

Mutual Heights

14 Darling Street, Cape Town
<http://www.mutualheights.net>

News from your Trustees

Edition 34

27 December 2015

Dear Fellow Owner,

First, let me wish you a prosperous and fulfilling New Year – may we all move on into 2016 with our litigation finally put behind us, and the prospect of finding a new and simpler equilibrium ahead of us. All is done with the legal processes, and trustees have already met to discuss the options for attending to the needs of the building and wrapping up loose ends. We will soon be making preparations for the 2016 AGM, which begins with budget planning. Do let me know if you have any input to that process.

In the meantime, there are one or two matters that now pop to the top of the list, and we need your input.

Balconies

At the last AGM there was a brief discussion about the portion of the common property that is the balconies. Those owners with access to the balconies have 'exclusive access' to something that is actually maintained at everyone's shared cost. This is the same as the air-conditioning plant on the roof – if you do not have a heat pump connected to the circulating water system (those two pipes running around the top of your apartment) then you are paying for something that you do not benefit from. That's the way sectional title works in South Africa. But while you have the option to install air conditioning, you do not have the option to use a balcony by means of access through someone else's section.

It has been proposed to re-assign the balconies to the sections that have exclusive access to them. This will incur extra levies for those sections. The owners of those sections will have responsibility for maintaining the balconies, for example the wooden decking and the waterproofing beneath it, but not the storm water pipes. They will also have the right to use the balconies in any way they wish, within the scope of our rules.

Having said all that, the proportional *reduction* in levies for those sections *without* a balcony will be vanishingly small.

We need comments from anyone who has a view about this. Please be prepared to discuss this again at the next AGM. I have asked the Management Office to prepare a one-page summary of the way in which this will be done, and the consequences for those with and without balconies.

Internet

I have the feeling that there is now only a minority of owners who use the Dynacomm internet service, via the wired network access points in all apartments. But Telkom are now installing optical fibre access in the city centre, and we have the option to approach Telkom in order to try and strike a deal of some kind. What would happen is that the building would get the fibre, but the existing network cabling within the building would still be used. You should expect to get an allowance about 50Gb of data per month ('soft cap', which means you are not actually cut off at the limit) at a nominal 10Mbps, for about R700 per month. In practical terms, that means for about the cost of DSTV 'Premium' you can get video streaming of all your news, entertainment and sport (if it is available), on demand, for up to about two hours of video per day, and probably in High Definition. Your email and other internet searching activity becomes an insignificant portion of your data, of course – it's the video and audio that gobbles up the bandwidth.

If there is any interest, trustees are willing to approach Telkom to explore options. **Please tell us what you think.**

Web site

That brings me on to the web site – www.mutualheights.net. It has certainly served a useful purpose and it draws enquiries from visitors, potential purchasers and others, but the [Wikipedia page](#) is probably of wider general interest and my efforts to keep the web site up to date have suffered with all

the time needed for litigation and so on. It remains rather clunky and not at all clever, but what is there works.

It has been suggested that we review the role and purpose of the community web site and I will be circulating another questionnaire to follow on from the one that we did almost ten years ago – a copy of the report is available [here](#). **Do have a look at the results then, and if you have any comments about the design and use of the web site please tell us.** Otherwise, the questionnaire will follow shortly.

Constitution of the trustees and chairperson

Finally, at the AGM I will be standing down as chairperson, having served since 23 October 2008. I will remain as a trustee (if invited) but we do need to find a new chairperson. Please consider stepping up. Let me help you understand what the role entails:

What is involved, as I see it, runs along these lines (with the considerable help of Charles and his team):

- **Chairing the AGM.** The AGM is the principal means to discuss and decide the bigger issues, and it generally lasts less than two hours.
- **Convening and chairing about four meetings or trustees each year.** Charles does all the routine paperwork (and more) and all the chairperson needs to do is manage the process of discussion. Charles needs decisions about what to do 'on the record' to make sure that all is above board.
- **Liaising with prospective owners and sometimes tenants.** People come (off the web site usually) with queries about availability of apartments. I have a standard reply that says trustees don't get involved, go look at Gumtree!
- **Liaising with other interested parties.** Sometimes there is an enquiry that Charles needs a second opinion about, in the case of permissions for festivals or filming, for example, but that has settled down and we have established guidelines.
- **Liaising with owners and residents.** There is actually relatively little communication with owners and residents – things run much more smoothly than one might expect in such a special building with such a disparate (no, not 'desperate!') community.
- **Championing a cause.** In my view, the chairperson should also champion a cause of some kind. Paul Rippon championed the confusion of settling in, and the complicated legal relationship with the Adderley development where we have car parking; I championed the damp works and the litigation; what comes next might be the enhancement of the building, picking up on Paul's unfulfilled ambition to 'beautify' the building. A mobile in the Atrium; a collection of photographs of old Cape Town; art work by local artists – what would you do?

We look forward to hearing from you, watch out for the internet questionnaire!

With warm regards,
on behalf of the Trustees,



Andy Bytheway,
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Check out "Mutual Building" on Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_Building