

## **Keurboom Park Association.**

(A City of Cape Town Ward 58 community initiative).

### **Chairperson's Report for 2019/20**

Good day/evening/whatever. Welcome to our first and, we hope, our last online reportback. First a couple of housekeeping matters.

Membership of the Association is required for voting on any matters (including committee nominations) but is not required for expressing an opinion (unless I don't agree with you). Membership is free to join and there is no annual fee. It couldn't be easier.

SIMPLY EMAIL US WITH YOUR NAME & YOU BECOME A MEMBER (unless you request otherwise). There is no downside save for an occasional email and begging letter. It would be good to know a little about you – address, any relevant expertise and so on but it's not required.

This AGM has been opened and will be closed on 08 August 2020.

The minutes of last year's AGM have been previously sent to our members. Should anyone wish to make amendments or corrections to those minutes then now is the time to speak up - by email. If we don't receive objections then those minutes will have been accepted.

Should we receive objections to last year's minutes by 08 August 2020 then we shall check notes and refer back.

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Our quarterly committee meetings were attended by the seven committee members and are chaired by me, Phil Flockton. I mostly handle maintenance and project matters. The other members are -

Justine Thornton who most of you know. She remains as involved in all things park related as she ever was. She is the go-to person who deals with initial contacts from park users.

Angela Jacobs – who has, with husband Peter, quietly and conscientiously refilled the poop bag containers – for the last six years. A thankless job which they have done cheerfully and reliably. She has now stepped down from that job. Thank you so much Angela and Peter. For the time being Emmarentia refills the poop containers with either Justine or myself doing it on weekends. Angela always offers valued input at our meetings.

Roy Andrew who many of you will know. Roy is a Rondebosch institution – his advice, contacts and local knowledge is invaluable.

Fay Linder – her botanical interests are much appreciated. The stream bank rejuvenation is her pet project.

Gill Grose – undertakes the miserable task of recording our meeting minutes. Her pet project is tree identification and labelling.

Paul Leader – is our general factotum.

The committee are standing for re-election en bloc. In this AGM pack there is a committee voting sheet and space for new nominations. The committee would very much welcome new and hopefully younger blood.

Now for the matters close to our hearts (well mine anyway) –

### LOCKDOWN

Our park has never seen as many users as it has during the last months and it has taken much strain and will continue to do so. When we designed and built the perimeter path it was never anticipated that our park would need to accept walkers (and dogs) from all over. No longer just Rondebosch and Lynfrae but now not only southern suburbs as well but eastern suburbs too. We are very happy to have our park so well used by such a mix of Capetonians. Pressure of numbers and social distancing has meant that the grass by the side of the paths is being hammered. In the spring we shall have to attend to this. We fully expect that the increased use will become permanent as many more people have now discovered the pleasures of our park. If that is so then we shall need to consider paving other minor paths to encourage their use and so spread the load. The canal path has been earmarked as one of those. I speak about this later under projects. Another “candidate” for paving is the link passing behind the green shed and crossing the granite bridge.

Until very recently City Parks Department was operating remotely - their parks were closed. Keurboom Park was the only de facto exception – illegally of course and so we had no service from them. Your Association took on the responsibility for securing and paying for all maintenance including emptying bins, cleaning litter, verges etc. Various people were employed, ad hoc, their wages being paid by a park user.

Since June 8<sup>th</sup> we have had Emmarentia back for five days a week (not weekends, nor public holidays). We are still prevented from opening the toilets – an issue we have been very actively and very forcefully taking up with the City. In the meantime we have instructed her to open on request.

### TREES

Every winter we lose a few trees to the gales and five or more to felling. We need to be planting: more Yellowwoods in the avenue along the perimeter path, more pines in the groves to replace those we lose, and more “dedication” trees in selected spots throughout the park.

We are keen to retain the indigenous ethos in the two lower groves which are now almost filled but we need around thirty new trees to replace those that have died.

