

Minutes of a meeting of the Exco and Manco of the Greater Knysna Business Chamber
4 April 2024

Venue: 34 Waenhout Street

Present: 32 persons, including members

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: Welcome. Today we are all about the different subcommittees, and the introduction of these to the Chamber. It's important to know who we are so that we can support one another in the appropriate areas. The chairpersons of each of the subcommittees will tell us what their subcommittee is about, and what they are doing.

PROVINCIAL DIRECTIVES FOR KNYSNA

Jan van der Westhuizen: Province, through the NEMA act sent some directives to the municipality mainly due to the sewage spillage in Belvidere, Lake Brenton, Hornlee, and subsequently other areas. They also issued a directive in terms of the waste in town – they have to find an alternative location for the waste – and they have to deal with the vagrants and the homeless in town.

We as a chamber had said to the municipality that we will support them in starting to execute some of those through Sections 77 - 78 of the Municipal Finance Act, which means that the municipality must agree to us supporting them, and that they acknowledge that they cannot deliver.

Subsequently the WC Government also incorporated that into their directives and their meetings, and over the Easter weekend, members of this manco, were party to the discussions from top level - people close to the premier and the minister have been managing and chairing this meeting. On Tuesday of this coming week, there will be a delegation coming to town to inspect the new site for the waste transfer, and they will also look at the new homeless shelters that were proposed, and they will also look at the various areas and corrections to the sewage spills. You will hear this afternoon that some people in this committee have been highly involved - specifically Dirk, who was monitoring the waste on a daily basis as a member of our Waste and Energy committee.

We have very high level support of the Western Cape government in working on these issues, because it's in the interest of the entire town.

We will give you feedback as we go along - please be on the lookout for communications from the Chamber Admin.

SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: Safety and security is the basis from which we can operate good businesses.

COLONEL FRANCOIS DE WET, SAPS, STATION COMMANDER, KNYSNA. Since my appointment in 2021, we have identified a number of areas of challenge. I think the most important one is partnerships - the bigger partners are currently SAPS with our CPF structures (Community Policing Forums), and then the local authority. Not to speak when the local authority is not present, but there is a lot of work to be done. We've been fighting to get all the stakeholders together, and the Business Chamber is also one of those platforms.

We need to eradicate the opportunity for crime. It's common knowledge that community policing partnerships is the way forward. I come from Hermanus, which is an example of what can be done if people work together. Bad things happen when good people do nothing. I can only do my job if I have the partnerships of all organisations.

Safety and security wise, the town is not in a good position. The biggest concern is the contact crime which is increasing on a daily basis, and what is very worrying is that in assault GBH, it happens 59% inside the house.

Knysna is currently a colonel station, and a report in the 1980s identified it as a brigadier station. The only two brigadier stations in the district are George and Oudtshoorn, and we need this upgrade to get additional resources.

Sedgefield is a problem because there are no cells, and we have to drive in and out if we make an arrest or if anything is needed.

I mention these things because people need to understand, and that's why we need to have opportunities to speak on forums such as this one.

We are at a very advanced stage of establishing a municipal court. There are by-laws that need to be enforced, but which are currently not enforced - this is a main function of the local authority. We have been in talks with them for the past three years, but lately there is progress. The chief magistrate gave his blessing so that we can use the court building to start with, and later the municipality will have to build their own court. But there is no excuse to wait until then - it needs to happen with immediate effect.

I hear that the local authority has appointed additional temporary law enforcement officers. The next thing that we will fight for is that they work the same shifts that we do, on the same time frames where most crimes are reported.

It's important that the different forums work together, it's the only way to eradicate crime. And then we must keep each other accountable. The Municipality is supposed to have a safety forum - this is the only local authority in the Garden Route district that doesn't have a safety forum. So we need to establish that, but we aren't going to wait for that. Through the CPF we have our own safety committee that meets weekly to review the present week and plan for the following week, but it's not attended properly by stakeholders who should be there.

MICHAEL SIMON ALSOUND (speaking on behalf of Declan Nurse): Just to touch on what Colonel De Wet said, partnerships are key and I can tell you he does hold all parties accountable.

