

SOMERSET WEST COMMUNITY POLICE FORUM

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

GENERAL MEETING HELD IN THE SOMERSET WEST LIBRARY HALL
ON 10 NOVEMBER 2009 AT 19H00

1. PRESENT

As per Attendance Register. Apologies were received from JP Smith, Peter Kinnaird, Stuart Pringle.

2. Opening and Welcome

The Chairman, Andrew Cosmopoulos, welcomed all present.

3. Confirmation of Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 17 December 2008.

The Chairman told the meeting that the Minutes of the previous AGM were available on the table at the back of the hall, together with the agenda for this meeting and the Record of Proceedings from the public meeting of 8 September 2009, which were also posted on the CPF website www.somersetwestcpf.org.za. The confirmation of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17 December 2008 was proposed by Ald Gisela Jespersen and seconded by Tony Van Minnen.

4. Address by Steynsrust Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) re radio system

A radio network has been established which currently has the CPF, Heldervue Watch, Steynsrust Watch, Helena Heights, 2 security companies, SAPS to have a radio in the Sector vehicle, OPS room and at least 30 radios on the network and growing to cover the farms and Raithby. The network will cover a circumference to include Somerset Mall, Gants Centre, Golden Acre, Erinvale, Helena Heights, Helderberg, Raithby, Schoongezicht and back to the Mall. Anyone interested in the project should contact the administrators through a CPF member directly or via the website.

5. Crime overview

Inspector Fleischmann gave a brief review, stating that crime had increased during the past three months. There were two murders (one in Sir Lowry's Pass, of 7 year old girl, one in S/West, of elderly resident murdered by Zimbabwean gardener). Aggravated robbery had increased 100%, this included car-jacking and house robberies, and was of great concern. The most common crime was housebreaking, also a 100% increase, and all areas were affected, from SLP to Raithby – this was a huge problem and residents needed to step up their vigilance and home security. Theft of motor vehicles was on the rise, as well as theft out of motor vehicles (54%). In answer to a question concerning hotspots, Insp Fleischmann said that there were no particular hotspots, as all areas were being targeted. He recommended that more Neighbourhood Watches be initiated, as these were most effective against criminals.

6. Chairman's Annual Report (Mr Andrew Cosmopoulos)

Mr Cosmopoulos said that the past year had been very difficult for the Committee as there had been no formal handover and we had had to find out how things worked ourselves. Our administrative grant of R3 850 had finally been received from the Dept. of Community Safety at the end of August 2009. He said that communication was key, and to this end the CPF had started a website, www.somersetwestcpf.org.za, where the community could obtain information, contact numbers for the Sector vehicles, emergency numbers, etc. He thanked Alastair Shand, the Webmaster, for his work in running the website and keeping it updated daily. He also thanked Helderberg Crime Watch for their sponsorship, and urged residents to make use of the website.

The Sir Lowry's Pass (SLP) Sub Forum had been a problem. A committee had been elected in January 2009 but the members had gradually all dropped out and, with the help of SAPS, a new committee was elected on 21 September 2009. The SLP Sub Forum was now headed by Mr Colin Williams, who was also the Co-ordinator of the Mission Grounds NHW.

The Garden Village Sub Forum had ceased to function earlier in the year and the CPF had tried to garner support for new elections through the media, flyers, loudhailers, etc. Two meetings had been arranged at the Gordon High School and residents of Garden Village, Paardevlei, Helderzicht and Victoria Park had been invited to attend and start a new Sub Forum which could cover all four areas. The response had been extremely poor, with less than ten members of the public attending. A new approach would be implemented in the New Year.

The CPF had instigated meetings between SAPS and the security companies, chaired by the CPF, which had led to weekly meetings where information was shared. The CPF was also involved with the Neighbourhood Watches and was kept informed of what was happening all the time via radio communications. Residents who were interested in starting NHW's in their areas were welcome to contact him.

