

MAGALIESSIG

Action Forum

MAF - Working for a better and safer suburb

MAF ANNUAL REPORT 2016 -2017

Presented at AGM, 8 November 2017

INTRODUCTION: Mary Hanna

Magaliessig Action Forum (MAF) was formed in early 2010 when residents learnt of plans to build a Makro super-store in Magaliessig. MAF has evolved into a residents association and attends to many other important aspects that affect the lives of Magaliessig residents. It has been another extremely busy year and we endeavour to maintain and improve our suburb of Magaliessig. The work undertaken is divided into specific portfolios and we sincerely thank and greatly appreciate the Portfolio Leaders and Committee Members (all of whom work in a totally voluntary capacity) for their efforts on behalf of the Magaliessig community.

In order to maintain the significance of this report it covers the period from AGM to AGM i.e. November 2016 to November 2017 and does not follow the financial year – 1 March to 28 February

WARD COUNCILLOR: Mary Hanna

As reported last year Magaliessig is now in Ward 93 and falls into Region A which is centred on Midrand. Previously we were in Region E which fell into Sandton. Our Ward Councillor is Candice James who is enthusiastic, hardworking and committed to service. We have frequent meetings with Candice and monthly inspections of Magaliessig are carried out by MAF and our Ward Inspector, Banele Yebo. Banele, logs problems we observe with CoJ such as potholes; trees needing trimming; broken drain and storm water covers; rubble on sidewalks etc. Banele follows up on all the problems and “chases” the appropriate section of CoJ. This is a huge task, undertaken for each suburb within Ward 93. We greatly appreciate the work carried out by Banele on behalf of residents of Magaliessig.

MAKRO – BUILDERS WAREHOUSE: Mary Hanna

MAF has been fighting the proposed development of a Makro super-store in Magaliessig for almost 8 years – since February 2010. It has been a protracted and gruelling battle which we have WON. A number of meetings have been held with Guy Hayward, CEO of Massmart, and other senior executives, commencing in September 2016. Following the first two meetings, we were informed that the Makro would not be built in Magaliessig, but in Riversands Commercial Park, adjacent to Diepsloot. This was a suggestion made by MAF in 2010. Construction commenced in May 2017 and the new store is opening in late November 2017.

However, the WAR continues, as Massmart and Massbuild wish to relocate the Pineslopes Builders Warehouse to Magaliessig on the front northern portion of the land originally planned for Makro. They propose to sell the rear, southern portion for residential development.

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More meetings have taken place and there has been correspondence between Massmart and MAF. All of which have been extremely courteous.

There has been compromise on both sides, but agreement has not been reached on access.

MAF has continually stated there must be NO access of any sort to the site from Leslie Ave/Merrow Lane. This is a non-negotiable as far as MAF and residents are concerned.

Massmart stipulates that customer access will be from Leslie Ave/Merrow Lane but truck deliveries will be from Bradfield Drive, off Monte Casino Boulevard. Hence the war continues.

The legal process to take the Gauteng MEC of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Rural Development decision to uphold the Makro appeal on review will continue. CoJ also filed to go on review and we have now been advised by CoJ attorneys and MAF's attorney that the process should be combined and a consolidated document dealing with all the issues be presented in court so the matter could be argued at one time. This will speed the process up when we finally get to court and reduce the costs.

Massmart/Massbuild will not be able to construct a Builders Warehouse while all this is pending. The legal procedures may take a number of years.

MAF will continue to do everything legitimate in its power to protect the residential area of Magaliessig and its surrounds from the unwelcome and intrusive establishment of an inappropriate development such as a Builders Warehouse.

The continued support of concerned residents is crucial to ultimate success in this matter.

This has been a long and difficult process so far and is set to continue for a number of years. We are extremely fortunate to have had the support of our different experts: legal, road engineer, town planner, and market research professional who have all advised and assisted us.

Our attorney, Patrick Mundell, has been exceptional throughout this process. How fortunate for MAF that Patrick believes so fervently in justice and is as passionate about this issue as we are. Apart from time spent on preparation for hearings and attendance at hearings, Patrick has advised us on all legal aspects in this matter since Oct 2012 on a *pro bono* basis. His generosity to us is boundless.

CCTV: Mike Hogan

As mentioned last year, we cannot afford to expand the coverage of the cameras as we are barely breaking even and in some months have made a loss.

Unless the number of contributors increases, we will have to raise the debit order and EFT collections to R120 per month or close the project down.