Safer Spaces was launched last week - I do believe that there's got to be more interaction with SAPS and CPF - not to get buy in, but to get more of a partnership on that side. Safer Spaces falls under Revive Knysna, Allsound has got involved and so has the CCTV project. At the moment, on the corner of Trotter and Gray Street they've got a new camera node that's gone up. It hasn't been connected to the power yet, and we're waiting for that. There are four cameras up there. The Log Inn has paid for a guard that walks up and down to protect that street, which is obviously a very important street because a lot of tourists walk there to the Waterfront. Another part of that project is putting up solar lights - one is already up - and we're going to continue right up that road with cameras, sponsored by businesses. But then again, talking about money, I don't believe that the prevention of crime has to always have a cost. I believe education is just as important as putting up cameras and that type of thing. Educating people on, for example, not leaving your front door open if you're in your back garden, not leaving things next to the windows, etc.

KARIN DU PLESSIS, FAMSA: The fact that we are one of the highest reporting on assault crimes is not necessarily a bad thing, because we have been doing a lot of awareness as different stakeholders together, reporting and telling people that they can report on crimes. So I think we should be proud that we are getting those reports.

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

DRIES VAN ROOYEN: I head up the investment committee. We spent quite a bit of time and planning on the pre-investment conference workshop in December, and that was a huge success thanks to Nathi Mabukane and his team.

We are now planning a huge regional investment conference in November this year, together with partners Knysna Municipality, the municipal manager and his team, and it's been good to see the cooperation coming from them. We also have the support of Wesgro, and we're doing this in consultation with the Western Cape Government - Alan Winde and his team - with their Growth for Jobs G4J strategy through which the Province is planning for 1 million new jobs by 2035.

In the last month, we hosted the French Ambassador here in Knysna. We had a two hour presentation at the Turbine Hotel, followed by oysters and lunch at Sirocco, and a yacht cruise on the lagoon. We are therefore building good international relationships. In South Africa there are 400 French companies. We are looking at twinning with a similar city in France - which has oysters as the common ground.

In the same way we are talking to the USA, twinning with a city in Florida, and we're also talking to Spain and Brazil.

We are in the process of establishing the Invest Knysna investment fund, which will be there to help small businesses, entrepreneurs, young people, to help establish or grow businesses, and to benefit all the people of Knysna

We are focussing on job creation - we can curb crime by providing people with jobs. That's the big challenge in South Africa. It is unacceptable that 2 out of 3 young people don't have jobs. We want to ensure that people are productive, that they can contribute to the economy of Knysna and the Western Cape.

We are also focussing on skills development - in for example, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, etc.

NATHI MABUKANE: I'm the guy behind the regional investment conference. Today we had a meeting with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism of the Garden Route District Municipality where we did a short presentation about the conference, and the opportunities the conference is going to bring to the region. We had great commitment from the District Municipality, and we were assured that we are going to have their full support, and we should have their written endorsement no later than Thursday next week. They see the need for investment in Knysna.

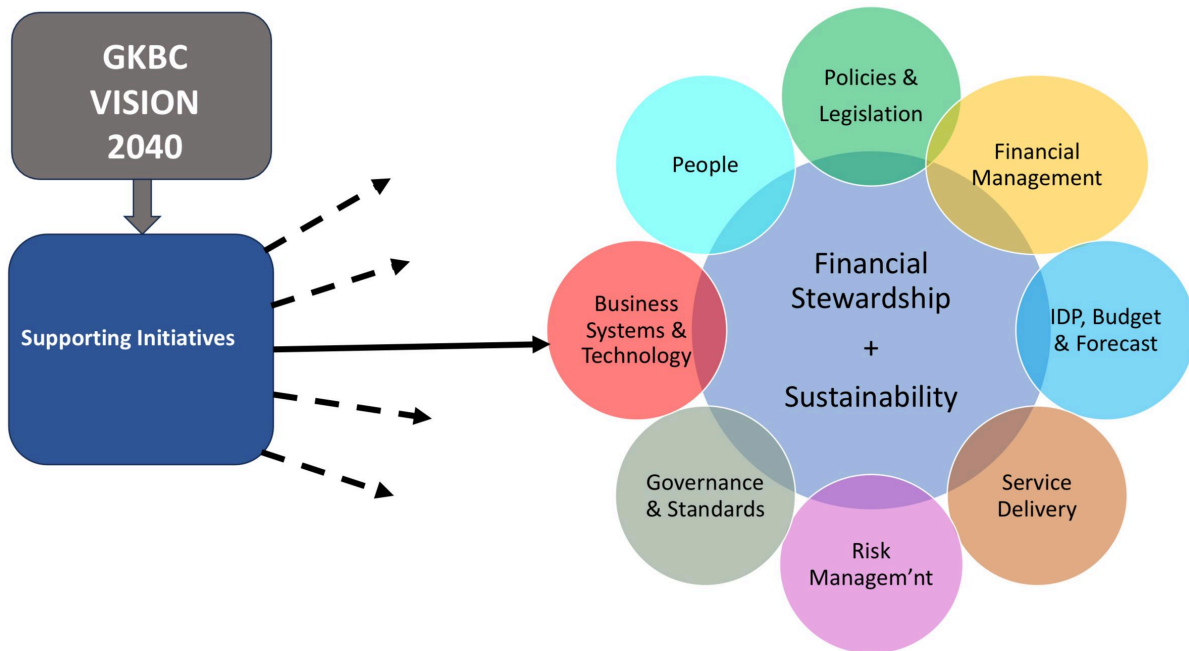
JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: This afternoon I attended a meeting with Wesgro on exports, and they are willing to come to the party to look at the textile clothing industry. By being able to say to the people in that industry, and also the boat industry that there are opportunities through Wesgro to export products. They have asked us to invite them to the next manco/exco meeting.

