



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2010

UNDER THE LEADWOOD

Mike Joseph

To the Grietjie Community

Today is 11th Sept. World Trade Centre. Also the anniversary of my mother's passing one year later. These are momentous and serious events. So I have no idea why I chose today to reflect on my last month on Grietjie but I did. I even took a slow (very slow) game drive and I saw no game---actually if I was in the middle of a herd of buffalo I may not have seen it. But reflect I did.

Why did I tolerate verbal abuse recently from members of another reserve when every fibre in my body said react, or walk out? Why do I tolerate what is abjectly unethical when my normal reaction would be to challenge and joust if need be. Reflection time. Because Grietjie's needs are those which I have accepted to serve and my behaviour must be conditioned to try achieve the best result for GNR. 'Sounds simple. Not that easy.

I sit with a list of issues from our community members who have difficulties with what has gone on in the past. This list was given to me by Deon in my capacity as chairman of GNR. This list will be systematically addressed. I am surprised at some of the issues; and again for a lot of the issues, it boils down to flow of information (or non-flow really). So we will address these and feedback to those whose list it is. Let's clarify what the situation is (or better still what it could be). I am equally surprised that in fact there are not massive differences in most issues, a few at best. The committee is grateful for receipt of this list as it now has something to work with in bringing the community closer together.

So where did we go wrong? I have had a look recently at some of the GNR documents. This is just my opinion, but there is often language used that is (unintentionally I guess) exclusive rather than inclusive. I listen to the way we've become accustomed to speaking. We talk about this group, and that group. And we do it without even realising it. I see some movement now of members of the committee referring regularly to the community rather than members, and non-members; owners, rather than residents and non-residents, and certainly within the committee, more erasing of lines rather than the drawing of them.

I said above that I control my behaviour for (what I perceive anyway) the benefit of GNR. Yet at today's meeting I let my emotions get the better of me and after my few minutes of soliloquy, someone suggested I should be a motivational speaker at the SGM. I scoffed at this a bit. But I reflected on the drive. Why would a few words elicit that sort of response? Because what I said at the meeting came from the heart (and this is strange because I'm a gut person)-so therefore there

was the necessary passion, the necessary plea for teamwork and the necessary integrity in the words.

Is there a point to this or am I just waxing lyrically. Well I look at the list given to me. Can we resolve everything immediately? Probably not. But there is a lot we can. More importantly, there's a great deal of common desires- the major being the desire to be a fully fledged nature reserve, based on an operationally sound platform. This, plus the desire for credibility, transparency and better communications. So if **we ALL** want this, if we really work with passion, with teamwork and with integrity, for the main common goals, rather than dwell on petty pasts, personality issues and such like; if we focus on the big picture and in broad direction rather than in detailed analysis and criticism of each other; if we do this, with oomph, gusto and a willingness to try things even if we make mistakes, we as a community will be better off than working against each other.

Bye for now from Under the Leadwood.

ONDER DIE HARDEKOOL

Mike Joseph

Aan die Grietjie gemeenskap

Vandag is Sept 11de. World Trade Centre. Ook die herdenking 'n jaar later van my ma se dood. Hierdie was ernstige sake, hoekom dan kies ek vandag om aan my vorige maand op Grietjie te reflekteer. Ek het ook 'n baie stadige game drive geneem maar het niks gesien nie. Dalk sou ek niks in elk geval gesien want my kop was op 'n ander plek.

Waarom het ek in die voorlopige week onbeskofte kritiek aanvaar, terwyl elke spier in my liggaam wou uitstap of reageer? Hoekom vat ek nie onetiese gedrag vas nie? My gewone manier is om dit direk aan te vat. Maar die behoeftes van GNR is iets wat ek aanvaar het om 'n bydrae van diens te maak en daarom moet my gedrag waar nodig, aangepas word om sodanig die beste (soos ek dit sien te minste) wat ek kan vir GNR liever. Klink maklik. Ja miskien maar nie altyd nie..

Deon Nieuwoudt het vandag vir my 'n lys van sake ,wat die sake verteenwoordig waarvoor mense van die gemeenskap ongelukkig is gegee. Ons sal die lys in 'n stelselmatige manieer aanpak. Van die sake verbaas my. Dit kom weereens neer op kommunikasie . Ons sal hierdie aanleentehede moet aanpak en terugvoering aan die mense gee tov wat die huidige stand van sake is (of wat hulle kan wees!!). Ek is ook verbaas dat daar meestal nie groot verskille is nie. Ons as komitee is dankbaar om die lys te kry. Dit gee nou 'n geleentheid om die sake te bespreek en op te los en dus 'n poging te maak om die gemeenskap nader aan mekaar te bring.

