Mutual Heights

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

News from your Trustees

Edition 20 **October 2011**

Dear Fellow Owner,

This is a short newsletter to bring you up to date with the damp works, and to announce an opportunity to acquire air-conditioning for your unit, should you wish to do so. **This requires a response, please, to info@mutualheights.net.**

Damp works

As I have previously reported, summons have been served on the developer (Old Mutual Properties) and the main contractor (Murray & Roberts), based on their failure to properly damp-proof the building. They have now decided to bring in (to "join", in legal parlance) the company that actually did most of the damp proofing work. OM and M&R have the right to do this, and the courts will decide later in November how things will now proceed, according to the information that we have. Until then, there is little else to report on the legal side.

Happily, the remedial works that have been undertaken so far (the upper levels of the Longmarket elevation) seem to have been successful, and we now need to proceed to deal with the rest of the building, as we are able to do so. We still have the survey data that gave us basic input on where there were problems and how serious they were. Trustees will review that data, and decide on a process that will equitably work around the rest of the structure according to the severity of the problems that have been reported, the availability of funds to undertake the work, and (of course) the progression of the legal process.

In the matter of funds, please be re-assured that we do have a good reserve, it is adequate for incremental treatment of the structure of the building while we wait for the legal outcome, and there is no suggestion of a special levy at this stage.

Air conditioning

Summer is just around the corner. Some of you have air conditioning installed, but I think the majority of units do not. In our unit we do not, and I have spent the last three or four years (yes, really!) trying to establish what needs to be done in order to achieve installation. It was not easy, and I have a catalogue of deception, incompetence and failure on the part of the local a/c installer industry that would make you weep. But let's move on … I think I can summarise the situation as follows:

- The building had air conditioning when it was built, but the original system has been replaced with a "new" system.
- The design brief for the new system was to minimise the cost to the developer (and therefore maximise the cost to the purchasers or the owners).
- It works like this: there are two water pipes in all units (the grey ones up by the ceiling). One brings water from a cooler on the roof, and the other takes it back. If you install a system in your unit, it is plumbed into these two pipes. The heat that is taken out of your apartment is transferred to the water, which then goes up to the roof to be cooled and sent down again. So far so good?
- Some details: The roof has two large heat exchangers (big boxes) which blow air through a radiator of some kind, to achieve the cooling of the water, just like in your car (so to speak?). I imagine that the water would typically go up to the roof at about 30-35 degC, and return at about 20-25 degC, but I really have no idea about that, I

am guessing. The point of mentioning this is that the developers had the option to install water *chillers* on the roof that would have cost more money (much more money). Such an installation would provide water at about 6 degC – much colder, nearly freezing? – so that all we would have in each apartment is a simple fan and heat exchanger costing (perhaps) R4,000. Well, not such a *simple* fan perhaps, but perhaps you get the point? All the pipes with the *chilled* water in would have had to be lagged of course, otherwise they would have gathered condensation and drip all over you (just like when they open the doors of your airplane when you land at Bangkok, on a hot humid day …).

- Hence, as owners we are left with only one option, to acquire what are known as **water-sourced heat pumps**. The only manufacturer that might supply us is Trane, in Texas in the USA. These things are what the name implies: they simply pump heat into the water by taking it our of the hot air.
- According to my information, **Trane** units are the ones that have been used in those units that have the air conditioning already installed. The units are described at http://www.trane.com/COMMERCIAL/DNA/View.aspx?i=1116 and I have the full installation manual if anyone is interested

OK, let's bite the bullet. The cost of these units is about R30,000, and they take at least six weeks to come from the USA. Installation, sound proofing and electrical work takes the total cost to about R50,000. There is little variation between the large and small units that might be needed for large and small apartments, so let's leave it at that for the moment (but let's remember that the value of the Rand is falling right now).

I have received two quotations, one from Service First Agencies (Pty) Ltd, Ottery, and one from 1Energy, Ndabeni. The 1Energy quote is a little lower than Service First, and the commitment from 1Energy has been commendable – they really battled to get the specification and costs sorted out to our best advantage, BUT, their quotation is based on a notional order for 18 (yes, eighteen) installations. Only then will they get the best price from Trane.

Personally, I think that air conditioning, even at this price, is worthwhile. What do you think?

If you would like to consider taking up this option, please let me know. We will then dig into the details, make a final decision, and engage with the suppliers.

We need 18 owners to make the commitment. Please consider this carefully, and let me know before the end of October. Thank you.

With warm regards,
on behalf of the Trustees,

(Professor) Andy Bytheway,
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Check out "Mutual Building" on Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_Building