

Grahamstown Business Forum 2015 Annual Report



Trevor Davies, Chair

1 Introduction

The GBF owes massive debt of gratitude to a number of recently retired members, Lu Boy, Alaric Heim, Thinus Swanepoel and Mike Bandey. Without their efforts, there would be no Grahamstown Business Forum and any successes which we enjoy are entirely due to their efforts. In addition to the recently retired chair and still current board member Eugene Repinz whose leadership and wise council have been invaluable, we salute and thank you.

2015/2016 has seen new board members in

- Richard Gaybba, Vice-chair
- Markus Mostert, Secretary and
- Chris Goldschagg, Treasurer.

In addition we have had Grahamstown Residents Association representation on the board in the form of Tim Bull whose tireless work is inspirational. We are also grateful to Cathy Gush who has played a role in helping us get our message out into the press.

2 Clean Grahamstown initiative

We have made huge strides with our clean Grahamstown campaign, focussing on “What can I do, rather than they must ...” Our partnering in these issues with Creative City and the GRA has had significant impact, and efforts in the year ahead are going to need to be focussed on how to sustain and build on this.

The parking guard issue has given rise to some severe challenges, and is going to require our ongoing help and commitment to try to get it to succeed as a service which improves the cleanliness, safety and efficiency of our CBD.

3 Relationship between foreign nationals

Whilst the GBF’s primary function is to improve the business environment in Grahamstown, we are often called on by role-players to assist in a crisis. A prime example of this occurred last year during the xenophobic violence which caught many by surprise.

The GBF sits on what is referred to as the “Joint Intelligence Structure”. This is a regional structure of the National Joint Intelligence Structure which reports directly to the President. The Joint Intelligence Structure basically consists of SAPS, SANDF, disaster management, local government,

the Department of Social Development, businesses and other role players. The structure is called upon in any emergency, disaster or security situation. The GBF's involvement in this structure directly benefits our members.

Led by Richard Gaybba, the specific tasks the GBF undertook over this period of xenophobic violence were:

- Arranging food, accommodation, and transport
- Establishing the Anti-Xenophobia group
- Liaising with the "foreign nationals" and role players
- Reintegration into the community
- Communicating with the relevant Embassies and High Commissions

Our view on the xenophobic violence, or any other violence for that matter, is that it is completely unacceptable. However, we are aware of the deeper issues involved which lead to the xenophobic violence in Grahamstown. It is our view that every business needs to be involved with development within the community in order to survive. Without this we just become "islands" within our own communities.

4 Business development

4.1 Sarah Baartman District Business Development Forum

In the beginning of 2014 the Grahamstown Business Forum participated in the activities of what was then called the Cacadu District Business Development Forum, a multi-level platform that sought to promote collaboration and partnership amongst local economic development stakeholders in the Sarah Baartman District Municipality. Aimed at promoting local economic growth, the project sought to elicit input from "captains of industry" in assisting local municipalities to clear bottlenecks inhibiting the development of new business ventures in the region. Since, for various reasons, this first attempt at establishing a District Business Development Forum was unsuccessful, the Sarah Baartman District Municipality in partnership with the National Department of Cooperative Governance re-launched the Sarah Baartman Business Development Forum (SBBDF), an event to which the GBF had been invited.

The overall objective of the DBDF is to drive and steer the local economic development agenda of the Sarah Baartman District Municipality (SBDM). Specific objectives of the DBDF are:

- To organise and bring together those who already "manage" the existing economic base (companies and institutions) in the area, through their trade and investment activities, into a structure that exclusively focuses on generating a manageable portfolio of Catalytic Business Ventures (CBVs)
- To identify and conduct a high level economic evaluation of these large-scale CBV
- To appoint a high-level project champion and team for each CBV, including representation from the private and public sector
- To conduct smart feasibility studies and develop cutting-edge business plans

- To ensure and oversee the implementation of the identified CBVs

A Catalytic Business Venture (CBV) may be defined as a large-scale private sector-led venture, the implementation of which will have a significant impact on economic growth and development in the Sarah Baartman District municipal area, most notably in terms of increasing employment and income generation.

