

Suiderstrand Community, Conservation and Fire Protection Association

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 20 DECEMBER 2023

The association was founded on 7 September 2023 at a meeting of the 29 founding members. An interim committee was elected with Schalk van der Merwe as interim chairman. Schalk started the whole thing: purchased a fire truck and equipment on his own, raised funds for it, consulted the authorities and fire department, and much more. The initiative for the founding of this association is Schalk's. The main motivation for the establishment of the association was that, if there might be damage to property during firefighting, the association as a body corporate could be held liable instead of individual volunteers who acted in good faith. With the establishment of the association, it was decided that it could also be a platform for, among other things, conservation matters, cleaning of the beach and town, removal of invasive plants etc. That is why the words Community and Conservation were added to the Fire Protection Association.

I will give a brief summary of the affairs and activities of the association here. Those who want more details can check the website at suiderstrand.co.za, or of course contact any of the interim committee members.

1. Foundation activities

A constitution was drawn up, approved and translated. The membership has grown from the original 29 to 80. We want each member to fill in a form to give permission for the association to enter his or her yard in the event of a fire hazard. Of the 80 members, 54 have already submitted forms; 13% of plots submitted forms; 6 new members have not yet paid their R150, but have submitted forms; and 26 members still have to submit forms.

2. The founding, composition and objectives of the association were introduced to CAM, the Agulhas National Park and SRA on several occasions.

3. Information and communication

An information sheet about the association was drawn up and a web page was created and kindly posted by Sam Beeslaar on his suiderstrand.co.za website, under Association. The committee has started a communication channel for committee members on WhatsApp.

4. Finances

Opening a bank account for the association is quite a process, and Tina du Plessis, the interim treasurer, expects it to be finalized within the next few days. Currently, an account is used in Schalk's name (called the Rooipens Wa!), and this has a balance of R15 365.28. Of this, all but R354 is earmarked for the fire truck only. This money will be paid into the association's account when the account is established. In addition to the cash in the bank, the association also has other assets worth R28 249.

5. Firefighting

The fire truck was improved, made roadworthy and registered in the name of the association. Schalk is our fire protection officer, and with his spirited team the fire engine is kept in a constant state of readiness. Hand saws were purchased to assist with firefighting and the eradication of invasive plants.

6. Conservation actions

Committee members and others, under the leadership of Geoff Nichols, cleared invasive plants in an organized manner on three occasions.

7. Committee

The interim committee of the association was elected at the founding meeting. It consisted of a chair, vice-chair, treasurer, secretary, vice-secretary and seven other members. Schalk, who started the whole project, has enough irons in the fire, and is not available for the chairmanship, but has agreed to be chairman until another chairman is elected at the first committee meeting. I then agreed to be the interim chairman until a chairman is elected at this meeting.

8. Committee Meetings

The committee has held three meetings since the founding meeting, where among other things the following matters were discussed:

- KAM's policy regarding deforestation of plots. Plots were indiscriminately cleared, and established indigenous shrubs and trees were cut down to the ground.
- Removal of telephone poles.
- Emergency measures and evacuation plan
- Advertisement boards of developers and estate agents
- Light pollution
- A logo for the association
- Division of work of committee members

For more complete information, the minutes of the respective meetings are available. These and other matters will receive further attention from the newly elected committee.

We all express our thanks and appreciation for the initiative of Schalk, which led to the fire truck and this association. I also thank all the committee members for their enthusiasm for this project.

Suiderstrand is small, probably one of the smallest of small communities. But it is special and unique. I hope that the activities of this association will further develop and confirm the special character of Suiderstrand.