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

RICHARD THORPE: A lot of people have said that when we cover municipal affairs it covers a wide spectrum. So for example is it in our remit to sort out the municipal waste station? Clearly it isn't.

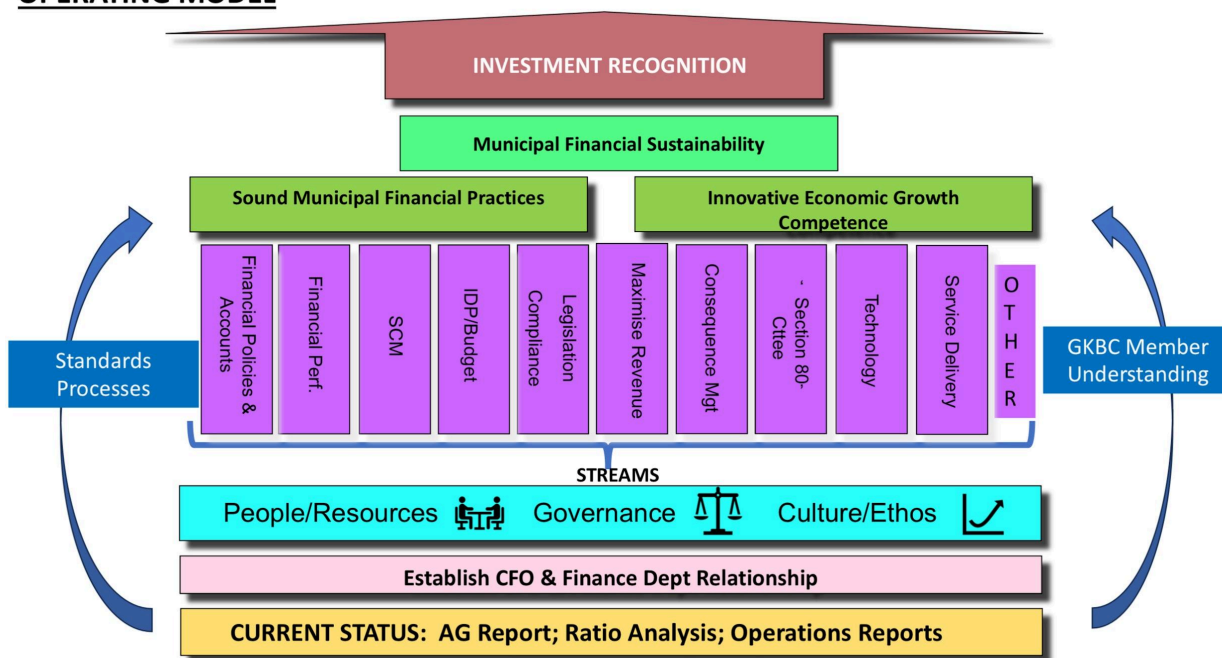
So how do we set about achieving what we want to achieve, and how will we know when we get there?

First I repeated the Chamber's Vision 2040, which I broke down into component parts, and from that I said if we're going to achieve that vision as a Business Chamber, there are a lot of initiatives that are necessary. So I took one - the Financial Stewardship or Financial Sustainability - and I broke it down to individual activities within that.



That then led me to the model:

OPERATING MODEL



Our goal should be to be recognised as an investment opportunity for new investments or retained investments for existing businesses in Knysna. To do that, we have to have strong, robust financial sustainability and then you can start breaking it down into financial practices and policies.

If we start at the bottom, we can find out the current status by looking at the Auditor General's report, at operational reports, etc., and what we've done is put together a ratio analysis for which we've picked out 18 key ratios that anyone can look at to see the health or otherwise of the municipality.

The next thing we need to do is get the agreement and support of the CFO - we've had one introductory meeting.