We have added number-plate recognition cameras to the three entrance/exit points to Magaliessig, which incurs extra monitoring costs and this has caused additional strain.

During the last year, we ended our relationship with TRSS who no longer collect debit orders on our behalf – this function has been taken over by Sage Pay who specialise in this type of work and the change has been beneficial.

A decision as to whether the project continues or ceases will be taken early next year.

SECURITY: Steve Appleton

Magaliessig is located in the Douglasdale SAPS Sector 4 policing area. This sector covers a large area that includes the suburbs of Magaliessig, Blue Heaven, Fourways, Norscot, Lonehill, Beverley, Pineslopes and Douglasdale east of Douglas Drive. It also includes a number of major shopping and business centres including Design Quarter, Merrow Down Plaza, Montecasino, Pineslopes, Fourways, Fourways Crossing, Leaping Frog and Lonehill.

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From a policing perspective, the Magaliessig suburb area includes the Montecasino and Design Quarter centres. Due to the nature of those centres, once again the large number of “theft out of motor vehicles” distorts the statistical picture of crime in our suburb.

Earlier in the year we recorded several residential burglaries in the suburb. The usefulness of the cameras was proven when the perpetrators of one such intrusion were apprehended a while later in Randburg when their distinctive vehicle captured on one of our cameras was spotted.

Of very recent concern is what seems to be a variation of the “follow-home” robbery wherein female victims are held up in shopping centre parking garages. The targets are jewellery and personal valuables. Once again it must be emphasized that this type of crime is not necessarily suburb-specific. We must appeal to you all to be aware of following vehicles (not necessarily the one immediately behind but also those 2 or more cars further back), especially when ending your journey and particularly if you are obviously wearing valuables. If you are unsure, take some unexpected detours to check if you are being followed or alternatively divert to a very public place.

As said last year, by far the largest contributor to crime in the sector is “theft out of motor vehicles”. This is because, despite constant appeals, people still leave valuable items on show in their vehicles when travelling or parking. Nothing has changed in this regard. Magaliessig is still blessed with three of the area’s worst hot-spots, Main and Witkoppen, Main and Robin, William Nicol and Leslie. Be careful when traversing these intersections: opportunistic criminals are indistinguishable from the benign beggars and vendors that also inhabit these places. MAF constantly brings such crimes to the notice of SAPS, but because those criminals are opportunistic and move around, this is a difficult crime to combat.

MAF still believes that, beyond residents providing their own individual property security, the suburb needs area security in order to make it safer for residents especially whilst out and about. Identifying listed vehicles and tracking movements in the public space provides an important first layer of security by reducing unrecorded attempts to access residents’ properties.

To provide this top-most layer, MAF still believes that a camera surveillance system, backed up by a patrol and response vehicle is the best and most practical way of securing Magaliessig. Sadly, due to on-going apathy on the part of most residents, the camera system is still less effective than it could be due to too few cameras and the lack of a dedicated response vehicle.

After several years as Magaliessig’s representative on the Douglasdale Community Policing Forum’s Sector 4 committee, I am moving on. Jeff Goutier is taking my place as your representative.

A decision as to whether the CCTV project continues or ceases will be taken early next year.

Roads: Mike Hogan

Last year we spoke about the need to widen the traffic circle at Design Quarter and the feed-in lane at William Nicol and Leslie Ave going up (southwards) towards the highway - none of this has happened to date and it is frustrating dealing with Provincial and Municipal officials for whom no sense of urgency exists.

Linked to this is the repeated call for speed humps as a traffic control measure but this will not happen any time soon and possibly alternative measures will prove just as useful - warning signs with flashing lights on sharp bends etc. or plastic rumble strips.

Road closures have also been mooted, instigated by concerned and interested residents - MAF identified three potential sites and provided estimated costs, at which point the enthusiasm melted away.

A few interested people came forward, but they received no support whatsoever from their affected neighbours. As a result MAF has declined to drive the project further - we will however be willing to

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facilitate the process should the residents in one of the potential sites be prepared to drive and organise the project themselves

FIBRE TO THE HOME (FTTH): Mike Hogan

We are all aware of the excavation of the sidewalks in Magaliessig by MetroFibre Network which has laid what is called the fibre backbone throughout Magaliessig.

