



Mutual Heights

News from your Trustees

Edition 40: 6 September 2017

Access control and short-stay visitor registration. The **new web site** offers new facilities. A **concierge service** next year? Residents moving over to **optical fibre** but **fibre** is upsetting our **DSTV**. **Smart water meters** promise real-time water usage data. **Insurance costs** have risen. **Short-term letting** is classified as a **business**. We are going to manage **contractors** much more carefully.

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

As the patterns of usage of the building change we have become more concerned with issues of security and access to the building. An important change of use is the increasing number of short-stay visitors: according to our conduct rules (and the Sectional Titles Schemes Management Act ¹), *anyone occupying an apartment in the building must be identified, and must abide by the conduct rules*. Hence, we need a convenient means for owners (and their agents) to notify the management office about all 'occupiers', including short-stay visitors as well as long-term tenants. This can now be done through the new web site.

The new Mutual Heights web site

Shortly all owners will receive an email inviting them to log onto the new web site in order to see the facilities that are available. As well as access to all the information about the building, *registered* 'users' of the web site can do three things:

- load basic information about tenants and short-stay visitors (and others)
- submit maintenance requests
- submit community reports

Tenant and visitor information: As well as satisfying the legal requirements, there are potential advantages to loading information about family, friends, domestic workers and others you wish to have access. If all goes to plan we will soon have a concierge at the main entrance who will have access to the list of 'permitted' people, day-by-day, simplifying admission and avoiding the tedious filling in of forms.

When you get the 'Welcome' email, please look at it carefully and save it somewhere. It will contain a link that identifies you; if you have cookies enabled in your browser, subsequently you be logged on automatically. There is a six-minute video demonstrating the use of the web site – it can be accessed directly from the [front page](#) (at the end of the text). Any comments and suggestions that will improve the new services on the web site, or the web site itself, are welcome.

Maintenance requests: The facility to log maintenance requests has been available for some time. This ensures that requests can be made at any time of day or night, and the building manager will be able to log them and add them to the list of current maintenance items. Maintenance requests that are made verbally, or sent to the wrong person, are at risk of being lost. Please use the web site unless there are very good reasons to use another channel (for example, if the internet access is down!).

Community reports: A further requirement of the Act is that all sectional title schemes must have a complaints procedure. We already have a 'community reports' facility and we intend to use that as our 'quality management' indicator. At the AGM, a summary of community reports will be provided together with the management team's response in each case. You are encouraged to use this facility to share

¹ The Sectional Titles Schemes Management Act (2011) states:

13. (1) An owner must ... (f) notify the body corporate forthwith of any change of ownership or occupancy in his or her section and of any mortgage;

The associated regulations state:

3. (2) A member must take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with the conduct rules in force in terms of section 10(2)(b) of the Act by any tenant or other occupant of any section or exclusive use area, including the member's employees, guests, visitors and family members.

any information that you consider affects the whole community: complaints, compliments, suggestions and general observations.

Plans for a Concierge

It was agreed at the AGM that a concierge service would be a very useful addition to services at the building, especially as the number of people involved with the building on a short term basis increases. Trustees have received a plan from the task force that met following the AGM this year, and the concierge will undertake the following:

Deal with first contact: Be present as the first point of contact for visitors, referring to the daily list of expected persons; record additional information as needed and clarify the purpose of the visit and what is required for fulfilment.

Provide information: Deal with casual interest from walk-in visitors, share knowledge of the building, maintain and share information about local events and facilities, and receive, display and dispose of notices.

Oversee security: Supervise deliveries, direct visitors to apartments via security, maintain a list of open issues with the management office and monitor security operations and call for assistance when needed.

Facilitate other services: Receive and log courier deliveries, organise taxis, deal with short term parking and (perhaps?) manage keys.

