



# Mutual Heights

## News from your Trustees

Edition 39: 31 March 2017

**Damp proofing** is well on the way. We are **changing our Bank**. We still battle with questions about **the median line** between sections. Technology is creeping up and down the building with the **fibre installation** and the new **smart water meters**. The **new web site** is up and running and provides a means to manage YOUR need to manage access to YOUR apartment. Finally, we must look after **the gym**.

### Damp proofing

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You will of course be aware that the work on the exterior of the building has been proceeding. Happily, all the grinding is now complete on the South and East facades is now done; grinding on the North and West facades will now proceed through until April. The actual sealing of the joints is done after the grinding is finished, for the obvious reason that all the dust and debris needs to be out of the way. Thank you for your patience with the dust and the noise.

### Change of bank account for levy payments

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You will have noticed that the bank account for the receipt of levy payments is changing. This is not a scam! Our present bank, Absa, have been insisting that for reasons of compliance everyone must be 'FICA'd'. Standard Bank understand that our managing agents are trusted with our funds, and they are the only ones that must be 'FICA'd'. It will help the office if you will note this change and update your arrangements for payment accordingly. Any questions, please call the office.

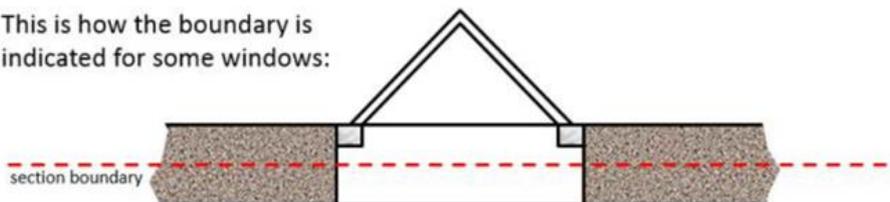
### Determining the medial line between 'sections' and the exterior

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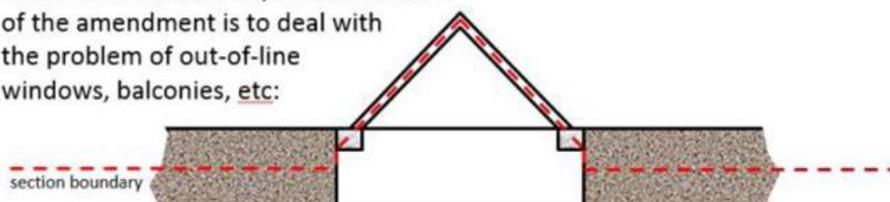
A related issue is the way that the cost of work inside and outside the building is allocated to the Body Corporate (in which case everyone shares the cost) or to the owner of a section (in which case you bear the cost). There might be circumstances in which the cost would be shared, and a specific case is that of our windows.

There is a long story about this, but in the early days (by inspection of the plans that are lodged with the Surveyor General) it was assumed that the windows were the entire responsibility of the body corporate, because there are straight lines drawn; however, amendments to the relevant act try to deal with this by accepting that there are sometimes protuberances that need to accommodate the boundary:

This is how the boundary is indicated for some windows:



This is how it would be, if the intention of the amendment is to deal with the problem of out-of-line windows, balconies, etc:



If the second case were to be 'the law' (for us) then any work on our windows would more likely be shared than the sole responsibility of the body corporate. However, not all windows were indicated on the plans and we were therefore faced with uncertainty. We have taken legal advice, and the conclusion is that the early understanding that all windows are the responsibility of the body

corporate (the upper part of the figure) shall prevail. We will be requesting the Surveyor General to accept changes to the plans to reflect this, thereby eliminating all uncertainty.

Please note however, that if you require work on your windows for reasons other than maintaining their function, then the cost will be for your account. If you require any work at all on your windows, then do contact the office and they will do what they can to assist.

## **Fibre installation**

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Following our survey last year of internet access and web site services, the fibre infrastructure is now being installed by Octotel. In case you missed it last time, let me repeat what said in the last newsletter. There is one change, highlighted here in green:

- There is **no cost** to the Body Corporate or owners for the installation of the fibre infrastructure.
- There is a choice of more than **12 Internet Service Providers** (MWeb, RSAWeb, WebAfrica and so on), on 12-month contracts. You will need to review the details when Octotel make them available, and then decide about your choices.
- If you just want **Internet access**, then the service will be delivered to a new termination point, probably in your geyser cupboard or elsewhere if the arrangements make that necessary (the existing network cabling will NOT now be used).
- If you want the **additional DSTV service** then you will need a DSTV connection box as well as a router will be provided. This will be at your cost.

This fibre installation promises data access at costs comparable to ADSL, but five to ten times faster and more reliable, without 'shaping' or 'throttling'. This is what was asked for in our survey earlier in the year.

## **Smart water meters**

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This work is also now proceeding, and you will have seen the additional line item on your monthly levy account. We hope that when you see the actual cost of the actual water you are using, you will be further persuaded to reduce your water usage.

The payments that you are making for these meters comprise a deposit, that will be repaid if or when you sell your apartment. The purchaser will have to make a deposit which they will then receive back on any further sale. Again, do let us know if you have any questions.

