

Minutes of the meeting of the Greater Knysna Business Chamber  
11 May 2023  
34 Waenhout Avenue, Knysna

Present - 40 delegates, 5 apologies

CHAIRMAN PIERRE GOUWS

For a quorum we need 22 members and there are a lot more here.

Minutes of the meeting on 16 March were distributed

APPROVED Denis Pule

SECONDED Catherine Booysen

PIERRE GOUWS

Lester and I and Martin had a meeting recently at which we looked at the financial affairs of the chamber. We are concerned, and we did raise at the last meeting that as a chamber we need financial support to cover the admin costs. Finalising last year's numbers it doesn't look great. We did suffer quite a big loss – mostly because membership fees were lowered in order to try and get more members but it ended up not being substantially more.

This year so far with a lot of effort it does look a bit better: a lot of people did send their subs through in the last couple of days. I think currently we are OK, but I think we're still at a point where we need to decide how to take it forward. We have money in the bank now that will cover a month or three, but what happens then? Currently we are not in big trouble, but we need a plan in order to cover costs. Membership fees are clearly low and don't cover all costs.

In terms of our budget for the year, the cost of running it is about R180,000; membership fees in the past was about R77,000, and prior years we had bigger donations filling the gap. Last year that unfortunately did not happen.

We have got someone who committed a R10,000 donation on condition that we find 9 others so that we cover the R100,000. I know R10,000 is probably a lot for most people, so any amount will help. So we need to get to a point where we (members) can contribute more, or otherwise we need other fundraising ideas. We're just very concerned at this point, especially bringing other, new directors onto the board if it's not a financially viable company. At some point we may need to make a call and say 'this doesn't work.'

However, the last couple of days did show that there is quite a lot of support. With this extra support, I feel a bit more energised, but we still need some plans in terms of donations or fundraising.

MARK SOFIANOS

Up until this week, a lot of people have not known who the business chamber is and for the first time our social media has been flooded with the business chamber. We are now seen to be doing something about the biggest problem in our town, which has already gone a long way to giving the business chamber credibility. Now that we are doing something, we'll get a following. If we reduce that amount to R5,000, I'll as a business commit R5,000, and if we can get a few others in this room to say we'll back that to make sure that we can continue for another year.

PENNY RICE

If we have a look at what Revive Knysna has done, in the last two weeks they've launched their website, and it makes it so easy to give them money – there's nothing easier than using your credit card online. They've also got a monthly subscription Their emailer is also sharp, clear, easy, to the point, with lots of photos – that's what talks to people today. Their social media has been the key to that.

DRIES VAN ROOYEN

I think that's an excellent idea, and what I'm happy to do as a business is to fund the website.

PIERRE GOUWS

If anyone can help through time - don't underestimate the amount of admin that goes into the chamber.

PENNY RICE

There is a website already, Chantel Corkie has now taken over management of that, but she can't be doing that forever for nothing.

QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR

How many members have we got?

PIERRE GOUWS

This morning it was 87 paid up

QUESTION

How many of them are big businesses like banks and estate agents?

PIERRE GOUWS

The thing is that estate agents are typically small businesses within franchises, so they aren't really that big. I don't think any of the banks have renewed.

KASI ARLOW

I think If we're trying to get awareness of the businesses chamber, we could get businesses to collectively put something together, like hampers or raffles to get awareness of the businesses

FROM THE FLOOR

If we have something of value that we can offer the members so that they get value for their money.

DAS BOFFA

If you look at what we have done this week (the campaign for objections to the municipal budget), that is value. Maybe that's why there's more interest.

PIERRE GOUWS

The amount of admin and hours that people have put into the municipal question, analysing it (the budget) to get to the point where we could share comments – people don't realise how much work that is.

PENNY RICE

Members should please like and share every post on social media, and become a follower because everytime one engages or mentions the name Knysna Business Chamber that pushes up our ratings, and we'll start getting noticed. Social media is the easiest way to get the word out – it's like wildfire.

