



From the community-For the community / Uit die gemeenskap-Vir die gemeenskap

GARSCOM CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT: Report Period: June 2019 – May 2020

This report gives an outline of the past year events more specifically covering the period June 2019 to May 2020. I wish to pay tribute to all volunteers who participated and aspired to GarsCom's vision of an open, friendly, safe and involved community.

1. Board of Directors:

Active Directors:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| ➤ Chair | Carol van Niekerk |
| ➤ Vice Chair/Security | Herklaas Meyer |
| ➤ Finance/Communication | Venessa Roelofse |
| ➤ Environment | Phoebe Machere |

2. GarsCom Residents Association:

Without the people, no community initiative will be successful and like most organisations we need financial contributions to sustain operations. We are grateful to each of the ± 430 contributing members and businesses who take our hands in this regard. This much needed funds are utilised to maintain the upkeep and replacement of our 22 cameras and to fund the functions of the 24/7 control room in our area. During the COVID-19 lockdown, funds have also been utilised to assist Pharos Community Centre with food parcels for people in our community.

3. Portfolios:

• Finance.

For the first time in a long time we have experienced a drop in membership fees of 6.1% and 5.4% of income overall. We have empathy with the hard economic times everyone is experiencing and are grateful for this relative small decline we experienced. With good financial management we were also able to reduce the expenses with 4.5% and were therefore able to end the year on a good note.

• Social Projects:

Because of the restrictions of the lockdown period GarsCom had to cancel most of the functions which included: GarsCom bazaar, Potjiekos day and recognition evening.

• Communications:

📱 Social Media.

All the streets in GarsCom have WhatsApp groups that were started mainly for security reasons. However, other relevant matters such as traffic problems, load shedding and other important community news are also communicated to the residents. Every

WhatsApp administrator decides whether a message that was sent from the main group is relevant for that particular street. This facility is available for all GarsCom residents. Some streets have started separate chat groups to communicate on a more social level.

The GarsCom Facebook is a very effective communication channel. The administrators at present are Shani Kotze, Wilna Barnard and Venessa Roelofse. This is a closed group and only residents of GarsCom are allowed to register. Thursdays is open to all registered participants for advertising.

WhatsApp Pet group.

This constitutes a group of pet lovers who have dedicated themselves in the recovery of lost pets and re-uniting them with their owners within the borders of GarsCom.

Weekly news.

All GarsCom Resident Association members receive a weekly email which informs them about crime tendencies and community activities. This is compiled by Johanda Ebersohn. The weekly emails are proof-read and translated from Afrikaans into English by volunteers namely: Tessa Moller, Anne Marie Schoeman, Laetitia Bottyan, Ane van der Walt and Corrie Els.

Entrance boards.

GarsCom events are announced on entrance board notices. Louis and Danielle van Heerden change the two entrance boards every week.

Monthly meetings.

GarsCom hosts meetings in the Bethel Chapel every last Monday evening of every month from January to October. Attendance varies from 15 to 50 residents per meeting. The meetings were suspended from March 2020 because of the lockdown period and they will be resumed as soon as the lockdown period is over.

Bi-Monthly printed newsletter.

The bi-monthly newsletter has not only served as a newsletter but also as a way of keeping records of all events in GarsCom since 2004. Due to insufficient volunteers to help compile a newsletter every 2 months, distribution was discontinued. However, Johanda Ebersohn volunteered to continue keeping records of all events in GarsCom without compiling a bi-monthly newsletter.

Website

The current website was designed and managed by Ilana van der Merwe.

List of suppliers in GarsCom.

During 2014 a resident of Boerboel Street, Steven Mayer, developed an excellent website to advertise good and trustworthy businesses in GarsCom. He managed and sponsored that website for more than 5 years and it was used widely in GarsCom and also by residents outside of GarsCom. At the beginning of 2020 he cancelled the website because its function was replaced by Facebook.

GarsCom Calendar.

Ilana van der Merwe is the editor of the yearly Calendar. 1500 copies are printed and handed out to GarsCom residents. It is also a marketing tool for the rest of the year used by businesses who advertise in it. It is also informative for new residents who move into the area.

