



Mutual Heights

News from your Trustees

Edition 41: 22 September 2017

A new initiative to make good use of the Banking Hall – This newsletter focuses on just one thing: the Banking Hall. There is a new initiative to deploy the banking hall once again as an events venue. In light of our previous experiences **this summary informs you about the initiative, and invites your comments and concerns.**

Background

In some ways, as well as being one of the finest features of our building, the banking hall has been a problem. For several years, it was simply not used. Occasionally, there has been filming that might have caused some inconvenience but did generate useful income – just once in a blue moon you might spot a TV advertisement that was shot there and enjoy a moment of pride. Then, just a few years ago, the Banking Hall was bought at auction and launched as an events venue.

This operation led to some concerns. There were complaints that it disrupted residents' use of the building, that it caused noise and crowding, and that it put an unreasonable burden on the management office. Then events became few and far between as the business struggled, and the frequency of these nuisances diminished.

Hence, when trustees heard that there is to be a new effort to further develop its use for events we were concerned. We have now met with the owner ('Red Sox') and the new operator ('EventRoom') and we have discussed the *modus operandi* and the issues that might arise.

The new initiative

The business model for the operation of the venue is a *partnership* between the *owner* (Red Sox) and the *operator* (EventRoom). What is different this time is the approach being adopted by the operator. EventRoom¹ is a new business that offers venues on the Internet rather like AirBnB offered accommodation in its early days. It acts as an intermediary between venue operators and potential users, but as well as this *intermediary* role they already have *full management* of one venue and our Banking Hall will be the second.

The space is already re-branded as "The Carraway"², an allusion to a central character in the Great Gatsby story³ called Nick Carraway. In the story, he rents a house on Long Island next to a lavish mansion owned by a millionaire. The millionaire holds extravagant parties but – interestingly – does not participate in them. I will make no judgement about the new initiative based upon that, check out Wikipedia (below) for all the details and decide for yourself!

The issues arising

We all want to see the space being usefully used without problems but based on our prior experiences we might be concerned that the disruption to our lives will recommence. We must take stock of the differences that are proposed this time around. While the behaviour of the previous tenant was difficult (at some cost of time and effort to our management team) this time there is a promise that the venture will be properly managed and properly controlled.

So, what do we do? We don't need to "stop them" from doing something that might be problematic, the *conduct rules* do that for us. Just as we are all free to use our sections in any way we wish, *within the conduct rules*, so are they. They have studied the conduct rules and say that they fully intend to observe them. Further, EventRoom are developing rules for good practice that will apply to all users of

¹ You can see the business at <https://eventroom.co.za> (and if you were to actually operate a venue you will see how easy it is to get listed).

² The space is listed at <https://eventroom.co.za/venue/Ampeux45vCtmaqCya>.

³ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gatsby for all the details.

the space. On the regulatory side all requisite permissions (noise management, liquor licensing, fire, health, safety, and so on) are being sought or are already in place.

Hence, at this stage, the portents are better than they ever were. But there are some issues that we can only comment on at this stage.

Sound – A bespoke sound system has been installed that we are assured conforms to all regulatory requirements. Sound tests have been done and we are awaiting sight of the results and the noise management plan. A qualified sound engineer will have remote monitoring facilities that will ensure that any excess noise is detected promptly. We are awaiting sight of the sound tests and the plan.

Privacy – The operator wants to prevent onlookers gazing in from the gym and from the walkway on the other side (and improve some additional sound insulation at the same time). It is proposed that decorated polystyrene will be fitted against the windows (on their side of the glass) in the same way that other windows looking into sections have been obscured for privacy, from the inside. The nature of the decoration is to be determined.

Access after midnight – The operator understands that the front door is closed at midnight. There is an expectation that people will be allowed to exit from the Parliament Street entrance if the front door cannot be used. They will employ extra security, and they are negotiating parking on the Grand Parade.

Operational matters – There will be an impact on building management and other services as a result of day-to-day operations, but remember that ownership of this space carries levies at almost R30,000 per month which we will not receive if nobody pays. We are told that the operators will have an office at the side of the banking hall which will be manned and accessible, and will be able to deal with issues that arise.

Assurances from EventRoom

Moira Johnston, Managing Director of EventRoom, explains that they are very respectful of everyone's right to peaceful enjoyment of their property and have gone to great lengths to ensure that it will not be adversely affected by events at the venue – from ensuring sound compliance to security and health and safety –nothing has been overlooked. If there are any questions regarding the sound that will be used in the venue residents are most welcome to contact EventRoom's sound engineer, Mr. Spiro Fatouros (spiro@spheresoundsolutions.co.za). Moira continues that EventRoom would like to open the lines of communication and work with, not against, the owners and tenants of Mutual Heights in making the Banking Hall a success and something that residents of the building can be proud of, and hopefully even make use of themselves.

Other steps that could be taken

There is an idea to mount a special event for residents and owners, to let all those involved meet and hear more about what is planned and how problems are being dealt with. There is another suggestion, to have a liaison established between the event management, the building management, and the community, at least for first few months, to ensure adequate communication.

Trustees invite any comments that will help the new operators to work, with the community, to realise the potential benefits of the Banking Hall, for all to enjoy.

With warm regards,
on behalf of the Trustees,



Andy Bytheway,
Chairman of the Trustees, Mutual Heights, Cape Town.

NOTE: Our new web site has a different address ending in **`.info`**; for now, email communication is still with **`.net`**

<http://www.mutualheights.info>
info@mutualheights.net

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