

The Hoekwil & Touwsranten Community Dialogue met on the evening of the 22nd of March 2023 for the fifteenth time.

SAPS representatives were unable to join the meeting this time.

Guests from Wilderness Heights and SAHARA joined the discussion.

SAHARA is an NGO in George that provides support for people struggling with substance abuse.

There were 27 participants, which makes this one of the biggest meetings to-date.



SAHARA →

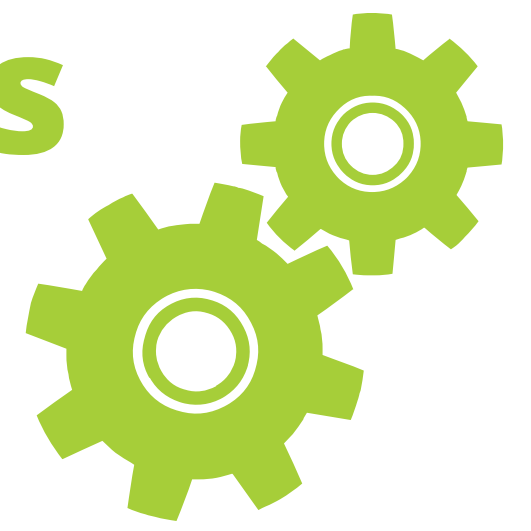
Welcoming and Framing

The participants and guests from Wilderness Heights were welcomed and reminded of the language policy. Ros reminded us of the dialogue's successes that include the community market; the community vegetable garden started by Sharon Fisher-Buys; increased safety on the path between Hoekwil and Touwsranten and most importantly, the two communities have come together and are talking to each other.

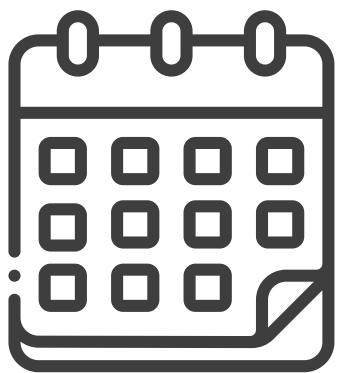


The mission of the dialogue is to create an inclusive community with the aim to find common ground, build trust & establish a safe, secure & economically prosperous environment for all.

How the Dialogue Works



They meet, take action and report back to the dialogue



The dialogue meets monthly to get feedback from these groups and build relationships. Some of these groups are struggling to get momentum and may not be sustainable. We will re-visit this as we move forward.

The dialogue remains accountable to the community by sharing detailed reports about each meeting on the WhatsApp group.



Introduction

The dialogue practices the value of deep democracy. This means that people are encouraged to express their opinions, even if they are unpopular.

We went around the circle, everyone saying their name and a value they would practice in the meeting. Participants also chose a value that they felt might be difficult for them and explained why.



Updates

Market Group

The market group had scheduled a meeting for the week after the dialogue meeting to plan for the next market.



SAPS

While the SAPS was unable to attend the meeting the dialogue was informed that there had been very few burglaries and that the levels of crime in the community were not high.

Community Clean Up



Simon reported that a skip was placed in the informal settlement of Touwsrante, and as agreed in a previous meeting, the community was responsible for cleaning up the rubbish in the area. The clean-up still needs to be completed; however, an agreement was reached with the municipality to assist in picking up trash. Since the municipality had not yet kept this agreement, Simon committed to checking in with them.



Safety Concerns Due to Lack of Toilets



It was brought to the attention of the dialogue that there are people living in Begonia Street without toilet facilities; this forced them to use the bushes, which is dangerous at night. Chandré and Chris (chair of the Hoekwil Ratepayers Association) were taken to see the problem by Simon. Chandré took photographs of the broken toilets and wrote to the municipality requesting an urgent intervention to reduce the risk of gender-based violence, address the lack of dignity that comes with having to use the bushes as a toilet, and address the health risks. The letter also noted that the existing broken toilet structures were used by drug addicts, and that this posed a safety risk for people living nearby.