I know that some of you will be as disappointed as I that so many trees planted in the rewilding area during the last 16 years have not grown as quickly nor as successfully as we hoped. But not through lack of care. Our gardeners spend much of their time on that work. We are actively addressing this by beginning to renew the labelling of the different species and then to identify relative successes and failures. We have contacted City Parks to obtain specialist advice, and we need to have the soils tested and compared with other areas of the park where trees grow successfully, and finally we are to experiment with different feeding regimens.

We appeal for donations of suitable trees –

- Fay and I would particularly like to see us planting more flowering and medicinal trees such as the Moringa – the sausage tree.
- Yellowwoods for the path avenue.
- Pines to replace those lost.
- Indigenous trees to replace the dead or dying in the south-west quadrant.

Tree planting is not cost free to the Association. In addition to the direct cost of poles, compost, and planting labour we incur substantial cost throughout the early years of their lives – watering, feeding, weeding and protection from Council mowing. We therefore ask tree donors to donate R1200.00 (or R940 if they supply the tree) to cover these costs.

We also encourage people to adopt and dedicate one of our existing young trees. Please contact Justine should this be of interest.

Despite the drought having broken we still don't use mains water in the park as we now have water security -

- from those park users who have adopted a tree and bring grey water to look after their tree.
- from rainwater stored in our ponds – particularly the two upper ones.
- from the continued generosity of our neighbours, RBHS, who allow us to use their borehole water from a syphon system installed by a regular park user.

We employ two men throughout the year, Kenneth and Daniel, often for more than a day a week on garden and path maintenance. They are paid out of donor funds.

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For the fourth year we have received specific project funding from an environmental trust and we are very grateful to them

Weirs and Wetlands Project

The log and concrete weirs, the central wetland dam and the “dog pond” dam are complete and functional. The damaged “little Bosch” dam has been repaired under the supervision of Ross Dold, a local hydrological engineer. Thankyou Ross for donating your expertise. We are not filling that pond until we are confident of the repair.

We are also to build pole and pebble steps down to the stream where it crosses under the lower path bridge. City Parks have offered to supply poles - thank you.

Our ponds continue to be well loved by dogs, children, photographers. Birds love them and many taddies survive into frogs. At this time of year, after the first rains, our frogs are very noisy at dusk and early mornings.

In late summer there were social media comments about dying tadpoles in drying streams. But it is nature’s way – frogs are prey species and have evolved a survival mechanism – they reproduce in enormous numbers. They continue to lay eggs so long as there is any standing water. The result is that some of the winter’s earliest taddies survive into adulthood but by late season, as ponds start to dry, then new taddies don’t survive.

One of the joys of childhood is netting taddies and putting them in jars but PLEASE don’t let your children remove them from the park. Catch and release. There are a number of different frog and toad species in the park and by taking away taddies children may well remove rare and endangered ones. We shall shortly be erecting frog info boards.

#### Canal side path

The path alongside the canalised Keurboom Stream has become popular due partly to the busyness of other paths since lockdown and partly due to its “wildness” (we are happy to have our bees back at the Poplar tree - but keep away). We have the design for boardwalk bridges over the two streams feeding into the canal where the erosion is considerable. We have a contractor in place. **Should anyone wish to partially fund and dedicate one or both bridges with naming rights on a prominent plaque – please contact us.**

#### Stream Bank Rejuvenation Project

Sadly the project is now on hold due to the funding shortage. But weeding and barrier maintenance continues. We did hope that by winter 2020 the economy would have recovered somewhat and then we would have been able to continue with additional phases. What a forlorn hope!

We do have a volunteer, a very enthusiastic young man, a horticulture student, who has taken on a section of the stream for replanting. Thank you Oliver we are very happy to have you.

Sadly some of his planting has been stolen already – what sort of person takes plants from a local park? Perhaps the same person who removes the logs that we leave to rot down into natural fertiliser.

