are being spent on; and we need to have breakdowns and details of Council Income and expenditure. The 2019 Budget has not been approved so Council are spending illegally. Council staff are being paid excessive salaries.

We need to fight for the reimbursement of the 25% portion our rates to be spent locally in Highlands. None of the urgent outstanding issues can be dealt with by the Ward Development until funds are provided. Bye-laws need to be enforced. Sanity needs to be restored out of the chaos, one step at a time. We are committed in our efforts to represent you.

2. **Constitution**

The new HRA constitution was adopted by a show of hands.

3. **Finance**

Both Ecocash and Bank accounts have been opened for HRA. Limited funds are needed at this time for items such as printing and signage.

4. **Membership Subscriptions**

The meeting agreed that annual resident membership subscriptions should be \$30 swipe or ecocash.. Subscriptions will be due by 1st of July each year. Notices will be sent to residents giving payment details.

5. **How to report issues of Concern**

Please download and use the app SMART Harare. It is simple to use and ensures that all issues are recorded in a logical manner and raised with the appropriate authorities. The District Officer and Council will be made aware of the problems. Your committee will report back to you.

6. **Ward Development Fund (25% Retention of rates)**

The Chairman of the Borrowdale Ratepayers Committee stated that BRRRA have the paperwork prepared read to go court on this issue, but are awaiting the outcome of a similar case already going through the courts before they take further action.

General consensus seemed to agree that HRA should wait and see what happens in these two cases. However it was noted that we all need to be together for any legal action with the whole community behind us. We also need to make "enough" noise by whatever means possible through general communications, the press and the media.

The question of Class Action was raised – joining up with other Wards in the Harare area. One resident commented that we need to use the laws of the land and take aggressive legal action.

7. **Report Back from Councillor Charumbira.**

Some excerpts from his talk and answers to questions :-

- Various sectors of Council are rotten – whole thing needs to be sorted out
- No transparency from the Treasury
- Council's only reliable source of funds is by collection of rates
- Debts are being accumulated
- Emphasis on accumulation of funds rather than utilization of funds
- Devolution must take place by 25% of rates being sent back to the wards
- The local council is under resourced due to non return of the 25% rates. No authority or power to resolve issues.
- Council minutes are available for inspection at the local office but you have to pay \$100 if you want a copy
- Pensioners over 65 may apply for 50% rebate on their property tax and refuse collection payments.
- Council's priorities do not lie in the western suburbs.
- Promotion by Council to encourage payment of rates has now come to an end.

Water –

- ✓ The US\$940M Chinese facility is currently not coming in the form of cash . So far they have supplied \$75000 worth of materials (some unsuitable).
- ✓ Morton Jeffrey Waterworks producing way below capacity
- ✓ 60% being lost through leakages.
- ✓ No water being produced by Prince Edward Dam and we are very dry in Harare.
- ✓ Chemicals are very expensive. Council looking into other methods of providing water – waste water could be better utilized by setting up sewerage treatment plants and mobile treatment plants could lessen the burden.
- ✓ No donors will come forward until the mess of water is sorted out.

8. **The Meeting was then opened for general discussion**

a. **Water -**

This is the responsibility of the Central Harare City Council. Neither the Ward Committee or local council can do anything about it. Reservoirs are failing to direct water to the Highlands and other areas. The underground piping is old and totally inadequate and needs to be replaced.

The National Water Policy was set up for ZINWA to raise funds, not for users of the resource. This is now a lost cash cow because all the farmers were chased off the land.

Questions:

Where is pipe replacement at local level. ?

What is Council's strategy regarding the upgrading of the water infrastructure. ?

Why are we paying for water when we are not receiving it. ? Noted that Borrowdale RPA took this to court and residents were reimbursed for a period of 3 years. It was generally agreed that this issue should be considered for legal action. Storage of rain water and collection of rain water to be encouraged. Council should look into mandatory storage of rainwater.

We have only had half the normal amount of rain fall this season and the underground water levels are already dropping. Irresponsible citizens throughout the ward are watering their verges and using their boreholes to capacity.

Bye-laws are needed to curb indiscriminate usage of borehole water.

Newsletters to highlight the seriousness and educate residents concerning usage of underground water and indiscriminate and unnecessary wastage – such as green verges through the winter months..

b. **Rates Boycott**

There was much heated discussion on this subject. However it was noted that it is illegal to withhold payment of your rates. There is no legislation which allows for non payment of rates. (Tony Lampart)

c. **Privatisation of Services.**

Ideal in an ideal world. However the whole community or separate areas of the community would have to agree and commit to participation. Members of the Committee have been exploring other options for private collection of rubbish. **A list of service providers will be sent out to residents** (Henry!!!!)

d. **Refuse Collection and Recycling**

- HRA do not have the resources to undertake management of rubbish collection. A few residents have combined together to pay for private collections.
- It was noted that Harare City Council had paid for refuse trucks to be imported. However the duty requirement has still not been paid.
- Mrs. Anderson reported that the truck is there for Ward 8 but there are still problems to overcome in repairing the vehicle. This truck will be based in Borrowdale where they have the facilities to clean and manage it.
- It was noted that a number of Bulawayo residents had purchased 4 x 7 tonne trucks and entered into a contract with the Council to facilitate refuse collection.
- It was noted that they system of transfer stations were used elsewhere in the world. This could be appropriate here and needs to be looked into.
- Everyone needs to recycle – education. Mrs. Anderson thanked Spar for leading the way on recycling. Green and black bags are available at shopping centres to assist in sorting your own rubbish. We have to start somewhere and if everyone makes an effort we will make a difference.

e. **Clean ups at Shopping Centres –**

16000 clean ups now registered. This exercise is now catching on.

f. **Accountability from Council**

How are are our contributions being used? Where is the money going? Nothing to prevent us making sure money is being spent correctly. We need to be assertive in pressing for accountability and transparency. We need details of Income and expenditure

g. **Council contracting out Service Delivery**

A suggestion was made to the Councillor that Council could consider contracting out, instead of managing, a number of services, such as road maintenance and refuse collection. Thereby managing the money only and insisting on efficient service.

h. **Regular news from the Councillor**

Councillor Keith was asked to make news of Council decisions and activities available to HRA on a regular basis for inclusion in newsletters to residents.

i. **Squatters.**

Because of the increasing cost of combi fares people are trying to move closer to town and a number of vacant old houses in the Newlands area have up to 35 people living in them. These people make no contribution to the community, crime and rubbish and vendors are increasing. It was suggested that residents look into the installation of booms at suitable areas. Mrs. Havnar asked what HRA were going to do about it.

j. **Internal Roads**

Internal roads which can be used as short cuts by combis and heavy vehicles are breaking up very quickly. HRA were asked to look into the provision of weight restriction signs and humps being provided by Council where necessary.

k. **Dumping** is a problem

l. **Municipal Police.**

The five Municipal Police stationed at the Highlands Office could be better deployed - shopping centres, monitoring vendors, combies, etc.

m. **Building Permits**

- Why are Council issuing building permits when they are unable to supply water; i.e. essential services; especially for complexes – corner Montgomery/Arcturus. Extra pressure on underground water.
- Two warehouses built on property on Arcturus. (no 25 or 27)
- Security business set up on Rhodesville without agreement from neighbours – dogs and lights a nuisance. (No 19?)
- National Laws concerning change of land usage and correct zoning should be observed..

n. **Combies**

There is also a need to monitor combies using illegal routes. Perhaps it would be possible to get a list of registered combies operating through the ward and their designated routes