So waar het die dinge skeef geloop? As ek na sekere dokumente van GNR bekyk, (en dit is net my opinie), dikwels die taal wat gebruik is (nie noodwendig doelgerig nie), sluit mense uit in plaas van in. Ons praat eintlik oor dieselfde dinge net op 'n ander manier. Hierdie groep of daardie groep. Sonder om dit eers te erken. Maar nou is komitee lede besig om te begin praat in terme van gemeenskap, in plaas van lede of nie-lede nie; eienaars in plaas van inwoners en nie-inwoners nie; en 'n bereidheid om mense in te trek in plaas van uit te sluit.

Ek het voorheen gese ek beheer my gedrag vir die voordeel van GNR. Maar by vandag se vergadering het my gevoelens my in die steek gelaat. Na my beurt van praat, het iemand voorgestel dat ek 'n motiverende voorleging op die SGM moet lewer. Ek het nie baie gehoor aan dit gegee nie en dit van die hand gewys. Maar ek het later daaraan gedink. Waarom sou 'n paar woorde so voorstel uitlok. Want die wat gese is, is van die hart gese. Met die nodige gevoel, die sterk noodigheid vir spanwerk, en die nodige integriteit.

Het al die 'n punt. As ek na die lys kyk, kan ons alles kits oplos? Inderdaad nee. Maar daar is wel die wat ons kan oplos. Maar, en baie belangrik, ons het baie behoeftes wat ooreenstem. Die stigting van 'n Natuur Reservaat, 'n gesonde operasionele stelsel, 'n behoefte vir deursigtigheid, geloofwaardigheid, en beter kommunikasie. So, as **ons ALMAL** (meestal) dit wil he, as ons rerig saamspan, met integriteit en gevoeligheid, fokus op die "big picture" in stede van aanhoudend by die sake van persoonlikhede van die verlede te bly, in stede van kritiek en detail order van die dag te maak, om nuwe dinge te probeer, al is foute begaan, en ons doen dit met "oemph", dan glo ek dat ons as gemeenskap daarby sal baat en beter vaar.

En ek vra verskoning vir die swak taal in die boodskap, maar dit is vir my nie baie maklik om in Afrikaans ordentelik te vertaal nie

Ek probeer daarem.

Tot volgende keer, totsiens van Onder die Hardekool.

FEEDBACK ON THE GRIETJIE COMMITTEE MEETING

Andie Rodwell

Dear All

The second meeting of the new committee was held on Sat. 11th September 2010. Below is a summary of what was discussed, resolved and actioned at the forum. If you would like to review the Minutes of the Meeting, please drop me a line and I will forward them to you.

Minutes of the 2010 AGM: The minutes of the recent AGM have been approved by the committee and signed off by the Chairman of the term, Ian Owtram. Please find attached a copy of the minutes for your records.

Co-opting of Theuns Trollip onto the committee: Theuns is now officially co-opted onto the committee in his capacity as the CPF (Community Policing Forum) representative.

GNR Website: Ian has handed over the running of the website to myself as part of my communications portfolio responsibilities. I endeavour to keep this as current as possible, but please bear with me as get up to speed with the new software! All input is welcome, and if you have anything to contribute to the website, please contact me on info@grietjiepnr.co.za

CAP Meeting: Mette Kristensen has sent an invitation to attend a meeting of the Commercial Operators to be held at Mbizi Bush Lodge on the 20th October 2010. Up for discussion is the re-

structuring of the commercial levy. If you are a CAP operator, please endeavour to attend this meeting.

The Volunteer Programme: Ian, Timothy and myself have revisited the cost analysis on the running of the volunteer programme, encompassing the expenditure on marketing, accommodation etc, as well as what we feel Grietjie can charge/ various packages on offer. Our biggest cost outlay will probably be for marketing – we already have slot on a Volunteer Programme site through Ian's connections which costs in the region of R750.00 p/a. We are looking at other packages available, and thank you to Searle Sacks (No. 117) for providing me with his contact at a volunteer programme company. Scott will be looking at the financial breakdown to assess the feasibility, and thereafter we can handover the operation to Oli Kuhnel and Paddy Beguin.