The purple ones are the individual initiatives and I know it seems a lot, but if you look at my committee, and I'm going to pick Donald as an example - Donald is a human resources practitioner and runs his own resource development business, so he is picking up the activities of resources and consequential management. Then we have Johan Pretorius who is picking up the revenue maximisation portfolio. So everyone is running their own portfolios and we come together at least once a month to make sure that we have consistency and interaction across the spectrum.

To return to ratio analysis, I find that people don't understand how to read municipal finances, what to look for. So we're going to start issuing our ratio analysis every month so that people can plot the progress.

My portfolio is governance, and people don't understand what that is. The Chamber is full of new ideas, but the one thing governance can't do is to impose a new level of bureaucracy - what we have to do is have a governance environment that says, 'We do things this way.'

HOMELESS SHELTER

CHARMAINE TOME: There were a lot of objections to the proposed shelter - where it was situated - and also the Department of Social Development rejected the building. So out of this crisis this subcommittee was formed.

Our purpose is to identify and obtain land from KLM, and the construction of a permanent shelter on this land. There are two options: one at the old testing station in the industrial area, the other one is the land between the jail and the epilepsy centre. The one at the testing station will be most suitable because there is already infrastructure on that ground. The Business Chamber did say that they will help us with buildings, and with park homes and mobile homes, which can be moved if that is not the permanent shelter at the end of the day. We have a crisis now, and as soon as we can get the land, we can start moving forward.

We did meet with the municipal manager in March, and we sent him a proposal letter, and attached to that were supporting letters from various companies and organisations.

We are also on the Western Cape Government's agenda for shelters.

As soon as that building is given to us, we can start with our next step, to clean up and get everything in place so that the authorities don't reject the building again.

What we're waiting for now is for the municipality to approve the property, but we haven't heard anything yet.

We as the community of Knysna need to stand together and help the shelter - to start and to keep it going. There is no money - the municipality has no money - and I believe that the community and the Business Chamber will do this and we will all stand together to create this shelter, and help these people etc become good citizens in the community.

FROM THE FLOOR: Is this a temporary facility?

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: I think we're moving to a permanent solution, because we find that temporary always becomes permanent.

HELP KNYSNA COMMITTEE

DIRK BEUKES: Our group was formed primarily to work with the residents and the community of Knysna, to assist them and to liaise with the municipality on their behalf where they are experiencing difficulties to get their service requests executed. It originally started off as a rates situation, but it quickly turned to Help Knysna and focussed on service delivery. We have been assisting many communities, individuals, and organisations in the last two to three months, helping them to resolve issues that they've had with sewage on their property - this is property-specific rather than into the estuary - where they've had no water, low water pressure, etc., we've been able to interact with the municipality and get these issues resolved much quicker.

We also from time to time provide feedback to our members. We have just over 2,000 members at the moment, and we will hopefully soon go onto another drive to expand. We are also looking to integrate as many as possible existing groups so that we can communicate with them.

We are looking at making use of the Collab Citizen system, which is a cell phone app, which the Municipality has at the moment. It doesn't look like it's been well used, but we've started testing it. There are some problems with it, and we are looking at getting those ironed out with the people in the municipality responsible for it. We are also looking at getting our own system to interface with that system so that we can draw our own reports and statistics.

We've been very involved with the waste transfer station. We've had a hiccup the last two days, but as from today things should have started happening again, and if all runs according to plan we should have that cleared in the next two to three days.

Next week, the company is coming to repair and restore the conveyor belt system, so that we can revert back to the system that was meant to be running there and we won't have any refuse

lying around outside - it will all go straight into that building where it will be compacted into closed containers and off to Mossel Bay while the planning is going on for the move of the transfer station.

EKASI ECONOMY

WADE MULLER: I head up the township economy subcommittee - small business that we are trying to get going in the township that will feed into so many areas of interest to the chamber - skills development, education, etc.

Our plan is to phase this in throughout the year, with the help of Nathi Makubne who has joined the subcommittee as a spokesperson in the community to get the community working together.

We are currently busy with feasibility and workshops up in the Northern Areas, to upskill certain individuals, especially starting with the youth, to try get them into skills, education, and keep them off the streets - get them off the corners and into skilled labour, which will fall into the remit of other Chamber subcommittees. But the crux of it is getting the economy running in the townships and ultimately spilling down into Knysna. Having those people open their spaza shops, getting plumbers and other technicians skilled, and getting the people sustaining their community, which will have a big impact on crime.