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

The subcommittee of the Water, Waste and Energy is developing an energy summit for Knysna to be held in June. With your help we can distribute that summit to everybody and let them pay a little bit which will bring money to the chamber. The chance is that we can reach out to areas as far as Wilderness to Plett. We have the Western Cape Government sending a speaker, our mayor will be speaking there, we have someone from the council that will speak there, and they have to tell us what their contributions and solutions to the energy crisis are. We would like to get the people from the PR subcommittee to help us with making it more professional so that we can send it out.

ELMAY BOUWER

I'm not sure what people get for their membership. This board has been doing a helluva job over the last two weeks, they've even had sample letters for us to hand in to the municipality to fight the rates and taxes. So now I feel that I paid because someone had done that for me. I want to know, for example, if there's a workshop I'll get a discount on the cost of attending. I think we need to think of business value. For example, if you're a member of the chamber, you'll get a discount on, for example, work on your web site. If your own website person is not a member, say to them they need to become a member. What kind of benefits are we looking at on top of what the chamber is already doing. It should be something concrete that will bring value to the members exclusively.

DENIS PULE

The chamber represents the private sector. We run businesses, create employment, create wealth, etc. South Africa as a whole because there's a massive drive to switch the whole system to a socialist model, or at best a combination of socialism and capitalism. So in the last year to the next election, the chambers should be running a series of adverts sying what is the role of

the private sector. We are the providers of industry, business, create employment, tied back to the education system – without that infrastructure South Africa and Knysna will not actually grow and be here in ten years time. We're living currently with a hostile government. What the chamber is offering is a cohesive body that speaks with a single voice.

#### DAS BOFFA

With Revive Knysna, you can physically see what they're doing, so people donate money and feel they're adding value. A lot of things the chamber does, people don't know about. The website is important because you'll be able to see what happens behind the scenes through the blogs, etc. The most important thing from the PR side is putting out there what the chamber actually does.

#### PENNY RICE

If we can get onto a project – for example the KAWS project – then a lot more people will see what we're doing. Once that starts to take over, people will see more of it. What has happened over the last two or three days proves that whatever the PR team is doing is starting to work.

#### FROM THE FLOOR

Every single person here should be a member of the Tourism group because they add a lot of information and value.

#### PIERRE GOUWS

It's clear that there is a benefit to being a member – we just need to get the people to sign up.

#### LESTER DAY

We got involved in trying to object to the Knysna Budget late in the day, and we were probably driven to it in some degree by the good work that has been done by ratepayers in Sedgefield. They made us aware of how far we were behind in the game, so we had a lot of catching up to do. The first part was to analyse the budget, to say what are the issues – so we didn't have a high-level look, we dug deep down, and if you read the document there are many things that appeal to many people - they won't all appeal to everyone. So we now know where we are. From that we started the social media, we got out and about. But when you think you're getting out and about, you then realise that you aren't getting out. I bumped into my electrician the other day and asked if he was objecting, and he said 'objecting to what?' It matters more to my electrician than to me as a retiree. So we need to find a way to get to 'normal' people who work for a living in this town. We've had significant help from Elizabeth-Anne Vertue, Penny, and Chantel, responding at short notice, developing catchy phrases and campaign tools; we had a board up in the Knysna Mall for the last two days, GRIB (Garden Route Insurance Brokers) were running a campaign for their business, we generated a board which called for objections; we're in Action Ads today, and suddenly gaining momentum. So we know we're doing the right thing. Are we doing enough? No. - we got badly sidetracked. We were told on day one that it would be crazy to have a petition because a petition might be signed by 2,000 people, but it would only count as one objection. So we went to great trouble to get individual objections, and we discovered that people are saying, 'I'm not going to object, I've signed a petition.' So we