7. Station Commissioner's Annual Report (Snr Supt M A Williams)

Snr Supt Williams delivered her report (copy attached). She said that the challenge was to break up the 3 large Sectors into smaller Sectors, but this would need increased personnel and the support of the community. Crime had increased in all categories, and the Station's Operational Plan had to be constantly reviewed to keep pace with the changing situation. Snr Supt Williams listed the various projects that SAPS had implemented during the year (see attached report). The Victim Support Room had been upgraded thanks to Hilda Lourens and her team, with the support of business and the community, and she invited the public to visit the facility. Alcohol and drug abuse were rife in the whole area and were the main causes of crime in the community. There were also a lot of shebeens in the area, in Garden Village, Chris Nissen Park and SLP; SAPS did shebeen control and policing, used search warrants etc. Legal pubs in S/West presented problems, generating a lot of complaints about fighting and drugs. It was important that the public give statements to forward to the Liquor Board in order to take action against them and review their operating conditions and hours. Drunken driving was a serious offence which was being addressed, with the assistance of the Traffic Dept., 124 people had been arrested since the beginning of the year. Vehicle checkpoints were also held to investigate trafficking of drugs and other crimes.

There was currently an excellent working relationship with the CPF. A meeting had been held with the SLP Sub Forum and shebeen owners in SLP and they would continue to engage the SLP community on issues affecting them. It was hoped to have another election in the Garden Village/Helderzicht/Paardevlei/V Park area next year as only two members remained active of the original Sub Forum.

Supt Williams thanked the community for bringing information to the police and said that some good arrests had been made during the year. There had also been disappointments, when members had been found guilty, complaints about service delivery, etc., but SAPS Somerset West would strive to uphold their vision and to bring all perpetrators to book. She thanked the CPF members and the SAPS members for their support and wished everyone a peaceful Festive Season.

8. Treasurer's Annual Report (Mr Tony van Minnen)

A copy of the Treasurer's Annual Report is attached hereto.

9. Address by Director Le Roux of Metro Police

Director Le Roux said that SAPS was under tremendous pressure and that Metro Police were there to support them. There ought to be 49 members for this region, but there were only 9 members to cover 6 Policing Precincts, including S/West, and they had all 6 Stations calling them.

They needed the public to come forward with information and point out hotspots. The Festive Season would stretch from 1 November until after the World Cup. They would focus on VCP's (Vehicle Checkpoints), speeding, beach ops, would be doing Joint Ops with Law Enforcement and Traffic. He asked the public for their co-operation during VCP's and roving roadblocks. The CPF could assist them with high visibility. He supplied a 24 hour number to call for Traffic Complaints – 086 076 5423.

The Chairman said that the CPF had met with a Traffic official to discuss issues pertaining to the Helderberg.

Law Enforcement was training 170 new recruits, 30 would be for the Helderberg.

10. Questions from the public

Question: Hawkers at busy intersections, 2 hotspots (N2/Victoria Rd and R44/Main Rd). They are well-organised and supplied, nothing gets done. What are you doing about it?

Reply: Dir Le Roux said that he agreed that they were well organised. If they were creating traffic problems then they could look at Joint Ops with Law Enforcement. Sgt de Milander said that they had held numerous ops there, had confiscated R400 000 worth of goods, done Joint Ops with Home Affairs, but the hawkers always came back. A resident said that they should take photos, gather evidence, do proper policing, deter the hawkers, or fine the public for buying from them. Mr Basson of Metro Law Enforcement said that they could focus on the problem. The Chairman remarked that Stellenbosch had a designated area for hawkers and that there was no selling at intersections there.

Question: Why did the Chairman not come to SLP when the 7 year old child was murdered?

Reply: Mr Cosmopoulos replied that he had been up country at the time but that the CPF did not consist of only one person, and 4 CPF members had been involved at the time, the Deputy Chairman had helped in the search and 3 other members had supplied sandwiches and cooldrinks to the search party.

Question: Does the Station Commissioner really recommend that residents walk the streets as part of NHW's without any security?

Reply: Snr Supt Williams said that she did not recommend that residents do patrols on their own, especially not on foot. The NHW's were part of a structure within the CPF, had to be registered and follow guidelines from the Dept of Community Safety, there was a certain protocol to follow. She agreed that there was risk involved, but said that they had made the choice to become involved. DOCS had indicated that they were currently looking at ways of protecting these volunteers. The Chairman said that the whole idea was to be "the eyes and ears" of the police and the motto was "Do Not Engage", instead they should call SAPS if they saw suspicious activity. Supt Williams said that unfortunately she didn't have enough police members to cover the wide area.

