



Mutual Heights

News from your Trustees

Edition 42: 12th December 2018

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Communications

It has been some time since the last newsletter (January 2018!) but that is because we have been using the web site much more frequently. During the year, there have been:

- 19 Notices (generally having a formal significance, concerning the management and operation of the scheme)
- 9 News items (less formal and intended to be informative to owners and residents)
- 19 Advisories (about the state of the building and services)
- 14 Community reports (from the community, recording problems needing attention and – in one case – a thank you for exceptional services rendered)
- 10 Requests for maintenance (from the community, to Colin)
- 75 Non-trivial maintenance tasks completed (by Colin and his contractors)

So, you can see that things have been progressing and that the web site is providing useful services.

The web site

If you have not used the web site, and if you have not registered as a web site user, you might wish to do so.

First, make sure you know the **email address** that we have on file for you. Then go to the log-on page (<https://www.mutualheights.info/MHM/Login.php>) and click the big button at the bottom:

You will then be asked to choose a password, and all is done. Additional facilities will become available to you:

- Request maintenance for the common areas and appropriate parts of your section
- Submit anonymous community reports recording incidents or complaints, and compliments
- Upload advertisements where you have things to sell or dispose of, or that you want

- Manage your personal data on the web site and your preferences (receiving newsletters and so on)
- If you are an owner or agent, you will also be able to manage access rights for your visitors and others.

If you have lost your password or cannot access the web site then do let us know. We cannot see your password (it is encoded and we have no maths that will decode it!) so what we have to do is delete you as a user and ask you to apply again, as described above. Simple, but it works.

We hope that the web site is contributing to the quality of living and working in the Mutual Building. If you have any comments or suggestions do let us know. There has been one comment that it is "old tech", but that is arguable: the web site runs on a virtual Ubuntu server that costs just a few hundred Rands a month, and that seems to have infinite flexibility and extensibility. I have done most of the development work myself as a "retirement project" (with considerable help from the Office, of course) and so it has cost nothing in the development. The focus has been strictly on *functionality* rather than *aesthetics*, so if anyone wants to step up and assist with making it look more beautiful, or adding more features (or if you know about "new tech") then please let me know.

Visitor management

Visitor management is a key driver of the web site project, and as the year draws to a close it is interesting to see some of the statistics over the year.

- In total there are now 703 persons recorded as being involved with the building.
- 318 of these are short-stay 2018 visitors, 152 of whom have been welcomed and "data captured" by Jose, the concierge.
- 163 requests for registration of 2018 visitors into the database have been processed by the office.

The one problem we face is that some of the agencies appointed by owners are not engaged with the process, and we continue to have to do the work of registration that the agencies should be doing as part of their obligations.

Owners are therefore advised that:

- **Anyone that you allow to occupy your section when you are not in residence MUST be registered, for example as a tenant or visitor, using the web site (or via the office in the event of difficulties).**
- **You have the option to appoint an agent to manage your section, but you MUST advise the office in writing that you have made that appointment. The office will then make arrangements for the agent to have access to the requisite facilities on the web site.**
- **We expect that there will be only ONE agent appointed for any particular section.**
- **The appointed agent MUST then arrange to register all those who will be in residence in your section, again using the web site (or via the office in the event of difficulties).**

The security desk downstairs has a list of all visitors that have access to the building, day by day, and if they are on the list all the visitor has to do is sign; if they are not on the list there is the risk of significant delay and the building management have to undertake additional procedures which, over the course of the year, can take more than 100 hours of their time.

An open question concerns the rating and review of short-stay visitors on (for example) AirBnB. An owner who manages their own visitors will usually submit a review about the visitors with AirBnB, especially if there were problems; where an agency handles this, we need to be assured that problem visitors will be reported, because that is the way that these

booking systems are supposed to assure a safe and proper outcome from each stay. Anyone with experience, or ideas about this issue is invited to get in touch with us.

Film shoot(s)

We were obviously excited but concerned about the "Inside Man" film shoot, but Simon Hudson and Colin Larkan liaised extensively on our behalf and it all seems to have gone very well (I was out of the country!). I have heard of only one complaint, so all credit to the location management unit and the film crew. I hope we will see our beautiful building dressed up as "The Federal Reserve Bank of New York".

Income from film shoots over the year is now approaching R400,000 and there are further projects in view. We trust that the community is content that we continue, with appropriate care and attention to the impact, of course.

Lift project

This is the next "big one". The recent history of lift usage gives rise to concern. As you may know we have asked to be advised of all "incidents" and we have been advised of 10 over the last six months.

We have made representations to senior management at Otis HQ in the USA, with some results. The Otis response to service requests has improved markedly, but we are now embarking on a project to refurbish or replace the lifts.

Heritage and safety issues are at the forefront, of course. We have had three preliminary quotations and the cost of replacing or refurbishing the six main lifts (not the service lift) will be between R7m and R10m. We still have funds at hand from the Old Mutual settlement from the damp litigation, but we need to recognise that we have to maintain an adequate reserve fund. It's the Trustee's decision, but of course we welcome any comments from the community at large. For example, there are issues of "flow management", and speed is a cost factor ("slow" lifts are cheaper).

Lyn Viviers and Arnold Shewan (from Elleke, on the fourth floor) have joined the project management group, and Mark Mallin is representing the Trustees. Thanks to them for assisting in what will be another challenging project.

Security

The security of the area around the building seems to wax and wane. Following a number of incidents, we have been working with Cartwrights Corner and it was agreed that we need representation at the CCID, at board level. We then requested the community to advise of any further incidents, but there have been no further reports. The CCID have increased their presence in our area, and so we can assume that that has helped.

It has been suggested that we should get body cameras for security staff. Does anyone reading this have any comments about that? Is there any experience of the cost, and the benefits?

Damp

We have had enquiries about internal redecoration arising from damp ingress from the outside of the building. The cost of internal work is for the owner's account *unless it can be shown that trustees were negligent*.

Hence, any owners considering a claim for such work must fully motivate the claim, clearly indicating in what way there was negligence. Each case will be considered on its own merits and could eventually be the subject of arbitration where there is no agreement.

Finally - being a good neighbour

Just occasionally there are significant incidents that give us all concern (and something to talk about) but during the year I believe all such incidents have been adequately managed

and resolved. However, there are small things that sometimes just get lost in the noise – **parking** and **noise**.

First, if you park your car in the Mutual Building will you PLEASE ensure that your vehicle is parked ENTIRELY within the white lines. It is extremely frustrating when large vehicles are parked in small spaces, or when vehicles are simply parked badly. If you have a large car and a small parking place please park it somewhere else, or buy a smaller car.

Second, there is the matter of noisy conversation and slamming doors. During the night, please remember that you AND your guests must be quiet after 10pm. Carry that wheelie suitcase, don't run it over the parquet flooring; have that energetic conversation behind a closed door; hold the door as you close it, and watch out for the strong winds (the summer is just around the corner!).

So, that is 2018 in a nutshell. The year is not quite done, but that gives me the opportunity to wish you, your colleagues and your families a wonderful break over the holiday season, and all success in your endeavours in the New Year. Your trustees have agreed that we want to make Mutual Heights **the best-managed building in the City Centre**, please help us to achieve that worthy ambition!

With seasonal good wishes,
on behalf of the Trustees,



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

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

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