RICHARD THORPE: I was listening to the State of the Province Address by the premier of Gauteng, who said they have taken 140,000 young people training them to be electricians, plumbers, joiners, bricklayers, etc., and then making those people into hit squads for the City of Johannesburg and the City of Tshwane, so that if there's a pipe leak, they are the first people to go in - even if it's just to turn it off. So they're using them wherever they can, rather than using labour from other towns or other provinces. And then they've allocated land because they have all the capabilities to build their own houses so that they can build their own homes.

WADE MULLER: Thank you, that is something we can work towards.

BUSINESS CONNECTION, SOCIAL MEDIA AND PR SUBCOMMITTEE

WADE MULLER: I've received an email from Beverley Pothier who heads up the Business Connection, Social Media, and PR Subcommittee.

The plan for 2024 is to revamp the GKBC website to facilitate business support between members, to work as a yellow pages, where chamber members can support each other and support active businesses.

Building up to 2025, the subcommittee will be planning an annual awards ceremony to recognise what Knysna has to offer. The awards - Knysna Gems - will offer opportunities for local businesses to be nominated for awards by the general public of Knysna. We would like to encourage a support local initiative, where residents get a Knysna passport through which they

can support local businesses without paying seasonal prices - for example, if members who run specials for locals during quiet periods, to encourage Knysna residents to support locals who keep the economy going through the traditional quiet times. So rather spend your money locally than in neighbouring towns.

They are also looking at establishing the GKBC Patrons Programme for national businesses to sponsor the Chamber, and in return may advise products and preferential rates to members.

The Business Connection Subcommittee is seeking assistance from members to join and assist with its projects.

The social media and PR committee are staying ahead of the curve by generating positive news for not only the Chamber, but for the town so as to improve the town's reputation amongst investors and potential investors.

INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

EUGENE VERMAAK: We started in December when Dion Boshoff and I started looking at the potholes in George Rex Drive, and did a local connection. Within 2 weeks we managed to raise R200,000, and we repaired George Rex. We still have some money left over.

In my mind I was thinking that if we can do this for potholes, we can do it for infrastructure, too. I started looking around and saw people like Revive Knysna and so many others. When I started approaching businesses, certain of them said, 'No, I just gave Revive Knysna,' so I realised we're all competing for the same resources. So I decided to try and work out where we fit in because I quickly realised that there are a lot of people who want to make the town better. Everybody is trying their own thing in their own space with their own strategies, so we're all falling over each other. There is no formal structure, no cohesive strategy for what we're trying to achieve.

Eventually we learned that there were a few people in Pezula who started a working group, and we were invited to that. I got involved in the temporary shelter, and met Jan, and through all of those discussions we realised that we need to create one infrastructure channel where we can make anyone who wants to get involved, part of it. That way, we can have a common strategy. A very good example of that is the Waste Transfer Station, where Dirk and Jan have done a lot of work, and where we eventually went to the council with two proposals for a short term and a long term strategy. We then agreed that maybe the right way for us is to be a vertical within the Business Chamber.

The working group in Pezula has now extended, the Thesen Islands team has joined us, LIRA, The Heads, so we're continually expanding.

If I assess where we are in Knysna, I don't believe that we're any worse off than the rest of the country. I actually think we're better off. Although we see a lot of infrastructure problems, it's a

general problem throughout the country. There has been zero investment in new infrastructure. The benefit to us is that we're a small community, and we react to the problems. It's much easier for us to fix it than it would be for individuals to go and do it in Gauteng. So we have an opportunity to take care of our own, and assist the Knysna Municipality to improve and make a difference in the town.

And that's our objectives: To make a difference in Knysna and to focus on infrastructure projects. We're breaking it up into three categories: 0-3 months is the fixing period - this includes fixing the council where they have such big vacancies that it's impossible for them to operate properly. We have to identify what those gaps are, and decide how we as business can start filling those gaps, even if only on a temporary basis. We have to employ the contractors to fill those gaps, to go and do the work, and we have to fund that. Right now the council has major cash flow problems.

When we did the first project in George Rex Drive we got a huge amount of criticism. People were saying they were paying rates and taxes so why should they contribute. This is a valid question. The fact is I could sit on the sidelines and complain, or I could do something. So I chose to do something.

Water, waste and sewage are major crises, and we have to break the solutions up into short to medium term, and long-term fixing, where we talk about how we invest and improve things for our infrastructure.

I just want to say thanks to Jan for all your support. In the last two months we've come a very long way. If I look at support from the Municipality itself, as well as Provincial and National Government, I don't think there's any other town that has that.