were badly undermined by people who should know better. We now have to ask people who've signed the petition to go and lodge their individual objections. It's been a frustrating job. Martin has been capturing this data, sharing it with me, people have been following up with the council because they haven't been receiving acknowledgements, and we think it might be a tactic to not register the objections, so we're monitoring the whole thing. As of now we've had 430 objections, Martin had very good feedback from Brenton two days ago, who asked if they could share our material with their ratepayers. They had a very vociferous meeting on Wednesday night, and all seventy members there said they're going to object. So if you can engage with the community at the right level, and get to them, we can get our message across. I went to Sedgefield and there must have been 100 people in the hall. Here you'll get twenty. The Knysna folk are not engaged for whatever reason. Our challenge is to get to them. Art short notice we've done good work, but it's what we do next. The challenge for us is to ask how the municipality reacts, and where do we go and what do we do – we can't let it die and not follow up. We need a process to make sure all this work, all these objections really count. We'll probably work with our friends in Sedgefield.

#### DENIS PULE

I cam across a couple of people who want to stay below the radar. They're so accustomed to being blocked by the authorities in other sectors – for example you apply for plans to be passed, and because you're the person who objected to something they don't pass your plans, or they want a backhand. It's not obvious, but it's implied, so when we approach potential participants, we need to put their mind at ease so that they know they're not there on their own, we are a group of people, so if they're going to get retaliation from the authorities, we can stand together to defend ourselves.

#### LESTER DAY

When the municipality compile their budget, they compile it in terms of Treasury guidelines, and we've found five or six guidelines which they have broken in compiling the budget, so we've written a letter to Minister Bredell at Provincial level to say, 'in terms of your guidelines, if the municipality doesn't do this, you must reject the budget and ask them to redraft.' That went in on a chamber letterhead. What will happen – who knows, but it's another leg that we've got out there. We've read the rules on how you compile a budget, and they've broken the rules.

#### DENIS PULE

I think you need to be commended on that. (Applause)

#### EVELYN PEPLER

On the point of the website, I think banner ads on the website is a great income opportunity for the chamber. For example, The Heads webcam sells banner ads, monthly, annually. Businesses will pay - big businesses like Investec can spend that kind of money, and you can earn it off your landing pages.

#### PIERRE GOUWS

I think we have to say a big thank you to Lester and everybody else who was involved in this budget analysis and coordinating it. A lot of effort went into that.

#### JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

I've listened to what people are thinking the municipal employees are doing or not doing. I don't think we must assume. They are people who live in this town, they are affected by this increase in rates, they are probably also concerned about the hike in prices as we are. So when we talk about the municipality, we need to find a way how we can work with them rather than opposing them. By that I mean that objections are great, but relationships and working together are even better. So my suggestion is that we start working on a committee level closely with them. There are people in the municipality that are paid by our tax money that do their work. When we work closely with them, we will realise that they are people just like us. And by bridging the gap is to influence them from inside, rather than just moaning from outside. We also need to consider the fact that we're here and worrying about our roads that need to be tarred, and our budgets, but other groups in this community, and it's a large community, have even more concerns. So please bear in mind when we talk about the municipality, let's figure out a way to develop a relationship with them.

#### FEEDBACK FROM SUBCOMMITTEES

##### PENNY RICE: SOCIAL MEDIA & PR

Reporting on behalf of committee chair Elizabeth-Anne Vertue. Following our meeting of 5 April, as of today we have drafted and distributed 2 letters to the Greater Knysna Business Chamber and the local community to try and garner new members.

We've done a call to action emailer and whatsapp correspondence that's been shared with the database. As of four days ago when Elizabeth put this report together, 1,125 emails had been sent out, and about 300+ Whatsapps.

Elizabeth, Lester, and Jacques have put together three media releases for the launch of the new board and subcommittees, and that will all be on new letterhead with new logo once the members have been ratified. Facebook and Instagram are now under our control – they were outsourced.

At this time, we have 1,125 facebook followers, so we will soon have in the tens of thousands. Instagram we had 1,049 followers.

The new logo is ready, we just have to make a decision and accept that. We have an outline for the first month's engagement for informing our followers about our changes and the way forward.