Suggestion Box at the entrance gate: The suggestion box is now in place and we encourage you to use it as a means of communication, particularly if you do not have email comms. Gert will be checking the box on a regular basis, and all correspondence will be kept confidential. Thank you to Pierre Ackermann for making the box - Pierre has been a valid contributor to the reserve over the years, his wooden signage structures have withstood elephant intervention on more than one occasion!

Building Guidelines and Development: The hearing for the legalisation of the four dwellings on No.117 took place on the 26th August. The application was rejected on the grounds that its content had changed since its original submission by the Town Planners.

During the hearing, and speaking afterwards to members of the hearing board, it was recommended that Grietjie must adopt an appropriate date before which any buildings erected illegally (i.e in contravention of the Title Deed), would have the support of GNR in an application by their current owners for their legalisation (similar to the system adopted in the GNR 'Commercialisation and Eco Tourism' clause).

Mike has asked the committee to review the constitution and the relevant documents over the next few weeks, for discussion at the next committee meeting.

Finances: The 2010/11 levies have been invoiced out to all owners. Scott Elliot has forwarded a breakdown of the levy structure on request from some owners, and is available from any of the committee members if you need clarity on how your levy was formulated. Likewise, if you have any other query regarding your levy, please do not hesitate to contact Scott at prochik@protectachik.co.za, alternatively drop a letter in the suggestion box.

To bring you up to speed on our financial status over the past couple of months:

July Income and Expenditure

01/07/2010 GNR acc. balance = R 68 312.00

Income = R 19 419.45

Expenditure = R 31 952.30

August Income and Expenditure

Income = R 49 660.00

Expenditure = R 60 170.75

The balance in the GNR bank account as of the 1st September = R 45 221.00. Payments have been made for:

- The Auditing of the 2009/2010 financials

- The Balule Game count
- The grading of the internal roads (July 2010)

We have received 12 levy payments to date. ONGR's road contribution was received on the 4th September, and proceeds from Balule hunts (Olifants West = R 4 488.00 and York R 6 361.00) were also deposited into the account.

The R 25 000.00 in the Road fund is to be allocated towards topping soil for the internal roads.

With 330 000km on the clock, the duty vehicle requires substantial repairs. Quotes have been received but the costs outweigh the trade in value of the vehicle. We are in no financial position to even consider purchasing a replacement vehicle, and in the interim the most important repairs to the bushes will be done. Deon is looking at trimming the costs of the other repairs with his mechanic.

The proposed purchase of two Buffalo by Mr van Zyl (No.'s 94 and 95), may be in jeopardy due to the ban on the movement of livestock imposed by the State Veterinary Dept. as a result of the Foot and mouth outbreak. However, Timothy has with confirmed with the Warden of Balule, Craig Ferguson, that we may keep the permits, but if by January Balule urgently needs the permits, they may use them and we may re-apply should buffalo's be available.

Craig also confirmed that the elephant will be hunted as revenue for our boundary fence repairs, and this will take place as part of next year's hunting season. The hunt will take place on 'Ukhozi / York, south of the Olifants River. In the interim Timothy is sourcing comparative quotes for the fence materials.

Property Checks: Requests have been made to the committee that if a non-resident owner is on Grietjie they have the option to cancel their property checks for that period, and be credited accordingly. Although this is a contract paid for in advance the committee request that the owner gives notification in writing one month prior to their stay.

Proposal and Action plan from the 'Dissatisfied Grietjie Landowners' (DGLO's): Although a sound proposal is not yet on the table from the DGLO community, below is their list of issues for clarity as mentioned by Mike in his 'Under the Leadwood' article:

1. Recognition of the Grietjie Land Owners rights as title deed holders. Even if they aren't contributing and aren't members of the constitution the Grietjie Committee has no powers over their property and this should be respected. They will in turn co-operate with the committee and support it where necessary. Currently this sector of Grietjie is totally ignored.
2. A management committee that has credibility and the members must represent the Geo-Political diversity of Grietjie. The members must be resident on Grietjie for more than half the year. (Afrikaans, English, Male, Female).
3. Furthermore when a committee member is nominated and has a seat on the committee he/she can not be replaced by any other member unless the Grietjie Members have nominated and voted them on.
4. Visible Reserve Management (Patrolling , Inspections and Random Road Blocks)
5. Effective Reserve Management. Management Committee, Reserve Manager (Member of Committee that supervises the rest of the personnel , which are the Ranger, Secretary, Gate Guards, Rangers, Fencing Team, Labour gang.