Question: A resident of Paardevlei said that he had 3 main problems; Dumping, loud music from cars, and tuckshops operating in the street which involved noise and crime. He had written to Gordon's Bay since 2007. Why does G/Bay phone back after 2 days and ask him to give a statement over the phone?

Reply: Dir Le Roux arranged that the complainant speak to Mr Basson after the meeting so that they could arrange for a Law Enforcement official to investigate.

Question: A resident of Garden Village said that drugs were a big problem. One street has 5 drug houses, young children buy drugs before school. When SAPS conducts raids, the neighbours hold the druglords and hide the stuff. The community wants SAPS to stop and search the rucksacks of Gordon High pupils. What are you going to do for the season, it is already bad before the season even begins? She also wanted to know why the Chairman did not come and see what went wrong when the Sub Forum dissolved.

Reply: Mr Cosmopoulos said that the CPF did have a meeting with the Sub Forum to discuss and solve problems but within a week the in-fighting had started all over again. It inevitably remains the responsibility of the community to bring forward their concerns and suggested solutions.

Question: A resident of Paardevlei said that the community kept quiet about the crime in their midst. Shebeens were allowed to operate in the suburbs, men did not take a leadership role and a lot of women had to stand in their place. People toy-toyed to get houses, then opened shebeens in the houses. We will never get crime down while shebeens are allowed. Stop shebeens in communities then crime will go down. There was a big problem with children returning from rehab, and no structure to assist them. What is being done about shebeens?

Reply: Snr Supt Williams acknowledged that drugs were a big problem in Garden Village. Of 209 cases investigated, 89 were from Garden Village. She said that parents were not taking responsibility for their children. Regarding shebeens, she said that they are there, we cannot wish them away. The by-laws prevented SAPS from seizing the liquor, as they would have to return it 2 days later. She also said that if the communities did not buy from the shebeens then they would not exist.

In reply to a suggestion that SAPS stop and search the backpacks of school pupils, Supt Williams said that SAPS could not stop and search people unless there was hard evidence, because of laws protecting them. John Kleyn asked why action could not be taken if the community knew where things were happening. Supt Williams said that their hands were tied; they currently had drug cases at court; the offenders must be caught in possession and SAPS must get permission to search. The Chairman said that it was a national problem in terms of the law.

Question: Is it true that one is not allowed to consume liquor in public?

Reply: Snr Supt Williams said that will become a part of the programme for the Festive Season.

The Chairman of the Heldervalley Community Forum said that everyone was singing complaining songs instead of working together. He said that Mr Cosmopoulos also had a family and could not be everywhere. He said that the harvest was big but the workers were few, and called on the residents of CNP, Garden Village and other

areas to come together and share workshops and help each other. Mr Cosmopoulos said that the problems were in the way South Africans dealt with each other, in the way we treat our families and treat our friends. A lot of it was due to the prevailing culture in SA.

10. Thanks and awards

The Chairman thanked SAPS, Snr Supt Williams, Supt Preston, Supt de Beer, Insp Fleischmann and the Sector Captains for their help during the year. He also thanked the CPF Executive Committee for their dedication and passion, Veta Schola, Helderberg Crime Watch and Jenna Viva for their sponsorship and prizes, and Alastair Shand, Webmaster for the CPF website, for his hard work.

Service certificates were presented to the following members of the community:

Johnny Brown, CPF Deputy Chairman, for his loyal service patrolling with SAPS members as a volunteer every weekend.

Jacqui Badenhorst, Kelly Bekker, Salomé Cilliers, John Kleyn, Wendy Oxley, Annetjie Robertson, Colin Williams:

For their untiring efforts in initiating and running Neighbourhood Watches in their suburbs. Colin Williams was praised for his hard work in running a Neighbourhood Watch in Mission Grounds, Sir Lowry's Pass, which involved foot patrols by residents, with a minimum of resources.

Beatrice Wiltshire presented the Chairman with an award certificate on behalf of the residents of Somerset West in appreciation of the tremendous amount of goodwill which had been built up towards the police over the past year.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 21h00 and those present were invited to stay for refreshments.

ANDREW COSMOPOULOS
CHAIRMAN
SOMERSET WEST CPF