Chantel now has access to the website, and she can update that and give us stats from there.

The campaign data is ready for the KAWS call to action to try and get support to get their funding back.

We are going to be looking at the newsletter to make it more engaging and digestible. We've been refining how we're going to use our social media and emails going forward in order to add value for our members.

What we would like is clarification on exactly what the different pillars are and who they are so that we can put that out on social media.

Something we want to do is to put faces out there. So whoever is a board member, we want a nice close up shot of that person and a short bio on them, what business they do, their previous experience, and the various different chamber projects they're involved with. Please pick up the phone and tell me what you're doing, send me as many photos as possible and we'll get it out there. And don't think it's a silly little thing: if you've had a fabulous event at your lodge, if you build boats and you've just delivered to the new owners, tell us about it.

The boatbuilding industry and all the watersports we've got really need to be pushed. We should have a Knysna Yacht Week, we could have canoeing events, waterpolo is quite a big thing with the schools, we've got amazing yacht building going on, we could team up with St Francis on that, and we have so much expertise and great skippers. We could possibly have something in the winter months to try and drive that.

We could possibly do a sticker or decal that you can put in your car or business window that you're a proud member of the Chamber.

I would like to get to know every person that's part of this, to put a face to your name: we're always desperate for content.

The way I look at this chamber is not what the chamber can do for me, but what can I do for Knysna.

**DEBBIE DAVIS – KAWS**

We're extremely excited to have the support of the business chamber. We have over 14,000 followers on our page, so we could possibly use our page to advertise the chamber's assistance.

**DRIES VAN ROOYEN: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION**

We are now in a strong planning phase. Last week we were invited by the Western Cape Government to meet in George with all of the Garden Route chambers to discuss business development and job creation. I was pleasantly surprised to see that government is so excited to support us and to support the entire province. We were addressed by the assistant director general of planning, Joanne Johnson. There was good two way feedback.

The important thing here is that they have come up with a vision which they call 'Growth for Jobs' with the acronym G4J. They are putting quite a bit of money behind the project because there are not only job problems here, but in the entire province. The strategy is now being rolled out. They are having a follow up meeting in the first week of July.

The Western Cape Government has a 2035 plan, and they want to establish 1 million new jobs in the entire province. The sad part is that according to them, in the Province we have 891,000 people unemployed.

They're saying if we can grow our gross domestic product between 4 and 6% over the period, for every 1% economic growth, there'll be a 60% ratio of new jobs.

What's also important is attracting investment to our towns, and growing existing businesses. If we grow existing businesses, it will provide additional jobs. The Province has a strategy for stimulating existing businesses.

Energy security is high on the agenda. This includes new technologies, liquid and biofuels, etc. – exactly the sort of things we are already addressing with our summit next month.

The export market is something we need to focus on. Export market doesn't mean just tourism, it means products that we manufacture here and export. So for example, we should expand the boatbuilding industry for the export market. We can see the result - starting with one company in Knysna, we now have five - why can't we have ten?

They believe that airports can play a big role. Knysna could collaborate and partner with our colleagues in Plett for sharing the airport for our export. As we know it's not only the international airports - infrastructure will really help. The province is also working with the port authorities across the province to help get our exports going.

Water security was a big item on the agenda.

They are really promoting the establishment of entrepreneurship. They have been to universities to see what they can do to encourage development there. They are specifically looking at establishment of micro businesses.

The position of the youth came through very loud and clear – we have to encourage our youth to get into business.

I believe there should be a lot of networking between ourselves and other business chambers. It was wonderful to hear from our business colleagues in the other towns to see how we can cooperate in establishing growth points within the Garden Route.

FROM THE FLOOR

What's the number of unemployed people here in Knysna?



DRIES VAN ROOYEN

I don't know. That's something I think we need to raise. The next thing we need to do is to establish what unemployment numbers are in Knysna, and discover what skills we have. We need to have a scorecard.

