

Mutual Heights

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

News from your Trustees

Edition 22

February 2012

Dear Fellow Owner,

I write this on budget day, and this is the newsletter you have been waiting for, that brings you news of our levy increase, ahead of the AGM. Let me not delay the good news ...

Levy increase

I am very pleased to be able to tell you that the increase this year will be **only 3%**. This follows a number of years where, because of “administered prices” (i.e. prices that are set irrespective of market conditions, by “administrators” working for government) we have suffered much larger increases in costs than expected. Thank you for your patience and understanding over this difficult period, we have managed the situation quite well and we can now breathe more easily (for a short while?).

The Mutual Heights levy is still *under R20 per square metre*; if you are not aware of levy costs in comparable buildings in the CBD, you will be happy to know that we are *well below the average*. There have been public comments on the blogs and elsewhere about the cost of living and owning property in the CBD (and in Mutual Heights specifically), please help us to dispel these misunderstandings – our levies are NOT high and ours is – without doubt – the most beautiful building in the whole region.

Special Levy for Fire protection system

Well, that was the good news. The bad news is that our Fire Alarm system has been checked and while the system works, it is not “up to standard”. We have been advised to replace it completely. When I wrote the previous newsletter we were not aware of the extent of this problem.

There will have to be a special levy for this work, but it will be spread over 12 months so that we will not be required to put up the whole cost at once. We are inviting competitive tenders for the work. We will provide further information as soon as it is available.

(If anyone reading this newsletter has expertise in this area, please let me know)

Damp works

As previously reported, the limited work that has been undertaken on the exterior of the building (the upper levels of the Longmarket elevation) seem to have solved the most urgent damp problems, and we now need to move on according to the needs elsewhere. Trustees are in contact with a small number of owners who have reported worsening damp, and that may guide us. However, it is now more than four years since we undertook a complete survey of the building, and trustees have agreed we need an “update” so that we can track the changing conditions and set about the next stage.

Please go to: <http://www.nem.co.za/MH/MH.html>

and complete the survey form – one response only per unit, please (but separate responses from owners and occupiers are OK). If you have problems with internet access, please contact the management office or print out the form included here and send it in, but the Web form is more convenient for the purposes of analysis. Thank you.

Air conditioning

There was little interest in installing air conditioning at the level of cost I reported in the last newsletter. Since then we have identified a design that does not use the cool water system in the ceilings, it is a single "box" and it is entirely contained within the apartment. There are no external units, just two air vents flush with the external wall.

Trustees have given permission for one air conditioning unit of this kind to be installed; warm air will be vented into the atrium which (as you must be aware!) is extremely well ventilated. Permission is granted on the understanding that operation is subject to reasonable levels of noise and consideration for others, as is already the case with pets and other "add-ons" to our lives in Mutual Heights. Let's see how this system works, and perhaps then those who wish to install air conditioning will have an economical way forward at last.

Scams

Those of you who look occasionally at our community web site will have noticed that we have been the subject of scams involving unscrupulous people overseas who offer apartments that they do not own, and demand deposits and rental in advance (they are always overseas and can not be here) and without producing any keys. See <http://www.mutualheights.net> for some details. Whilst that does not affect us directly as owners or occupiers, you need to be aware of this problem and do what you can to remind people to be extremely careful, and not to send ANY money to people that they have not fully authenticated.

I have corresponded with six or seven would-be Mutual Heights tenants in the last two months, and at least one has lost almost R10,000 to "Mr Robert Spooner". Somewhere there is a real Robert Spooner who must be furious that his name is being used in this way!

Enough for now, I hope you feel adequately informed, do please keep the lines of communication open. We are listening ...

With warm regards,
on behalf of the Trustees,



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

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<http://www.mutualheights.net>

Check out "Mutual Building" on Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_Building

Mutual Heights - 2012 supplementary damp survey

This survey is supplementary to the first that was undertaken about four years ago. The comparison of the two sets of results will help us see whether the problem is worsening, and help us to plan the next stage in the external work on the building. Thank you.

What is your unit number? _____

What is your email address? _____

In what capacity are you responding to this survey?

Owner

Occupier

Agent

Other: _____

How would you describe the nature and extent of the problem?

What part of the apartment is affected?

Walls

Windows

Other:

How serious do you consider the problem to be?

Not serious

Cosmetic

Serious

Thank you