CHURCHES & NPOS COMMITTEE

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: NGOs and churches are amongst the people fighting for resources in town. There are 186 NGOs registered in town, and 230 churches - that's the ones we know of.

JAN DAVIDS: Our purpose for creating this committee is to look after the well-being of the non-profit organisations, and to collaborate to make a positive difference in the greater Knysna community.

Our committee meets once a month and I can add that, especially amongst the NPOs in our community, there is a lot of struggle - for example the soup kitchens struggle because there is a lack of food for the community. When the children come out of school and their parents are at work, they have to go and stand in line for something to eat because there is nothing at home.

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: It's interesting to note that apart from the vulnerable, they have identified other projects that they are working on: a group of young people in a soccer academy;

and then they are also working on a men's group whereby in the year they will have a meeting on Loerie Park where all our men need to be present - the reason why many of our challenges are there is because there are no fathers.

KESH (KNYSNA EDUCATION SKILLS HUB)

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: KESH was probably one of the first subcommittees we established.

LIEZEL SWEMMER: I am a Skills Mecca Technician and an intern employed by the Garden Route District Municipality hosted at Knysna Municipality in the planning and development department.

The Skills Mecca is a rebuild pillar of the Garden Route District Municipality after the fires of 2017. We are here to equip youth across the 17 municipalities in the District.

The Skills Mecca has so far conducted three successful summits where we look at what economic drivers we have and how we can develop skills within those drivers so that whatever we equip our youth with, they stay in our towns with those skills.

KESH was formed after the Skills Summit last year, where all the key members came together and asked what will we do about whatever skills and needs were identified at the Summit. The Garden Route Skills Mecca, Business Chamber, Knysna Municipality, South Cape College and 6 different skills development providers in Knysna came together to form KESH.

KESH is here to make sure that skills get driven through all the different service providers. The word is already out there that we are busy establishing a South Cape College campus here in Knysna.

The projects that we are currently busy working with in the Municipality under the LED department are (a) boat building, (b) community automotive mechanics (we go into the communities and equip those mechanics working in their backyards with skills, qualifications, and registration so that they can make sufficient income We currently have 18 taking part who have all the compliance documents and 48 registered on the database); (c) Knysna Skills Centre which forms part of education of people to understand waste and the recycling of waste (d) in cooperation with the Services SETA we have submitted a proposal to get some funding for skills development in Knysna (d) the Asivikilane Community Infrastructure Project, which is working on service delivery within communities including mobile toilets for people who don't have toilets, people who don't have running water.

Last year we did the HW Seta home-based care personal assistants training for 6 months. So in Knysna you have 17 qualified home-based care personal assistants so if you are looking for someone like this, I can put you in touch with a young person who is sitting at home waiting for an opportunity.

With Safety and Security SETA we've trained 13 unemployed youth as safety patrol officers.

We are currently busy recruiting host employers for our next tourism and hospitality project. We will recruit 50 youths in Knysna, and I currently have 14 businesses on my database that will host these youth for their practical training.

Last year the Wholesale and Retail SETA awarded us funds to train 43 informal traders in a one-day certificate course in entrepreneurial skills.

The National Business Institute project management training will begin next week. It is for us, the 12 Skills Mecca technicians in the district.

EVENTS COMMITTEE

ALAN BELL: I came into the Chamber and was fortunate and privileged to work with Jan on the Knysna Energy Summit last year and the success of that has cemented our relationship and our ability to deliver events for the Business Chamber.

We put that event together in 2 or 3 weeks. A similar one was put together in George where 43 people attended, and at our event we had close to 200 people who each paid R200 which is unheard of in Knysna where most people don't like paying more than R30 for tea and coffee. Our measures of success were the turnout, the comments that the material was excellent, and that we incurred no cost to the Business Chamber.

We also did the regional investment conference workshop last December, which was attended by about 40 people, and which was a springboard towards this year's investment conference.

Dries also spoke about the French ambassador's visit, and we put that event together in about 3 days.

Events that are coming up: Knysna Oyster Festival, what we'd like to do is to revive the Flavours of Knysna competition, potjie competition, fish braai competition, so if you know any people who would like to get involved in that please let us know.

I'm also pleased to announce that we have major sponsorship for the Knysna Cycle Tour which will assure the success of this year's event.

One of the other events that's coming up is Khali 24 which is being organised by one of our members on the media side, Andre Johnson - it will be a celebrity gala event, The Chamber is not sponsoring it, but we are taking a table. Andre has sponsorship, will have Ferraris and Porsches on display: this is a major event - he had one last year, and it's just going to snowball from here.