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

Congratulations to the committee member from Skills for doing great work. There is a skills Mecca that has been established by Garden Route. They are having a session in July in Knysna on skills and on unemployment. To the question of the gentleman about unemployment, in 2022 the rate of unemployment in Knysna and Bitou was 42.3% and it's likely to grow upwards as the economy worsens. But there is a great opportunity to work with the skills Mecca. The skills Mecca was formed after the fires in 2017, where there was a lot of money donated.

PETRIE SWANEVELDER

We need wifi hotspots for people to communicate more effectively.

BABALO NTLEBI: PROJECTS COMMITTEE

We held our first meeting on 4 April, at which we selected our chair (myself) and vice chair, Johny Mulder. We had three points of discussion. First was the homeless shelter. As a subcommittee we see the importance and the need for a homeless shelter for the greater good for the community of Knysna. Homeless people are members of the community of Knysna and now see themselves homeless due to the ills of the economy and society. It is also extremely bad for business to have the homeless sleeping in front of places of business. Richard Thorpe gave us a report on what was being done in regards to this problem in Knysna. A temporary shelter has been identified for the winter in the town hall annexe and on some land in Clyde Street, and a long-term shelter has also been identified. We need to understand that a shelter is not a permanent home, so there needs to be prospective jobs for the homeless, and this is where the chamber could support this project. Richard did say that he's busy writing a short document on how the chamber can assist the project.

The second point was safety and security. Declan from Allsound said that Allsound is currently upgrading its existing camera surveillance system to fibre. For this project they are working with KSSI and coordinating with SAPS and about 10 business owners.

The third project is KAWS. KAWS is doing amazing work when it comes to our animals, and educating people on how to take care of their pets. However, they have needs in order to continue with their work: they need their grant which is still outstanding, and hasn't been paid for some time. Apparently they need their lease to be signed, and only then will they be able to get their grant. As the projects committee we understand that the chamber might not have the financial muscle to assist our projects, and therefore we rely on the community members of Knysna to get our projects on track, and to assist with our projects. We also understand that people are busy, which is why we would like to tackle one project at a time, and we would like to start with KAWS.

## ANDREW KING: PROJECTS – HOMELESS SHELTER

We've had a bit of progress on the homeless shelter. We met twice with the community services people. There are three aspects to the homeless situation. The ultimate goal is a shelter that is earmarked in the Heidevallei development, but that's so long-term, and is so tenuous that I don't think it's something we need to focus on.

The temporary shelter – there's a property in Clyde Street that belongs to the municipality and the council has just approved the land behind as a place for the shelter to be built, but they woke up and realised winter is approaching so they've also provided for interim shelter in the annexe behind the town hall, and in the house that stands on the property where they're going to built that temporary shelter. They have a budget of R300,000 for that. They've put out a tender for the NPO to run the shelter, a tender for all the bedding, the toiletries, the sanitary packs, the lockers, etc., and they've appointed GAP Management Services and Security. Where we can possibly come in is to help with installing showers. I've already spoken to some contractors who will be able to donate a geyser and some shower heads and taps - this is one of the visible projects that we can put on social media so that people can see that we're doing things. There's dry-walling and some doors. Perhaps we can have a work party on a Saturday morning to put them up. It's very basic, but it's one of those visible projects that can be a kick start to more.

The homeless forum: there's a big group of people who are feeding the homeless in various places, various church organisations and individuals, and I think Richard Thorpe can coordinate them all and get them to feed the people at the interim shelter.

The municipality went out to tender for the architectural services for the new temporary shelter building and some company from Klerksdorp was awarded the tender for R180,000. I have questioned that. I spoke to Richard Meyer and we have offered to do that as a pro bono service – we on behalf of the chamber. He's going to cancel that, and we will do that service for them.

Richard Meyer and Liesl Badtjies of the social services by their own admission are not sure what they're going to put up, and they're looking for guidance, so I think we can drive it quite a bit, and speak to the various contractors and suppliers in town.