### Reed Garden

The reeds and restios planted at the dog pond have grown magnificently and we have planted a few more donated restios. Our intention is to create a reed garden in the large open area between the existing dekriet and the WPCC path.

This is a very significant project for our park and presents a major dedication opportunity – possibly a memorial garden dedicated to a person or pet. **Should this appeal to anyone please discuss with Justine or Fay.**

### Other projects

Perhaps some of you can split your own lilies for the stream beds or clivias for the area by the toilets?

If you notice any damage to children's play equipment please report it to us.

There has been interest in an equipped adult exercise area in the corner of the park close to RBHS and WPCC. **Comments are invited.**

We need two more picnic benches in the kiddies play area and more bench seats for the morning nannies, afternoon mummies. If your nanny is one of those or you are one of those mummies perhaps you would like to donate a picnic bench or single bench seat – **dedications are possible.**

One of the other projects close to my own heart remains the extension to the skateboard snake. Renovation is way overdue but as we want to double its length we are holding back. We did receive funding commitment from our very involved local Councillor, Sharon Cottle, and from City Parks, but we were let down badly by the specialist designer and had to forego the funds. Once we have an appropriate design we shall proceed.

Because we received very little negative feedback the no-mow wild area has been extended once more: now it stretches as far as Keurboom Avenue. I don't know that rewilding has encouraged small rodents but insect populations have certainly increased which is excellent news. The grasses that have gone to seed have encouraged seed eating birds at the expense of having some undesirable grasses multiply. Our own labour and brush cutter is used to control certain grasses. Undesirable human incursion is something we accept with good grace and a spade to dig in their excrement.

Owls have been spotted mostly in the evenings and occasional mornings so we remain hopeful that they will again raise young despite the presence in the park of the black sparrow hawks. Our ponds are frequented by wading birds and a dawn walk without dogs is rewarding: spotting a spoonbill or heron is not uncommon.

I should like visitors to spend longer and to socialise in the park. The committee wants to see mobile coffee especially during summer and warm afternoons and evenings. Also ice cream vending. We have definite operator interest but we now need to convince the City to remove their objection.

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### Finances

The financial report reflects the necessity that day to day expenses (other than capital expenses) had to be reduced because of reduced donor income. Current and capital (project) expenses are separately budgeted and costed. The project monies from our main benefactors remain strictly ring fenced and will not be spent on general maintenance.

Our “current expenses” depend on user donations. Contributions to maintenance are not glamorous but are vital and it helps greatly if we have reliable monthly contributions. In the reporting year “maintenance” donations fell year on year by R6 700. Daily I see many of the same faces in our park (not during the last months though I do see the same masks). We have only 14 regular donors and, over a year, just 8 to 12 occasional donors. That is really pathetic - out of all the hundreds of park regulars. Last year, on a sunny weekend day, we made a rough visitor count – we thought 1800 an astonishing number. There have been many days since lockdown when we must have at least doubled that number and rivalled Sea Point promenade for hectic. Very many days all our poop containers (totalling 500 bags) have been emptied and refilled and sometimes refilled again (your association buys those bags). Please don't rely on a handful of other people to keep your park clean and maintained. Please consider making a regular monthly donation – **a R100 a month from just 40 more people would make an enormous difference.**

### Finally

Thanks to all the committee for your work during the last twelve months and thanks to all who have donated money and/or time to our park.

Thanks to all dog walkers who remove their dog's poop. There is no litter problem partly because most users are considerate and partly because a few pick up and bin others' litter when they see it. Remember if you walk past litter without picking it up then you are part of the problem not part of the solution.

Comments PLEASE – we need to hear from you. Let us have your thoughts, suggestions, ideas for park improvements, whatever. **AND if you would like to be more involved in your park then please offer your expertise and/or nominate yourself for the Association committee.**

Our contacts – [info@keurboompark.org.za](mailto:info@keurboompark.org.za)

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