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Community Dialogue



The municipality responded quickly and agreed to meet with the people living in the informal houses on the corner of Begonia Street to discuss a way forward. This meeting was attended by people living in Begonia Street, Chandré, Simon and Marlene Viljoen. Patrick Buys observed. Three people from the municipality attended under the leadership of Wendy Mentor

It was agreed that:



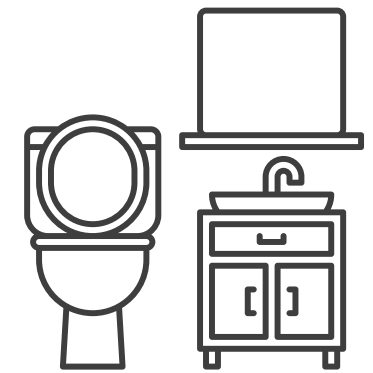
The municipality will survey the households to find out how many people are living in the houses on the corner of Begonia Street, and to assess their needs.



Four toilets will be built and a tap and basin put in place. A tender has already been awarded and the municipality is waiting for the health and safety check to be done.



The grass around the existing toilets would be cut and the broken toilets de-commissioned.



It was further agreed that the community would form a committee and create a WhatsApp group for further communication with the municipality.



Updates

Skateboard Ramp

The half-pipe which had been made available for skateboarding was inspected by Alan and an engineer. They found that it will have to be cut into at least two pieces; in order for the parts to be moved a rig will be needed. A request was made to the municipality for the ramp to be placed on the sportsfield. We are waiting for feedback from Mr Damons.



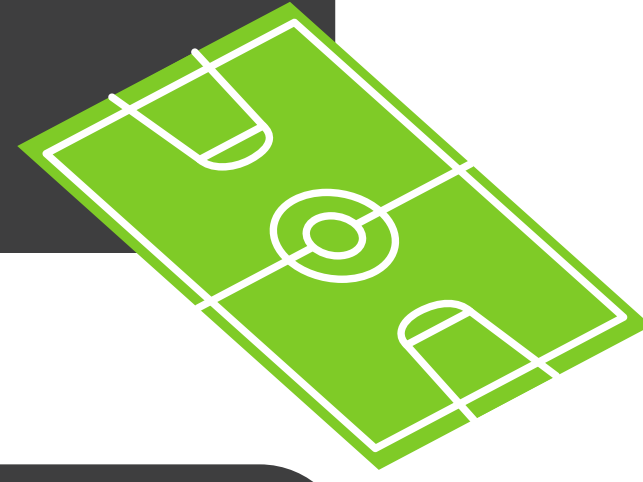
Outdoor Gym

Morné got measurements for the outdoor gym from Van Kervel school and provided a document with all the details of what is needed to make the gym. He took photos of each piece of equipment that can be made. The school is willing to assist in building the gym.



"Old" Sportsfield

Public Works owns this land but were unaware of this. The dialogue has yet to decide what the next steps will be regarding cleaning and using the land.



Mapping out land with opportunities

A suggestion was raised to look into using the triangle of land at the entrance of Touwsrante as a recreational facility as it has high visibility. Wilmi volunteered to check with the town planner whether the land was available or designated for anything. She found that the land is zoned for business.

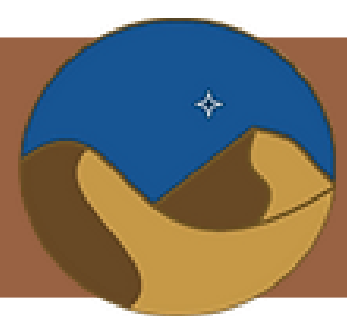
Emerging Issues: Fees for using Sportsfield



A concern was raised that sports teams that do not belong to a league have to pay a fee of R2500 in order to use the field. While people are allowed to practice for free, this presents a challenge, especially for people working with kids who cannot afford this fee. It was also mentioned that this lack of access places the field at risk of being vandalised as people are frustrated.