The final shelter is very pie in the sky at this stage, and I don't think we should waste our energy on that at this stage. We should concentrate on what we can do now.

## PENNY RICE

I suggest you send me a wish list of what you need, and let me put it on social media. I do think there are a lot of local businesses who have donor fatigue, so we need to look bigger. If I look at what Sanlam Private Wealth does for Hospice – they put in significant amounts of money and they have money in their social responsibility budgets that they need to spend. If we look at the number of Investec and Private Wealth clients that we have here and the bonds they hold here – those banks need to put something into the town.

ANDREW KING

Richard Thorpe has brought up the point that this is where the business development committee needs to get involved. The shelter is not meant to be a permanent place for people, it's meant to be a temporary place.

MARK SOFIANOS

I've worked for about two years with Richard and the homeless forum and it's quite an emotive subject for a lot of people because on one side we have people who are trying to look after our businesses, keep them clean, tidy and crime-free, and you have people on the other side of the homeless forum who are really trying to look after just the homeless people. The aim all along has been to find a shelter where people can be housed on days like today (rain and cold). The training and job creation are as important. And coupled with all of that is law enforcement because if law enforcement does their part, the homeless have somewhere to go.

This together with KAWS are the two projects that can get the chamber on the map, and it will benefit every business in Knysna if we can get the people off the streets. We are all affected by people who live on the streets, do crime on the streets, dig in the dustbins.

The homeless shelter needs soft furnishings although this is covered in the tender process.

ANDREW KING

Liesel Badjies said that they need any help they can get.

MARK SOFIANOS

If it's driven and structured, people will give. That's why Revive Knysna has worked. It's structured, you can see what they're doing, it's overseen by capable people, so people don't mind giving. So if we dedicate a team to the homeless shelter, we can achieve a lot.

Andrew has done a great job so far.

TARRYN EDKINS - MEMBERSHIP AND NETWORKING EVENTS

Alan Bell, who couldn't be here today, is trying to set up a meeting with the three people who head up the Garden Route Taxi Association, which should happen on the 17th to encourage those people to get other members of other communities to sign up and join us.

We've started a clipboard at Salt and Petal where people can put their names down and we can send them information. I've also asked people to display their certificates, put them in frames where people can walk in – from ours, lots of people ask me what this is, how they can get involved.

EVELYN PEPLER

Are the certificates already being done, or are you waiting for the new logo?

MARTIN HATCHUEL

The certificates are already being done. We're going to have to reissue when the new logo comes into effect.

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: WATER, WASTE & ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE

We had a meeting where we were appraised on how far we are with the Knysna energy crisis. I gave feedback to the subcommittee on a recent feasibility study and the outcome of that study. In broad terms, the outcome was favourable, that Knysna could by its own means develop 24% of its electricity from using waste. That will result in a R20 million savings on not transporting the waste to Mossel Bay. It will further bring in an additional income to the Knysna Municipality of about R20 million if they sell the energy to consumers.

The process is that the Municipality accepted the feasibility, they then ran it past the academics who were happy to comment on it. The next process is that they will in the first week of June the feasibility will be presented to the mayor and council. They then need to come up with a solution as to how they go ahead to procure additional sources of electricity for Knysna. We do not believe that waste-to-energy is the next Escom, but the contribution of 24% will be a great contribution. We do believe that there is a need for an energy island in Knysna, meaning that we will need to make use of many opportunities to create energy. Hydro, wind, solar, waste-to-energy and other sources. But that is the job of the municipality. All that we can do is to support them, making sure that we push it as far as possible.

We are now awaiting the date where I will give feedback to them, wearing two hats – one as a provider to them, the other as the chamber.

The second thing that is happening is the energy summit, where they (municipality) will tell the rest of the town what they are doing in terms of energy. They have committed that the mayor as well as the electrical and environmental departments of the municipality will speak. Also, Pierre Gouws has committed to speaking about the tax and financial impacts of energy. Also Beverly Pothier (KnysnaON) has committed to speak on behalf of business to tell people what the impact on her business and eventually on our businesses is – if you don't have power, you don't have hotspots, you don't have internet, and eventually everybody who works at home will eventually not be able to work. We are awaiting confirmation from the Western Cape Government on the date. I will sit this week with the PR Committee to make sure we send out something attractive for the event.