My other role is to look after membership of this Chamber. We've been talking about drives to get membership, which is actually quite hard. What is easy is if we have successful events, then the members come.

If you aren't a member, or you know anyone who could become a member, let's bring them in and so raise the funds that will ensure the success of the Chamber.

FROM THE FLOOR (BEV LEVINES): Is there any way we can involve the homeless in our town. We have about 240 homeless people.

ALAN BELL: Just to give you a little bit of background, I was also privileged to step in for Penny Rice of Keep Knysna Clean, where she asked me to look after an event at Loerie Park, and Beverly kindly arranged for some of the homeless who are residing behind Loerie Park to come and help us which they did for no pay; about 20 of them came to help.

TOURISM

ELMAY BOUWER: I was asked to take over the tourism pillar, to which I agreed, but I feel I've reached the ceiling.

Tourism is one of the industries that has a roll-over effect because everybody benefits from these businesses. But we are in the cross fire with all the negatives that are happening in town, and on the other side as tourism businesses, our bottom lines are influenced by cancellations of bookings. I just want to share this with you because you might ask what role the forum is going to play.

Recently I got this message from my social media lady: I put out an advertisement to come and stay in Knysna during the Oyster Festival, and the reader wrote on my business profile: "Is your municipality up and running at the moment, and how does the bad service affect your tourist businesses?" to which my social media said, "Elmay, what would you like me to tell this gentleman. Can I just tell him to fuck off?"

We know that the municipality is up and running - it's just not running as effectively as it should be. We have to change the whole perception, which is a fight that we are sitting with at the moment.

I can tell you now that all the busses you see in town - those are happy people who are only concerned about a good meal - they drink filtered water at home in any case. So the people who are hit the hardest are probably international swallows who are staying for much longer, and our domestic tourists.

The lady taking over from me will be Judiet Barnes, who is the marketing officer of the Motsomayi Tourism Group, which has developed the Kruger Shelati Train, and which is a BEE partner in many different tourism products.

We are putting together a stakeholder board, and we have worked very hard to rebuild the relationships between Visit Knysna, the municipality, and private sector. Also we are living in the middle of a national park, so SANParks plays a vital role on our stakeholder board.

On the leisure market over the last month and a half we liaised with the Harley Club in George who had a big rally in Wilderness, and we said - show off the Garden Route, take a drive to Knysna, and they agreed to that and ended up with us at Blackwaters because we had to find a place for 150 motobikes that make a huge noise.

We have had dealings on the film industry side, there was a big golf tournament at Fancourt where we dealt with an operator that does incentive business and deals with BMW, which was the sponsor, so we had the whole BMW media team and filming crew from Germany that was here doing a photoshoot on all our Garden Route beaches.

We have been involved in product development with a new glamping site on the Plett Road, where Judiet got involved - that company had everything in place except a BEE partner.

We also got involved with Knysna Ziplines who wanted to buy new bicycles, and we assisted them to buy from a local bicycle shop.

About 2 weeks ago, we entertained about 44 tour operators at our cost. We showed them around in Knysna. There we brought our smaller activities like Knysna Gin, Red Bridge, the Spice and Tea Shop, and they had the opportunity to share what they do. Honestly, the operators are so used to doing the same things over and over, and they were blown away with the smaller things they can suggest for kids, for when it rains, and not the same old same old.

For us going forward, the safety, the crime, and the water situation are big things. When we had the operators, I said to them that all those stories you hear about Knysna are true, but this is what we are doing and having in place to rectify it, and how to make it right. What we want to do is put press releases out as soon as possible after a crisis arises,

Going forward we also liaise with the Green Tourism Incentive Programme, which gives money to tourism businesses - especially accommodation - to set up solar, and we are busy getting those people down together with Tourism Business Council and the Industrial Development Corporation by the end of April and we will work with establishments on how to apply because we would like Knysna to be not only a safe place, a clean place that we are a sustainable town when it comes to energy and water.

Next week, 17 Knysna businesses, paying out of their own pockets a minimum of R50,000 each will represent this town at trade shows like World Travel Market Africa where, before you can mention your own business, you have to say and explain where you are so you will be marketing Knysna. Visit Knysna, our own tourism office will also be there, but they will be

represented on the Garden Route District Municipality stand. And then after WTM we will all be going to Indaba in Durban.

WASTE, WATER, AND ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE

CHRISTO LOMBARD: I'm the vice chair for the Waste, Water, and Energy Subcommittee. Our committee consists of ten members meeting once a month and looking at how we can resolve the issues that we are currently experiencing. So we will be reaching out to other people to make sure we have all the right people around the same table.

