

Greater Knysna Business Chamber

Minutes: 2 March, 2023

Turbine Hotel

Present:

- Chair: Pierre Gouws - pierreg@srfinancial.co.za
- Reana Rossouw - Next Generation - rossouw@nextgeneration.co.za
- Vaughan Palmer - vaughanmobile@yahoo.co.uk
- Penny Rice - PR & tourism - penny.rice@seeff.com
- Beverley Pothier - Knysna ON - info@knysnaon.co.za
- Denis Pule - denis@safinco.co.za
- Peter van Diepen - info@gardenroutecarrental.com
- Andrew King - andrew@fkarchitects.co.za
- Dries van Rooyen - Discovery - dries@southernwealth.co.za
- Alan Bell - alan.bell.za20@gmail.com
- Declan Nurse - Allsound - response@allsound.co.za
- Jerome Simonis - East Head Cafe - jerome@easthead.co.za
- Andries Fourie - andries@kdpq.co.za
- Martin Hatchuel - martinhatchuel@gmail.com
- Richard Sohn - richard@sohn.co.za
- Mark Sofianos - mark@mgprop.co.za

Apologies

- Lester Day - Thesen Islands HOA - lesterday@icloud.com
- Elizabeth-Anne Vertue - training@emporiumknysna.co.za
- Catherine Booysen - African Ozone - catherine@africaozone.co.za
- Cathy Loupis - cathy@calconsulting.co.za
- Jan van der Westhuizen - jan@experttech.com

- Wiseman Ntoli nlitoli@gmail.com

PIERRE: Thank you all for putting up your hands to help the Chamber.

MARK: We are in trouble if we don't stand up and make those in power accountable. We need to formulate a plan in conjunction with ward committees, etc. to hold council accountable.

RICHARD: The frustration comes when you move from ward to council level. We have tried the soft approach, it simply doesn't work: councillors are unwilling to deal with Chamber.

DENIS: Black people are not represented in the Chamber, at AGM and here at this meeting.

DRIES: The town's biggest problem is job creation. If we can show results, the multiplier effect can be huge.

ANDRIES: The problem is the municipality. It takes 18 months to get building plans approved. It's all about politics. It's about getting the right managers in the municipality; how to build relationships with them when every second month a new person is in the position.

JEROME: We have to have a relationship with the Council. Because of the municipality we don't have a tourism industry in Knysna. The Municipality is in a downward spiral that will be very difficult to turn around. We need to solve the core of the problem.

BEVERLY: The first thing we need to do is have a unified voice. We need to have a mandate.

MARK: The tail is wagging the dog. The wrong people are running council. We need to say 'this is our base.' We therefore need to establish relationships with all other groups - Homeowners Associations, etc. **We need a marketing sub-committee** to tie in with other associations.,

RICHARD - We have inexperienced councillors/decision makers and the wrong people in management. My personal view is that we must ask MEC Bredell to place the municipality under administration. This (asking) must be done by individuals.

MARK: We must formulate a plan and communicate this to members. So we apply pressure as individuals and as Chamber.

VAUGHAN: Information is power; give information to members and the public.

DECLAN: Managers have been put in place under politics. The only way to reverse is this is via administration.

DRIES: The problem is leadership, not just political issues.

RICHARD: Julie Seaton prepared a document regarding administration: a list of some of the problems. Treat this list with confidentiality, but each of us must write to Bredell in our own words.

PENNY: How many emails does Bredell need?

RICHARD: As many as possible.

PENNY: If each of us gets 20 people to write.

DECLAN: I'm concerned we're approaching this piecemeal. We need maximum penetration to locals to get them to join Chamber and join in requesting administration.

MARK: **A 4-pronged approach**

1. Membership sub-committee

2. **Social marketing and distribution of information**
3. **Legal and financial team to look at the pitfalls**
4. **Send the municipality a list of questions and then tell them what we (a large group of people) want.**

Chamber must take a phased approach. We must decide what we want to do first.

Chamber needs a chairperson who isn't in business in Knysna.

BEVERLY: I have friends who have a green bonds/grid-tied answer to load shedding. It all works on block-chain funding, basically turning every roof into a power station.

ANDRIES: Jan van der Westhuizen is quite far down the road with using waste to generate electricity;

PIERRE: **Energy must then be one of our sub-committees.**

MARK: **Another item we should be looking at is undercover intelligence gathering.**

ALAN: Privatisation is necessary to take ownership of many of the services. If we start providing them in parallel, we can later push them back into the municipality. The key is getting Chamber members, then asking them (the members) what they want, and then driving those issues and problems.

JEROME: The situation is worse than we think. You can't get responses from directors.

ALAN: We need facts to put before Bredell. What are the issues in underrepresented communities?

MARK: Chamber needs 5 directors and sub-committees.

REANA: We have a mission statement but we are digressing from it because of pressing needs. We need a new statement for a 12-month period, and then later return to the core of Chamber business. That's the communication needed.

PENNY: I will help with social media.

RICHARD: I don't think lobbying to put the municipality under administration should be a function of the Chamber. It should be done by individuals.

DECLAN: Our response is to put Council under terms.

RICHARD: We **must compile a list of questions to put to Council**. The public must see that Chamber is trying.

BEVERLY: **We need a tourism sub-committee.**

JEROME: We must remember that there are very good people in the Municipality who are also unhappy. We need to reach out to them.

DENIS: Can we create an entry-level category for membership?

MARK: Even low-paid labourers pay union fees if they feel represented. There is strength in numbers.

REANA: We have to have events, addressed by local people for local people.

ALAN: Perhaps a monthly award for a person doing good work in the council.

JEROME: We can't have the entire municipality feeling the town has a downer on them.

BEVERLY: There are various forums in the black community - business forums, etc. Community forums are also active. But they feel left out. We need to engage them.

PETER: I will put up my hand to work on tourism-side recruitment.

DENIS: We need a combined approach, with written objectives for a PR campaign.

ALAN: We must pursue the idea of an advisory board for the chamber – retired people who can advise on policy and direction.

BEVERLY: I will work to attract members from homeowners associations, and in the energy and infrastructure sectors

REANA: We need to be more inclusive of the other communities.

PETER: I will recruit in tourism

ALAN: I will recruit in the industrial area

ANDREW: I will recruit in the building industry

RICHARD: The most important reason people should join the Chamber is that Chamber is trying to get the town to function properly.

ANDRIES: The budget figures just don't add up. The budget is R1 bn; debtors are R432 million; creditors are on 120 days; last month council had to take an emergency overdraft of R 20 million

to pay salaries; Eskom is owned R18 million. So in my mind, if this was a business, it would be finished.

Meeting closed; will meet again in 2 weeks – 16 March at 15h30. Venue to be advised.