There is also no security at the field despite the municipality saying there should be. In response to a question about whether this issue should be left to the sports committee or taken on by the dialogue, it was proposed that the dialogue engages the sports committee so they can endorse a letter to be sent to the municipality requesting a meeting to get clarification regarding this policy. Chandré Gould was mandated by the dialogue to write the letter with Jeemon's assistance. The letter will be shared with the sports committees by Ros, Jeemon and Simon, before it is sent.

SAHARA



Herman Reuters shared information about the Planet Youth programme. This programme is funded by the Department of Health and UCT. The purpose is to reduce substance abuse by young people. So far, 12 high schools have been surveyed with 7000 learners from grades 8 & 9 having answered the questionnaire. They asked young people about their lives, mental health, hobbies and sexual activity. A report will be shared with the dialogue and others in about two months' time.

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Hoekwil & Touwsrante

Community Dialogue



They Found That:

More than 50% of learners drink alcohol

Learners who do sports drink less alcohol

Learners whose parents spent time with them and those whose parents disapproved of alcohol are less likely to drink

These findings will be presented to schools and the municipality in meetings where an assessment of the results will be done. They will also identify community programmes that can assist in addressing the issues identified.

Re-Assessing the Agenda

At this stage in the meeting we had to make choices about what we wanted to discuss, given that we only had a few more minutes before the scheduled end of the meeting.

Three options were:

- Accountability to the Dialogue
- Choosing projects to work on together
- Lack of maintenance of a graveyard

A unanimous decision was made to discuss accountability. It was also proposed that for future meetings people should suggest items for the agenda ahead of the meetings on the WhatsApp group for consideration by the convening team before meetings.

Accountability to the Dialogue

It is important to think of our actions outside the dialogue, what we say and how we say it when acting on behalf of the dialogue. It was agreed that there is an expectation for people to practice the values of the dialogue not only in the meetings, but outside the dialogue as well.

At our previous meeting, members felt the dialogue needed to be more visible in the community. In response to this, T-shirts could be made for the dialogue. This raises the question of how people who wear the T-shirt represent the dialogue and what that means for how they behave. In light of this, participants were asked to respond to the prompt: "When I think of how we act outside of the dialogue, I envision..."

Commitment and Courage were sighted as necessary. People need to be courageous and committed to what the dialogue stands for. One has to have the courage to conduct themselves according to the values of the dialogue. An example was not using violence as it is something the dialogue stands against.

Not everyone agreed with this. One person felt that the dialogue could not and should not dictate how people behave outside of the dialogue. Others felt that when you act on behalf of the dialogue or as a participant in the dialogue you have to be conscious of your actions and whether they align with the values of the dialogue. Another example was that if the dialogue is behind a process to clean up rubbish, then it would not be ok for a participant in the dialogue to go out of a meeting and throw a chip packet on the ground.





It became clear that there are very different opinions about what is required to be accountable to the dialogue and about what violence is and whether it is justifiable to use violence in some instances.

Since there was still a lot to discuss and unpack, it was agreed that we would give this issue most of the time at the next meeting. It was also agreed that, if there was time, at the next meeting the dialogue will choose one project that we can work on together.



**The next Dialogue to be held on the 19th of April 2023
at the Community Hall in Touwsranteen**



Attendees List

Sheila Majola

Angelo Paulson

Andisiwe Makwecana

Roslynn Damons

Sharon Fisher-Buys

Simon Mtshotana

Denzel De Swardt

Senzekile Bengu

Sharon Appels

Chandré Gould

Angie Baardman

Austin Mkadayenda

Jinnifer Isaacs

Matthew Obel

Muzilene November

Jeemon Adams

Hermaus Hufke

Salmein Jumat

Jasmine Van Rooyan

Collin Wildeman

Chris Krizinger

Herman Reuter

Dullin Appels

Patrick Buys

Magdalena Slinger

Gert Louene

Wilmi Dippenaar

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