

Chairman's Report AGM August 2024

What a year that was. At the AGM last year, we let you know we would be holding an EGM later that year to decide on the roads issue that had been a slow burn from a couple of years previously. Well, from that moment onwards we had our hands full for sure. Let's cover how the year looked and what we have been up to in that time.

Security

Always the number one reason for moving into Thornhill but not the most understood set up to be honest. Thornhill Estate was established by the property division of AECl many years ago. There were a lot of mistakes made in the setting up of the estate but on the whole, we have to agree it was the best thing for the area by a long shot. Over the years we have applied for the 'Road Closure' as and when it became necessary. It is supposed to be every two years but due to how things have gone we have only ever had to apply about three times to date with our next one already in the process now. It will still take time for that to be completed and while that is in the process we run under the existing permission issued by the city a couple of years ago. There is lots of talk of how to get more out of us fixing your roads etc but the reality will always come down to paperwork that goes via a very dysfunctional city government. We do what we can to get these things done and we work within the broken system we find too. Only one metro in the country got a clean audit this past year and it was not Johannesburg so understand we are a long way off from counting on our city to assist us.

Security within the estate has been strong but we all need to realise that once you leave the estate, you are in the hands of others. We reported recently that the police are tracking down two youngsters we believe have been responsible for over 25 car jackings in the past month or two. While this is happening outside our main area, over at the Marlboro Drive off ramp, plenty of our residents will be using it. We are seeing similar issues at other locations such as London Road and even on the other side of Edenvale Hospital. So be careful when you are out and about.

Internally we do try to ensure only our residents use our pool and gardens so be aware that if you do invite guests to use our spaces you should be with them at that time. We are going over our constitution, rules and regulations to see if there are any of those, we need to change that may well affect our security too, like nonmembers using our facilities from time to time. We need to be aware of the issues surrounding that sort of thing and not leave it till it becomes a main issue before dealing with it. I mention this as we have had a few complaints about nonresidents coming in to use our pool area.

We pride ourselves in having great security in place and that continues as we work with iMvula to ensure the best service at our main gate and in terms of reaction too. Thanks to all of you that donate religiously to our Guards & Gardner's Xmas Fund each year, your generosity year after year is most welcomed indeed. A big thank you to everyone that makes our security team work from Armour Gittings all the way down to each and every single guard.

We are sad to let you know that one of our long-term Tango drivers passed away recently after a short illness, Albert Gatsheni was known for his friendly smile when dealing with our children out wandering at night but was also known for his speedy response to any possible issue happening on the estate. He was an asset to iMvula and to our estate, may his soul rest in peace.

Estates & Gardens

While our gardens are coming back to their usual splendor it is sad to see the amount of effluent that ends up in our rivers and flows right into the estate too. The smell is terrible on those days when raw sewage gets to flow into the stream, but we do our best to complain to the authorities but, just like our comments on getting our roads fixed, we find the city is not functioning very well. The GNU gave us some hope, but it is clear it is not pushing pressure down to the major metro's just yet leaving several messes at that level still be dealt with. As such we are on our own to deal with these things and we seem to be doing fine so far. With the Roads Project well underway we will see some roots getting cut away from trees that have been breaking our roads. How that will set the tone for how we deal with those trees going forward remains to be seen but we will need to be looking at replacement trees and the like in the years to come. Anyone keen to get involved in a 20-year project by any chance, you need to be no older than your early 40's right now though. Yip, we do have to plan ahead ladies and gentlemen, let's get started.

All of this has fallen to Graham Hartlet as the trustee in charge of this, so far, he has done a great job with the Roads Project and we hope his energy will remain as we look to shift a few more projects in the years ahead.

Architectural

The big thing we are still waiting to see if how the build on Thornhill Road will go near the park. That is the double stand with the current old houses that was used as an office for the past two decades at least. The final plans are not in yet, so we wait for that to kick off. The entrance is the current target for Architectural as we need to change how the gate works in that space since that empty area will see the first of the houses go up in the next year we think. Outside of those two areas, there is not much else happening except renovations which do not always see a change in the look of the property. All the same, Carmen Van Wyk has suggested a more modern look for our entrance, and we wait to see what she has in store for us for next year, this year has been soaked up by the roads side of things for sure.

Financial

This is the backbone of everything we do. Without Ian Boxall keeping an eye on our financials I would have sleepless nights that is for sure. The estate is no longer a small one. When I first moved here, I think there were just over 300 houses paying a small levy per month. Now we are over 500 houses, and a lot is undertaken by our office every month making this portfolio the most active these days. Our review of the constitution has highlighted that this should fall under Secretarial as opposed to Financial so that adjustment will be dealt with after the next AGM but it will still be run with the eagle eye of Ian for at least another year as both Ian and I were voted on last AGM, you are stuck with us for at least another year.

Governance

This year I had cause to lean heavily on Emile Stoop as the Chair of this portfolio. We had a member complain to CSOS about how we dealt with their late levy payments. Suffice it to say that both Emile and I had to represent the THOA at the CSOS hearing.

I find these things frustrating to say the least, but Emile kept it calm and straight forward, we were eventually found to be right and we now move forward but not without hours of hard work having to go into defending our position. What did we learn from it? We need to be less empathetic and more business-like in our dealings with residents that do not follow our rules and regulations. That

does not go down well with me as I do my best to smooth out the edges and ensure that all of our residents get a fair hearing. When that approach is abused or falls on deaf ears, it just costs us all a lot of our own time (read own money) and puts volunteer's off from getting involved as trustees or other support positions. Therefore, I have to change how I deal with residents that want to disagree all day long, the cups of tea that I use for diplomacy have not helped as much these days as they used to, and I also struggle to find the time to do that too.

To that end the board is reviewing all of our rules etc to find ways to streamline things and take most of the opportunities to misunderstand them out of the way.

Social

This has been one of the most difficult committees to find members for. Maybe Covid made it more difficult, but I am pleased to say that, since the beginning of this year, Sarisha Govender has chaired it with support of at least four other ladies. I am sure Sarisha could do with some encouragement and support for the various events so anyone willing to assist, please let the office know and they will pass that onto Sarisha. It is this committee that can set our social diaries alight as well as provide the catalyst for residents to meet each other in a social environment and build new friendships and support systems. There is no doubt that Thornhill has the physical locations for various social events throughout the year, all it takes is time and ideas, the estate is the canvas, let's get painting guys.

Finally

This past year the biggest two things I have had to work with has been our CSOS matter and the Roads Project.

CSOS was an issue that let us know our constitution and rules are rock solid so, despite the personal time I had to put into it, the result was positive for us all and provided much needed confidence to the board that they are operating professionally.

The Roads Project has been a mighty thing to get off the ground but now that we managed to do the heavy lifting regarding getting it green lit, the heavy lifting moves to the actual doing of it. That seems to be going well and I look forward to seeing the end result in a few month's time.

Two big tasks, two ticks in the right boxes. Without our team we could do neither, without you, there would be nothing for us to do. So, thank you all for putting so much time and patience into the work we call the Roads Project, it has been appreciated. Now help us out a bit by making sure the pet register is all sorted and we will take care of the rest.

See you all at the AGM, don't be late guys, I will see about trying to entertain you a bit better as we wait and surely, they will allow me to plug in some music to rattle your eardrums with this time around.

Stephen W Burrow
Chair, THOA