Suddenly in April 2017, gum poles were being erected all over Magaliessig. Investigations by Candice James revealed that Vumatel were installing aerial fibre “following a public participation process at which it had been explained to residents.” Because there had not been a public participation process and there were numerous complaints from residents, Candice stopped Vumatel from continuing work and called a public meeting, held towards the end of May. Vumatel made a confused presentation, all present were angry and said they didn’t want aerial fibre. A survey was carried out by MAF and Little Fourways Village of all Magaliessig residents and the overwhelming response was that the poles must be removed, as after all the trenching that had taken place throughout the suburb for underground fibre, it was unnecessary, unwanted and unwarranted to have aerial fibre strung along gum poles. The poles were removed in August 2017.

The installation of underground fibre to stand-alone homes and complexes is proceeding.

COMMERCIAL CREEP AND ILLEGAL DEVELOPMENTS: Mary Hanna

Commercial Creep continues to threaten our residential suburb in several directions and a considerable amount of time and effort has been spent on a number of issues – over and above the Makro/Builders Warehouse situation.

The Bulk LP Gas Storage Tanks:

Set up illegally on the site situated on the western intersection of Witkoppen and Main Rds, they were removed on 17 November 2016 (3 days after our last AGM!). It took over 2 years for the CoJ Planning Tribunal ruling, made in July 2014, that the gas tanks must be removed immediately, to be complied with. The tanks, shipping containers containing petrol and diesel pumps and tractors were relocated to the corner of Main and McGillivray Roads, Glenferness. The residents of that area are up in arms and are now embroiled in a similar process to the one we endured. MAF has sent information regarding our fight to GECKO, the residents association for the area.

The other illegal businesses are still on the property on Witkoppen and Main Rds and continue operating due to delays caused by the site owner opposing legal actions instituted by CoJ Planning Law Enforcement.

The owner of this site applied to CoJ in June 2017 for permission to establish a township on the property. The Township would comprise of dwelling units, shops, places of refreshment and offices. The residents of the adjacent residential complex have strongly objected to the proposed development on numerous grounds: due process was not followed re Public Participation Process; unacceptable increase in traffic; access to the Township is projected through the adjacent secure complex which has been walled and gated for over 20 years; residents security and safety will be compromised etc.

Objectors, after numerous enquiries, recently received the following note from CoJ Manager for Land Use Development:

“The application was returned to Registration for legal non-compliance. The applicant was advised that the application has lapsed in terms of section 102 of the ordinance. We therefore have no application under consideration”

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The heat is off for the moment, but due to long experience with the owner, it is expected that this threat will rise again.

Illegal Advertising Balloon on Golf Driving Range

MAF has been in constant contact with CoJ Outdoor Advertising personnel who have been most helpful and cooperative regarding this matter since the balloon was installed and inflated during Easter weekend 2016. A court order was served for removal in April, but Aerial Displays filed an objection. After meetings and much correspondence with CoJ, Aerial Displays withdrew their objection to the court order and were going to apply for permission for the balloon. MAF organised a petition, supported by a large number of residents, against the balloon remaining. The time allowed for the application lapsed and CoJ were going to instruct the Sheriff to deflate and remove the balloon. But divine Intervention played a part! The huge storm in Magaliessig in October caused the balloon to deflate and break free from its cables, and it landed on the N1 highway. It was miraculous that there wasn't an accident and no one was injured. This was cheaper and quicker than going to court again!

Doggy Day Care and Boarding Facility and Cattery

On the lower portion of the Golf Driving Range bordered by Sangster and Main Road. Planning permission has not been granted for this business and it is illegal, although it is very well constructed, clean and tidy and of service to the community. CoJ attorneys have served founding affidavits (notice of motion) of their intention to institute legal proceedings for non-compliance with the city's by laws.

We recognise that development is absolutely vital for our city, but believe there must be some controls to prevent total chaos. Surely this is why CoJ has by-laws? We find it astounding that these by-laws are continually being ignored and flouted with apparent total impunity. As MAF we have undertaken the responsibility to protect and preserve the residential nature of Magaliessig, in line with CoJ policy for our area of "no further non-residential intrusion into residential areas" for the benefit of all who live here.

GENERAL: Mary Hanna

Alwyn Smith has carried out the secretarial duties of MAF with great diligence and enthusiasm and we thank her for her dedication. We are extremely grateful to Merrow Down Country Club Body Corporate for their consideration in allowing MAF to hold our regular committee meetings on the premises and making their facilities freely available to us. It would be difficult to find another venue as attractive and convenient as Merrow Down.

My personal thanks go to the MAF committee members for their assistance, hard work, commitment and dedication throughout the year and together, with the support of the community, we look forward to a successful year ahead.

Mary Hanna

Chairman

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