- **Environment**

Borders.

During the past year very little progress was made on the project to beautify and make our borders safe because the Municipality was revising the bi-laws. Businessman Ruaan Robberts assists us in the negotiations with the municipality to be able to continue this project.

Street clean up and Mandela day.

This inspiring initiative was started in 2014 in order to honour the legacy of Nelson Mandela. Cathy Coetzee is responsible for organizing residents to clean all GarsCom streets once a year in July. In addition to this Jan Phuti cleans main streets twice a week made possible by the sponsorship of a few residents.

Garden friends

The objective of this group is to discuss gardening issues, share green secrets, attend DIY workshops and of course make friends. Kobie Nel leads this group and an active WhatsApp group keeps everybody informed about all activities. To date this group has grown into another successful initiative that makes GarsCom the true community it is.

Recycling

Venessa Roelofse is the contact person for this project. We are happy to have Blu Swirl providing this service to our residents after lengthy discussions with them. They took over from Waste Group.

Parks

During the year GarsCom had fruitful discussions with the Municipality concerning various improvements to the Parks in order to make them friendlier. Some of the suggestions made by GarsCom in this regard include: the need to lock all gates at night; erecting a notice board at the gates with opening and closing times; beautifying the children's play area and introducing adults' entertainment initiatives such as chess and outdoor exercise equipment.

A project committee consisting of 5 residents and headed by Lizbe Henze was established at the beginning of 2020 to take this project forward. The Parks Board started implementing some of these suggestions such as making chess area at the Great Dane Park. Hopefully all these will contribute to enjoyable times for the community.

Streams

Two of GarsCom Directors in the company of the Parks Board personnel took a tour of the streams and conservation areas in order to assess the safety and cleanliness of the routes. This was necessary to prepare the residents who were interested in touring the streams at night to view the various animals and other wild life. A group of about 30 residents was able to tour and enjoy the wildlife viewing in the later part of 2019.

- **Security.**

- ✚ GarsCom Support group.

The support group was established in 2008 by a group of volunteer patrollers. The purpose of the group was to assist residents who experienced break-ins or even worse house robberies. This group became inactive after sometime as the crime declined in the GarsCom area.

GarsCom revived the support group in 2019 in response to the community calls to assist them in combating these particular crimes. The group does not only focus on the victims of crime but also attends to a wider spectrum of problems. The group now consists of 29 volunteers drawn from the following categories:

1. Patrollers. 4
2. Medical 5
3. Trauma councillors 2
4. Hospitality 5
5. Prayer group 5
6. Animal assist 3
7. Handy Man 3

This group is led by Alda Muller as coordinator and assisted by Yolanda van der Merwe. This dedicated team of supporters provides assistance to victims of domestic violence, suicide attempts and many more. During the lockdown period GarsCom has witnessed a number of residents who have lost their jobs and are in need of help. To this effect the group is now assisting with distributing food parcels.

The number of volunteers is not big enough to match the needs of the community which are growing by the day. I would like to appeal to fellow GarsCommers who have special skills that can be used to meet the needs of the community to join the support group.

- ✚ Two way radios

A control and management system has been implemented in order to comply with ICASA requirements. Repairs and programming are managed by GarsCom. During July 2019 all GarsCom radios were reprogrammed by Georgie Mantcheva from 3G Telecom, and Venessa Roelofse. Ane Pretorius from Powerfin assisted with the financial administration throughout the whole process.

Only members of GarsCom are allowed to use radios on the GarsCom frequency.

- ✚ Community patrols

There are about 78 volunteers who dedicate their time, day and night, throughout the year, patrolling the streets of GarsCom. They are the eyes and ears of the community, reporting any suspicious activities and potential threats in the community to the GarsCom Control Room. In the past year almost 72% of all the patrol shifts were covered by a volunteer patroller.

The green light patrols consist of 11 teams, each managed by a team coordinator with each team having a scheduled two-hour shift to patrol the area using their own vehicles and fuel. Every patroller is equipped with a two-way radio, a green light for the roof and a "GarsCom Patrols" magnetic sticker on the side of the vehicle.