6. Proper Game Management. (Grass Classification and Grazing volumes determined, Accurate Game Counts/Census, Animal Population Control).
7. Trade in Game (Dead or Alive) to attain correct animal densities or populations and to earn funds to alleviate the high levies.
8. An reasonable and affordable annual levy.
9. The provision of services and material in exchange for the levies
10. The payment of a conservation fee by each visitor of a lodge. Grietjie monthly invoices the lodges with the fee applicable to the number of visitors. In this way the lodges pay Conservation Fees according to their customers population.
11. The introduction of a fee/deposit for contractors building on Grietjie. Determined monthly for the duration of the project paid in advance per full month, about R50-00/week.
12. A Grietjie Radio network with 3 channels. (Public channel, Security/Fire /Gate Alert channel and Rangers channel).All on one frequency. GRN Gate Base Station, Vehicle Mobile Unit, Two Hand Held Units. Everybody Else has mobile or Hand Held or a Base Station on Same Frequency. No mast is required.
13. Northern Fence completion.
14. Application for Nature Reserve Status to alleviate Municipal Land Rate Levies.
15. A Land Claims Member on the Committee to Co-ordinate the Land Claim issues.
16. The upgrade of the Vulture hide so that it can be opened. Funds generated by the hide must be repaid to Grietjie. Grietjie can provide the small game Carcasses (Impala and warthog) as part of its animal population control program.
17. What happened to the money in the road fund started in and around 1998?
18. What happened at Grietjie no 3 (Mr. Stephan Lucas)?
19. What happened with the paying Student that didn't complete his stay?
20. When will Nature Conservation put an end to the feeding of Baboons at Care?
21. Is it acceptable that the Warden uses the official vehicle for private transport to town.(When is it for Business and when is it Private?)
22. Currently the Grietjie Setup only benefits the privileged few.
23. Medium term to Long term Planning so that Budgets can be more realistic and acceptable.
24. Transparency and Communication of what is discussed at the Committee Meetings.

The committee is to review these queries and submit their feedback to Mike. As the memo was addressed to Mike as chairman, it is incumbent on him to respond in this capacity. He will consolidate the committee's feedback, respond to Deon, and from there we can continue to move forward.

Enyathikulu Wildlife Estate: DEAT (Dept. Environmental Affairs and Tourism) has approved the EIA for the proposed development on or Northern boundary (Try). Our only angle of objection is the impact such a development will have on the ground water, as the EIA's figures are based on assumptions and were taken in the rainy season (a more realistic assessment of the water table should be conducted at the end of the dry season). Grietjie has until the 20th September to object with a hydro-geological report. Mike and Gert met with Olifants North and South who have also lodged as interested and affected parties. They are willing to contribute R 10 000.00 each to fund the report and effectively oppose the application. In turn, Grietjie needs to match this contribution, and Gert will be sending out a communication to all owners on this issue.

SGM 2011: The following items are confirmed for tabling at the SGM in February 2011:

- Approval of the AGM minutes from 2009
- The proposed amendment to the constitution 'Culling clause'
- The proposed addition to the constitution 'Cut off date for levies'
- Definition of a second dwelling for levy payment
- Review of finances

Notices and enclosures of the SGM will be distributed timeously.

From the Warden: Please all be aware that it is fire season, and also, if you are planning a controlled burn on your property, please let Timothy know in advance, so that he does not rush out under a false alarm!

Some owners are allowing for the removal of firewood from the reserve. Please be aware that certain species of trees are protected and cannot, under law, be removed. Timothy and the gate guards will inspect all wood loads leaving through the gate.

Leave has been granted for Timothy from 17th September – 3rd October. Mike Joseph will be manning the warden's phone in his absence, and Gert Lubbe will be on standby with the fire fighting equipment.

In case of an emergency please call:

The warden on 078 875 8722

In case of fire please call:

Gert Lubbe on 082 681 8387

The annual Balule game count is scheduled for Fri. 17th September.

Finally, our sincere condolences go to the van Zyl family on the untimely death of Ronnie van Zyl. Our thoughts are with you all.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Sunday 17th October, and until then, go well!

Regards

Andie Rodwell

Visit us on www.grietjiepnr.co.za