For us, the main issue at this stage was the waste, with Dirk addressing the issues in town on getting the waste compacted, getting the station up and running. We are looking at making sure that the National Government is involved. The process was to get the directors involved, getting the right people in the town enforcing the laws and the regulations, and forcing them to assist us in resolving the issues.

The good news is that we've identified two possible new sites where the waste can be moved to from the middle of town. Two sites have been identified close to the sewage farm and the request has been put in for the move. That was something that we looked at for the next 12 to 18 months, in preparation for a possible future endeavour where we're looking at a waste to energy plant, which is something that is definitely needed in this area.

We've also got possible joint ventures with established clubs like Rotary in the area that are looking at waste collection and recycling initiatives, and composting in the low income communities.

We're looking at the prepaid electricity metre update, which is something that is being rolled out by the Municipality but not well advertised. A lot of communities are waiting for the Municipality to come and do that. We've come up with structures and models whereby communities and ratepayers associations can do that with the help of the Municipality. It's been successfully done in two or three suburbs already and we're looking at rolling that out to other ratepayers associations in the area.

We're also looking at the SEG - the registration of solar and inverter connections. The amnesty period that's just been extended is part of the work that we've been doing with the Municipality.

So a lot of small victories, but we are moving forward in understanding what the aims are and also influencing the outcomes of their decisions.

Electricity rates and bidirectional meters are on the agenda and we are meeting regularly with the Municipality on that. We are the input as far as citizens go in the decision making process and we're reaching out across the Western Cape to look at rate comparisons, to look at best practices and advising and influencing the way things are done in Knysna.

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: I can also mention that we worked very closely with Thole, who was the previous electrical manager, and he introduced us to his replacement, Khaya, and I believe that we will continue that relationship. It's just a matter of leading the conversation, rather than complaining.

MARITIME SUBCOMMITTEE

DRIES VAN ROOYEN: This is an industry that we revived in Knysna about 20 years ago. It's important to know that this is a growing industry. It is correct to say that there are now 15 boat building companies in Knysna, but today we started the next one, which will provide another 120 employment opportunities.

We also work closely with SANParks, and have brought a proposal to them to see if we can get additional mooring facilities and create more infrastructure for our bigger boats.

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: We are still working on the group of maritimers to join the Chamber, and to work with us. They have come to the subcommittees meetings, but nobody there has yet taken the lead, which is why Dries and I have worked together with SANParks to get moorings.

You have heard about KESH training people, but we also need to address the operational needs, which includes moorings facilities. The first one was turned down due to conservation requirements.

PROPERTIES AND SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK SUBCOMMITTEE

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: A bright lady named Zelmarie van Rooyen has joined this committee - she's overseas at the moment.

Basically what we did was go through the archives of what were possible discussions in the past around spatial development frameworks for the town. That means, what do we plan for this town in future head up by infrastructure, business zones, business nodes, throughout the district. We then came up with the Chamber's spatial development framework comments in preparation for discussion with Knysna Municipality. Our spatial development framework heads up towards a 2040 vision of where we see this town growing, and we are ready to discuss that with the Municipality.

If you want to know more about this, please join the committee, which consists of about 10 people who are looking at how we protect the historic belt of the city, how do we expend, what do we do with the waste, what do we do with the rail, and what will be the impacts on the N2 (a lot of people say the bypass will never happen, but there might be a surprise for us)

The Properties and Spatial Development Framework Team is looking to grow the town by working with the municipality.

A special thank you to Zelmarie, who is a Spatial Development Framework specialist.

MEMBERSHIP RATES

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: If you think about it, we have 18 teams or subcommittees, and if each of them can just achieve one initiative this year, that's a lot of success. But of course, most of the teams are busy with more than one item.

MARTIN HATCHUEL: Membership categories:

- for micro enterprises and individuals, membership is R120 a year or R10 per month;
- for small businesses, start-ups, and nonprofit organisations its R50 per month or R600 per year
- for medium and established businesses it's R100 per month or R1,200 per year
- for well-established businesses and residents associations its R250 per month or R3,000 per year; and
- for corporates and national companies, it's R4,800 per year or R400 per month

For more information or copies of our membership forms, please write to info@gkbc.co.za or visit <https://www.gkbc.co.za/membership/sign-up/>

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: Please note that I have sent out an invitation to NPOs and Churches to join us at just R10 a month - R120 a year.

CONCLUSION

JAN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN: Thank you everybody for attending the session. We can make a difference without complaining if we lead the narrative.

Thank you