

# Mutual Heights

14 Darling Street, Cape Town  
<http://www.mutualheights.net>

## News from your Trustees

Edition 35

29 February 2016

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Dear Fellow Owner,

We have several things to report, and things that you may wish to think about ... I will try to be brief.

### Christmas party

Some of you may remember that we promised to re-institute our annual Christmas Party when the litigation was done. We have a 'task team' working on the details (!) but now you need to note the date: **23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016**. Why not diarise it now? We will be inviting owners and residents to attend.

### Deploying the settlement funds

First, you will be pleased to hear that the settlement funds from Old Mutual are received and safely banked in a 'call' account. That gives us the best available interest (on which we will have to pay tax, of course). Unless our strategy has to change for unexpected reasons in the future, the settlement funds are **reserved solely for work on the waterproofing of the building**. They will not be used to defray operational costs that must still be paid for from the levy income.

Trustees have agreed to deploy about one third of the funds over the next year (or two), completing the renewal of the joints in the granite exterior and renewing the vertical flashings that protect the vertical joints between the window frames and the granite exterior. This will deal with the most pervasive and troublesome damp problems and we expect that the renewed joints will keep us dry for at least 10-15 years. We are using the most modern silicon sealant, under the guidance of the supplier, and it should perform very much better than the urethane sealant that was used at the time of the conversion project.

The remaining funds will be allowed to accumulate interest, but they will be available for other ad-hoc or emergency work, as needed. Hopefully, when the joints need renewal again (perhaps in 15-20 years, depending on which elevation, and the vagaries of the climate?) there will be sufficient funds still in place to undertake that work all over again. That is the prospect that we are faced with.

### Budget and levy increase

Owners will have received details of the new budget and levy allocation from the management office, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Starting with the 2015 budget figures, trustees and management reviewed every line item and applied increases based on known or estimated costs for the coming year.

Three factors stood out in the discussions, for me:

- First, maintenance and other operational items have been severely squeezed in recent years (in order to pay for the legal and other services that we needed to deal with the damp), and there is now a long list of maintenance items (at least 143 – check the web site for details) that now need to be dealt with.
- Second, municipality and other non-negotiable costs will continue to rise at a rate above inflation, and they have to be fully provided for. See the note about the water situation, below.
- Third, our reserves now have to meet mandated levels (there is new legislation about that) and some levy income has to be diverted to the reserve fund.

This is the background to the levy increase of 8%. Being concerned about this, I asked once more for a survey comparing levy rates across comparable buildings in the CBD, and I am pleased to be able to confirm that we are *still* running at almost exactly the average level, despite the heritage nature of the building and the significant costs we have had to bear ahead of the settlement.

And now to more mundane but still important matters ...

### Water restrictions

The water shortage is now an extremely serious matter. In some rural but densely populated areas dams are expected to be unusable in a matter of a few weeks. The office has circulated a note

indicating that there will be additional charges if we do not reduce water usage. We have posted notices giving tips to save water, please think about this every time you turn on a tap.

## Recycling

In the same vein, let's try to be responsible citizens in all possible ways. Do please remember that we have recycling bins in the garage, diametrically opposite the garage door on the ground level. You will see posters about that, as well.

## Website/fibre data service

In my previous newsletter I promised that I would circulate a survey looking at our internet services and the use of the web site. A paper copy of the form is attached, or you can [complete the survey online here](#) – doing it online would save us a lot of time so please take that option if you can. The link is also provided on the web site.

## Angle valves

We still have occasional crises of water flooding arising from broken 'angle valves' (see the photo for an example). These small valves are under your hand basins and kitchen sinks, usually with a flexible pipe going on to the tap (or perhaps to the toilet cistern). When you need to isolate a tap because it is leaking, the odds are you reach for the angle valve; when you find that it does not turn you go for your pipe wrench (or your personal equivalent!) and apply force: the angle valve collapses in a small pile of broken plastic (yes, they are *not* metal they are plastic) and you have mains-pressure water issuing forth, all over your apartment and the apartments below you.