Andre Vorster is the chair person of the patrols and Anthony Schaaf the vice Chair. Since the lockdown all patrollers had to stand down. This service to the community by volunteers will resume as soon as rules allow it.

Control room

The control room serves as a central hub where all the cameras and radio communications are managed and monitored. Among many other benefits, the control room provides services such as emergency support, incident management, radio assistance, lookouts for potential threats, patrol coordination etc. whilst keeping detailed records of all occurrences.

We have 4 operators (3 full time operators and 1 stand in operator) operating 24/7 in the control room. Venessa Roelofse assists with all control room matters. The control room operators in cooperation with the National patrol officers and the green light patrols are a primary contributing factor in combating crime in GarsCom.

GarsCom is very proud of our control room and the way the operators provide their service to the community. The control room is used by ALL residents in GarsCom, regardless of whether they contribute to the expenses or to which security company they belong to.

Team building

Each year a team building day is hosted by GarsCom and National Security. The last two occasions were held at the office of National in Brooklyn. Because of lockdown period we had to cancel the team building scheduled for 2020.

This is a valuable day aimed at building better personal and working relationships.

National Security and Fire

National Security and Fire is serious about the pro active model. We have two dedicated patrol cars in GarsCom managed by experienced and professional patrol officers. The GarsCom clients' alarms are monitored by a dedicated desk at National and National also provides a dedicated technician once a week at a lower call out fee. The GarsCom directors have regular monthly meetings with the National management at which all problems are addressed. As a result of the meeting between the 2 parties in January, National appointed a dedicated manager, Johan van der Sandt, to deal with all security matters in GarsCom. The purpose of this appointment is to identify and address problems in a more effective and efficient manner.

Domestic and gardener training.

Since 2005 GarsCom has been hosting domestic and gardener security training workshops. The workers receive training in basic self-defence and are provided with safety and security information to better protect themselves and the houses where they work. National assisted us with training on how to extinguish a fire and provided other security tips. A GarsCom resident Elizabeth Nell demonstrated self-defence.

A food packet is prepared for everyone who attends the course. They also receive a GarsCom calendar and a whistle. A database is kept of everyone who attends the course.

4. Acknowledgements:

GarsCom wishes to express sincere thanks, appreciation and immense gratitude, to which no monetary value can be apportioned, to the following persons:

- Firstly, the dedicated directors who walked the extra mile this past year and helped in the fulfilment of our dream of a friendly and safe community.
- The Bethel Chapel elders for always making the Chapel available for GarsCom meetings and other activities.
- Mr Reinhard van Wyk of Van Wyk & Vennote for auditing the GarsCom Residents Association.
- Messrs. Anthony and Dub Boshoff of Property Shop for making their boardroom available for meetings.
- Tessa Moller, Annemarie Schoeman, Ane vd Walt, Corrie Els and Laetitia Bottyan for their precise and faithful work of writing, proof-reading and editing the weekly news. They are also assisted by Phoebe Machere.
- All the patrollers for keeping our streets safe night and day and the patrol coordinators that make sure that their teams are tops about their shifts.
- The many volunteers who organize community events and gatherings.
- All street WhatsApp administrators and back up administrators for making sure that all members of their streets are well informed about security and other community news.
- GarsCom Facebook administrators, Wilna Barnard, Shani Kotze and Venessa Roelofse who keep a watchful eye on the Facebook and manage the new applications.
- Ilana van der Merwe who keeps the website up to date and sends out our weekly email messages.
- Those community members who make financial contributions towards making our streets clean.
- To the many people who are always willing to avail their knowledge, skills and time to GarsCom and their fellow residents and
- All those residents who have contributed financially or otherwise to ensure that GarsCom is such a safe, open, friendly and involved community.

We give glory and honour to our Heavenly Father for His protection throughout the year and for granting us the grace of friendship. May the bond of friendship continue to bind the community of GarsCom together.

Carol van Niekerk

May 2020