It is anticipated that the concierge will have at least one year's experience of security and front-desk operations, be able to work with minimum supervision according to written policies and procedures, communicate effectively verbally and in writing, adopt a positive and proactive approach to residents, visitors, contractors and the general public, and be capable of problem recording and tracking. Resources for the concierge will include a dedicated phone, computer, internet access, printer, stationery and business cards.

Any additional ideas from owners with experience of concierge services will be welcome.

Optical fibre services

A range of Internet Service Providers are now open to requests for FIBRE services at Mutual Heights. Pamphlets with information about the fibre services have been distributed, but if you have been away the information provided to us in **NOVEMBER 2016** can be seen [here](#). You are advised to approach the ISP service provider(s) of your choice DIRECTLY for up-to-date information, and for details of installation charges and any special get-you-started offers that they may have.

DSTV service

The satellite receiving equipment on the roof is being upgraded to deliver the DSTV service over the fibre network. Our apologies for the disruptions to the regular co-axial services, please understand that the upgrade is essential if you are to be able to access the newer higher-quality DSTV content.

Once completed, a notice will be forwarded to all owners informing about the installation of DSTV fibre connections.

Smart water meters

As owners and residents will be aware, we now have wireless internet-connected water meters in the Mutual Building. As well as assisting the management team to organise billing based on actual water use, there is now the possibility to access water usage data in 'near real time'. Short-stay visitors and others who are only in the building for a short time will be able to be billed for actual usage, or cautioned about excessive usage, even if they are only in residence for a few days. Alarm thresholds will be able to be set, and problems will be able to be addressed promptly.

A smartphone app will link to the web, and the wall-mounted display communicates with your meter 'locally', by wireless (it will need power). [Applied Metering](#) (the company operating the system) hopes to have these options available before the end of the year, and they have agreed to offer a 33% discount on the standard cost. A small monthly charge will be added to your levy account.

There has been some discussion about retrofitting a device to geysers that is able to shut off the water supply in the event of a leak; however the new smart water meters are able to detect leaks (and a number of other problem conditions) and notifications are sent automatically to the management team. This capability has already identified a number of problems since the meters were installed.

Insurance costs (and back to short-stay visitors)

Our record of claims on our insurance policy has been problematic. The cost (to the insurer) of our claims has been more than 2.5 times the premium income, and the insurer in question declined to renew our policy. The new policy is about twice as expensive as the old one – yet more pressure on our budgets.

There are two issues that might affect this cost. First, *if we can reduce the number of burst geysers and similar claims*, it is possible that we could re-negotiate the premium – that is the good news. Second, *because we now have additional 'business' activity (short stay visitors)* the insurance costs will have to increase for those sections that are available to short stay visitors.

Our first analysis indicates that any apartment that is marketed for short-stays, by any means not just through AirBnB, **must be classified as a business**. The terms of our insurance require that we declare those that are so marketed, and should there be any failure to do so then the whole of our cover, *for all risks*, could be in jeopardy. We cannot allow that to happen, and there will be sanctions in cases where apartments (sections) are rented out on a short-stay basis without registration of the visitors. .


Having said all that, this is still a somewhat fluid situation and we are seeking definitions of the critical terms 'short stay' and 'occupancy', that are not defined in the act nor in our conduct rules. **In the meantime, owners must ensure that any short-stay visitors are registered – preferably through the web site, but otherwise through the office.** You will hear more about this as the details become clearer.

Contractor management

There has been a long-running and substantial refurbishment project on the sixth floor. At one level, the behaviour of the contractor has been exemplary. All the rules have been followed almost all of the time, and where not there has been prompt correction. On the other hand, the disturbance to adjoining units has been very intrusive. Trustees have been concerned for a long time to find ways to control this kind of work more effectively, and we are just beginning the process of drafting new rules that will require an approving vote at the next AGM. You may be assured that they will be comprehensive.

In the meantime, any comments or suggestions about contractor management will be welcome.

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

Check out "Mutual Building" on Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_Building