At the re-launch meeting at Cape St Francis on 12 June 2015 each local municipality within the district municipality nominated three members to serve on a Local Leadership Group to represent the local municipalities on the District Leadership Group. Makana Municipality is represented on the District Business Development Forum by the Local Leadership Group comprising Xolani Ngcikhwe (primary representative), Albert Adam (NAFCOC representative) and Markus Mostert (Alternate representative). While the members of the Local Leadership Group have been participating in the meetings and decisions of the District Leadership Group since the re-launch and will continue to do so, getting recognition and establishing credibility in the local community proved somewhat of a challenge in the face of apparent power battles with the Makana United Business Chamber, a body that was formed earlier in response to the call for participation in the activities of initial Business Development Forum in 2014. While the Local Leadership Group has the support of Makana Municipality's Directorate of Local Economic Development and Planning, plans to canvas participation from the local business community have not yet realised. Despite this, a proposal for establishing FamilyBest, a buying group operating in the wholesale and retail sectors developed by NAFCOC, have recently received the support of the District Leadership Group. The next step would be to obtain funding for the project.

5 Assumption Development Centre

The Assumption Development Centre (ADC) in was originally run as a clinic by the Missionary Sisters of Assumption from 1992. Since unemployment has been identified by the surrounding community as their main concern, the Sisters donated the space to the community in 2013 to be used as a skills training and small business development centre. David Greybe and Masonwabe Nduna were appointed as coordinator and full-time intern respectively. The ADC's key stakeholders include Rhodes University, leading NGOs and the local business community.

On the SME front, the ADC is working with about 10 fledgling business and entrepreneurial initiatives – being a combination of private businesses and social enterprises. Considering the many challenges facing new businesses in a South African township environment, coupled with the short space of time that the ADC has been operational, 2015 already saw some very encouraging signs. The ADC focus is to help build capacity through training and mentoring.

In the beginning of June 2015 some members of the Grahamstown Business Forum committee met with David Greybe to explore ways of formalising a relationship with the ADC in which the GBF could possibly become involved in providing assistance in setting up mentoring relationships between fledgling entrepreneurs and established business owners. Following the departure of David Greybe towards the end of 2015 this initiative has been put on hold.

6 Relationship with Grahamstown Residents' Association

Tim Bull regularly attends GBF meetings in order to share information regarding GRA in particular. GBF have broadly been supportive of the idea of expanding GRA and its building capacity and encouraging active citizenship.

2016 is in some important ways a possible turning point for Grahamstown - with more activity like Creative City bringing people together to solve problems - the year we stop saying 'they should do that' and start saying 'I will do this.'

7 Conclusion

I believe that we as Grahamstown businesses and citizens are tired of the negative press and condescending attitude from people from out of town who have read the newspapers or seen with their own eyes our downward spiral. I am tired of the social occasions where I find an evening of miserable people complaining of all the things that are wrong, with no attempt to offer their help in making things better. I tire of conversations that begin with "them or they". Folks, there is no them or they, the problems of this city are our problems waiting for our input and us to make them better.

I tire of conversations that only deal with problems experienced in Grahamstown West without any thought as to how people living in Grahamstown East may be experiencing far worse.

I grew up in a country where there was "a can do attitude" and I believe in South Africa, and our capacity to be the change that we want to see.

I have lived in the USA and the UK and believe in my heart that we have some of the greatest people on Earth living right here in Grahamstown. We need these people to wake up from their slumber, we need to seize the opportunity that has been started by so many people in helping turn this city around.

I have experienced first-hand how little towns such as Prince Albert and Steytlerville, where ordinary citizens have made these towns clean, safe and beautiful. It has already started here, let's get positive, let's get involved and let's make Grahamstown great.