*This is an angle valve:*



PLEASE consider getting a plumber in to change them for you, if you have not done so already. If you are not willing to do that, at least would you PLEASE make sure you know where your main supply stop-cock is, and ensure that it is accessible in an emergency. Thank you.

## Noise/door slamming

Can I remind everyone that noise, especially at night, is really distressing for people who need their sleep? In particular, when apartment doors are slammed (or allowed to slam in the wind) we have a totally avoidable nuisance.

We have been investigating door closers that prevent slamming. They are available, but only from the Netherlands (so far as we can see) and they are expensive. We cannot consider fitting them to all apartment doors, but if specific residents cause a nuisance in this way we may insist that they are fitted, at the owner's expense.

Please respect other's need for peace and quiet. Go and read the "[How to be a good neighbour in Mutual Heights](#)" page again!

With warm regards,  
on behalf of the Trustees,



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

[info@mutualheights.net](mailto:info@mutualheights.net)  
<http://www.mutualheights.net>

Check out "Mutual Building" on Wikipedia:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual\\_Building](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_Building)

## Mutual Heights - 2016 Internet and Web site survey

This survey is intended to take a fresh look at the internet services to our building, and the way in which we use the community web site. There are two sections: first, Internet services to the building, and second, our community web site.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey.

**\*Required**

1. **What is your unit number? \***

\_\_\_\_\_

2. **In what capacity are you responding to this survey? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Owner
- Occupier
- Agent
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Internet services

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Optical fibre based services are now available in the CBD, offering much higher speeds and more bandwidth, possibly at a higher price.

3. **Do you use the Internet services provided by Dynacom at Mutual Heights, or do you have a third party service such as Telkom? \***

*Tick all that apply.*

- Yes, I use the Dynacom service
- No, I use Telkom
- No, I use another third party service

4. **Do you have any comments on why you chose the service that you are using now?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. **There are now optical fibre services available in the Cape Town CBD. Are you interested in using fibre services? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

6. **What two benefits would you MOST expect from fibre services? \***

*Tick all that apply.*

- Lower costs
- Faster speed
- More bandwidth
- More reliability
- More convenience
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. **What are you currently paying for internet services in Rands per month (approximately)? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- < 200
- 200 >< 500
- 500 >< 1000
- 1000 >< 2000
- 2000 >< 5000
- > 5000

8. Would you be prepared to pay more? Please help by explaining your feelings about this.

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9. Imagine that you were offered a package of services: 1) a telephone service, 2) a phone, 3) DSTV connectivity and 3) a router - all for R150 per month - and uncapped, unshaped data at 10 megs-bits-per-second for an additional R500 per month - would you be interested?

You would have to pay extra for your DSTV bouquet. 10 mbps is about ten to twenty times faster than you got when Broad Band started.

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

## Mutual Heights community web site

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The web site has been running for years, and is simple but functional. It's time to reflect on whether it can be improved.

10. How often do you access the Mutual Heights community web site ([www.mutualheights.net](http://www.mutualheights.net)) \*

Mark only one oval.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Never
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. What features of the web site have you used? \*

Tick all that apply.

- The news items on the front page
- Information about the building
- Accessing the newsletters
- Accessing the information pages
- Checking the page on payment procedures
- Looking at the photographs
- Looking for useful contacts and links
- Informing myself about scams
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

12. What additional features of the web site do you want? \*

Tick all that apply.

- Record of maintenance repairs
- Record of security incidents
- Minutes of relevant meetings
- Notification of AGM and other meetings
- Notification of Filming and other activities
- Diary information
- Community activities
- Discussion pages to talk about shared issues
- Links to other web sites
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Please make any other comments about what kind of information and services you would like to have added to the web site

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14. **If we switched to a social networking site such as Facebook in order to maintain our community information, which ones would you suggest, and what would they offer that we need?**

If you would NOT want us to do this for any reason, please say so.

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### **That's it - thank you!**

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15. **If you are willing to help trustees with either of these initiatives, please indicate below and make sure that you provide contact information \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

16. **If you would like to be involved, or just in touch with us about these things, please provide your email address or cell number \***

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