## **Security, access control and short-term (vacation) letting**

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In the last newsletter, I highlighted the issues of security and access to the building. There is continuing concern about 'short lets' and the variety of people who can now be seen moving around. We need to deal with this. There have been two incidents of which I am personally aware (there may be many others in the incident log maintained by our security contractor). On one occasion some time ago there was smoke issuing from under a locked door (it turned out to be only burning toast, as I recall), and on another more recently a nocturnal 'guest' was let loose in the building because her 'host' (someone in residence, but *not* a short-stay visitor) did not accompany her to the outside door as is required by our rules.

### **If you are an owner, responsibility for managing casual or intermittent use of your property rests with you.**

Even if you have an agent or agency managing the letting of your apartment, if there are any problems then you are responsible. Rule 5 of our conduct rules concerns 'letting' and makes it clear that **when you are not in residence, anyone who you allow to use your apartment must be registered**. It is also required that they sign off that they have seen and understand our conduct rules. Historically this rule has not been enforced, but we need to acknowledge the need: in the case of any kind of incident or emergency it is imperative that the office has all the information needed to contact not only you, but anyone who you have allowed to use your apartment.

Apart from your tenants and short-stay visitors, you may wish family, friends, domestic workers and others to have access. At present there are two possibilities:

- The person has a white card that you have paid for, and which is linked to your records in the office. Security will admit people with a white card without hesitation unless there are good reasons not to do so.
- The person has no white card, in which case they have to explain to security, fill in forms, and generally struggle with uncertainties of different kinds before being admitted.

It is interesting how this works out. Recently I had a visitor who is a young-ish but senior black African professor from one of our universities, with a background in running businesses. At the security desk in the main entrance, in being assisted to fill in the visitors register, he was treated like a child. That is good in that the intention was honest, but it was very embarrassing because his status and capability to look after himself was not acknowledged.

This all hinges on access to information. If security knew who was coming from one day to the next, then they could acknowledge them at the door and they would know which apartment they are visiting, and why; if there is smoke coming from under a door, then we need to know not only how we might get hold of the owner, we also need to know who is in occupation of the apartment in question; if your back-packing daughter returns from Kathmandu at five minutes to midnight, then we need a means whereby they can be admitted.

## The new web site is in 'Beta'

The answer lies, I hope, in our new web site. Those who know me well know that every summer I commit to a 'summer project'. For example, five years ago it was the development of the Wikipedia page that details all that we know about the building. This summer I committed to developing some web-software that will allow us to manage things better in the building, which is incorporated into our new web site.

First, this is the home page:

The screenshot shows the home page of the Mutual Heights website. It features a navigation menu with links for Home, News/Notices, Maintenance, Community, Information, and Contact us. The main content area includes sections for 'Community information services', 'Latest Notices', 'Latest News', and 'Advisory'. A banner at the top right reads 'You are viewing a BETA version of the new Mutual Heights web site - please tell us what you think about it!'. Below the main content, there is a section titled 'Mutual Heights is a sectional title scheme...' and a photo of the building. Callout boxes point to various elements: 'If you are a registered user, or have a specific need, you can log on here' points to the 'Community information services' section; 'See the latest news and notices' points to the 'Latest Notices' and 'Latest News' sections; 'See Colin's latest 'advisory' about building maintenance' points to the 'Advisory' section; 'See blogs and any community reports' points to the 'Community' link in the navigation menu; and 'See all the general information from the old web site' points to the 'Information' link in the navigation menu.

First, please understand that this has been quite a big job, and the note that says 'You are viewing a BETA version of the new Mutual Heights web site' is real. I am still making changes to the web site daily as little issues arise, and there will certainly still be bugs. However, it is stable enough for everyone to have a go at getting involved.

Please be assured that the web site is private, it uses secure encryption (just like your bank), and you do not need to worry about the privacy of all the data. The benefits are real: if you are the owner, or the nominee of a family trust that owns a section, or any other responsible person, you will be able to manage the information about people who can use your apartment, thereby easing access for your people who are without white cards or other identification. You will be able to do this by yourself, and at any time or place that is convenient to you. If you do internet banking, there is no reason why you cannot do this!

**If you are the person that the office associates with an 'entity' that owns sections, then in the next few weeks you will be getting a special email that invites you to log on and register as a user, so that you can manage your own data, make maintenance requests, and submit community reports.**

More about this in due course. We hope that this facility will make your lives a little easier, make the building a little safer, and give the office access to the information that it actually needs to fulfil the conduct rules (and to comply with the new legislation about Sectional Title schemes).

## **Gymnasium**

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One final comment: users of the gym need to be reminded that it is NOT supervised, it is just cleaned. It is reported that weights are not being packed away after use, equipment is being damaged and stolen. Please leave the gym in the condition you would wish to find it, and if you notice anything at all amiss please report it to Colin Larkin (the building manager) or to security. They will be monitoring and checking the gym more often in the future.

Enough for now. Please enjoy the remaining months or weeks of summer. Let's hope for lots and lots of rain, but ONLY after we have finished the work on the exterior of the building!

With warm regards,  
on behalf of the Trustees,



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

NOTE: The new web site has a different address ending in **.info**;  
for now, email communication is still with **'... .net'**

<http://www.mutualheights.info>  
[info@mutualheights.net](mailto:info@mutualheights.net)

Check out "Mutual Building" on Wikipedia:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual\\_Building](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_Building)