The idea is to host the energy summit, but also to create awareness for the chamber.

It's important to support this event, to find out what the mayor, the municipality, and the Western Cape Government are doing in terms of energy in our area.

GENERAL

LESTER DAY

I think our members are somewhat saturated by media at the moment, but the KAWS initiative we think is good for everyone, and for KAWS, so we want to get an appeal out for the municipality to pay the R270,000 grant over to KAWS. It's in the budget for this year, it may have been misappropriated.

This is what we'll put out in the second half of May to try to get some traction from the community.

**BELINDA SPEED, MANAGER, KAWS**

The reason we can't get the grant is because we don't have a lease. We can't get a lease because the municipal manager is in hot water, I believe, and him signing the lease if he ends up being fired makes our lease null and void. I think this can't be correct, because surely someone that is in a position at a given time signs a document, that document must be a legal document.

KAWS has been fighting for a new lease since December 2021, so we are essentially squatting illegally on their property. They gave us a one year lease after the previous lease expired. We are hoping for a 9-year, 11-month lease for the next period.

KAWS is bleeding money every month. We are running at a R40,000 loss every month. The economic state of Knysna has resulted in so many more people coming to use our clinic – so it's not just that we have to find homes for lots of dogs and cats, it's actually the clinic that's the thing that's draining us. We would hate to get to a position where we would have to close the clinic because we simply cannot afford to run it anymore because what that's going to mean is that animals are going to die at home and in the streets, and the diseases that can carry over from animals to humans will increase enormously.

We really appreciate that the Business Chamber is taking our plea on board and helping, because for a long time we felt that we weren't being supported by anyone.

We're running at a loss every month mainly because people can't afford to pay their hospital bills, or they just don't. They can't afford a private vet, or they've been blacklisted at a private vet so they come to us and they still don't pay their bills. From an animal welfare perspective we're in a difficult position because what do you do if someone comes to you with a sick or injured animal that actually has a loving home that just can't afford the vet bills.

The R270,000 grant will be very welcome, but that doesn't even cover a month's costs at KAWS. I believe that the grant used to be more than R500,000 every year. We haven't had anything since June 2020.

We run a project called Club 101 where we are trying to get 3,000 businesses and members of the public to give us R101 each per month. If we can just get that, it'll cover our expenses every month. Our shop is fantastic, it gets over R100,000 per month, which comes straight to our operating expenses.

DEBBIE DAVIS

All the upgrades and repairs at the Kennels we're doing at our own cost. Even though it's municipal property, any electrical or other issues, we pay for. There's been a drain that's been spilling raw sewage down the side of our property for 15 years, and they keep saying we can't fix it because the one side of the property is this person's department, and the other side is another person's department. So we paid R10,000 and we got it fixed in two days. But it's R10,000 that we can't actually afford.

We get support from Hill's, if they have damaged packaging, etc., they give us food, but it's as and when they have it, it's not every single month. We have to buy food, although we do get a lot of food donated.

PIERRE GOUWS

The other thing we wanted to do today was elect a new board. On the one side we want to do that, but on the other hand we understand that they might be scared to become directors of a company whose financial affairs are not sound.

Should we let the matter stand over to the next meeting and see if the financial situation improves?

LESTER DAY

We should get the annual financial statements finalised so that we can see where we are at February 2023, and look at the budget for next year, and then form a view.

PIERRE GOUWS

Happy with that. I think the committees are already doing amazing work, and we don't have to get everybody on paper yet.

If I can ask then if anyone can make any financial contribution, please get in touch: we can make it anonymous if you want.

Thank you to everyone for coming, and it sounds exciting – we are really making a difference.

*Meeting ended.*

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