**Port Alfred Ratepayers and Residents Association Chairperson’s Report March 23rd 2023**

Good evening and welcome to our AGM for 2023. This report covers more than a year since our AGM was postponed due to COVID and changes in our Financial Year End. The last chairperson’s report and minutes were posted on PARRA’s website.

PARRA has during this period continued with our policy of constructive engagement rather than criticising Ndlambe LM at every opportunity especially on social media.

PARRA had engaged with the Directors and the Municipal Manager on numerous issues of mutual concern. I think that if you look at Port Alfred as a small town in comparison with many small towns in South Africa our local Municipality is doing quite well. Our verges are usually cut on a regular basis, our refuse collection is done on a regular basis, and our electricity supply (except for load shedding) is well run with very few interruptions. Our shortcomings are mostly on the infrastructure side specifically sewage and water. If you look back in Port Alfred’s history these two items have been issues for years. Please remember PARRA cannot fix water or sewage leaks but have set up systems whereby we can communicate and monitor issues reported with the relevant departments. Ndlambe LM has representatives on these WhatsApp groups. The water and sewage leaks Apps which include Ndlambe LM official have been very successful. We have the full support of the Municipal Manager as he has on more than one occasion asked PARRA to go to the Sarel Hayward dam and report back to him as he knows what he gets is a true representation of the facts.

Water: Our biggest issue is the lack of maintenance of the infrastructure especially the pumps at Pump Station No 1 which also fills the Sarel Hayward Dam from behind the weir at Waters meeting. PARRA were instrumental in the Ndlambe LM building a dedicated pump and pump line from behind the weir to the Sarel Hayward Dam. PARRA have addressed the poor maintenance issue on numerous occasions with the Director of Infrastructure and it appears that there are plans to outsource this function. During the recent festive season despite QFS renegading on their contract to supply 2.0 ML of water a day from the 2 ML RO plant the Ndlambe LM managed to supply water to most of residents during the season. It must be noted that Port Alfred usually uses 6.0 ML of water a day but this goes up to 8.5 ML per day during the season and our infrastructure struggles to cope with this demand. I am happy to report that NUWater are the new contactors appointed to run the 2 ML RO plant and have already started work on the Plant. The Minister of Water Affairs has proposed that Amatola Water be appointed as the main water board for the whole of the Eastern Cape. Their monument (white elephant on the hill) to complete incompetence can be seen near the 43rd Air school! PARRA through the NRF have written to the Minister about their gross incompetence and hopefully he will listen to all the objections of appointing Amatola Water as the main Water Board for the Eastern Cape.

Sewage: Our biggest problem is aging infrastructure, pumps failures (due to incorrect design), poor maintenance and vandalism. A large grant has recently been obtained and there are contracts in place to upgrade the sewerage system infrastructure, (currently less than 50% of Port Alfred is on water borne sewage), reduce the number of smaller pumps stations especially in Nemato where vandalism has been an ongoing problem. The upgrade will increase the number of residences connected to water borne sewage and the large Sewerage Infrastructure Upgrade Scheme where all the sewage on the East Bank, Station Hill and Nemato is gravity fed down the hill to a new major pipeline running along the river to the sewage plant. Hopefully this will increase the amount of sewage enabling the 3.0 ML used water RO plant to be commissioned by NuWater.

Valuation Roll: PARRA vigorously interrogated the Valuation Roll and a few calculation errors were pointed out to the Valuators. Ratepayers must remember that rates on your property are directly proportional to the value of your property.

Budget: PARRA together with the NRF (Ndlambe Ratepayers Forum) have regular interactions with the Finance Department and highlight budget items that appear excessive. Every budget cycle the casuals and overtime budgets are excessive and PARRA insists that these be reduced. Ndlambe LM annually calls for a meeting between the Finance Department and Ratepayers and often this is very poorly attended by local ratepayers.

Public Participation: PARRA has been represented at numerous Public Participation meetings. These include Phase 1 of the Sewerage Infrastructure Upgrade which was total fiasco, TotalEnergies application for a production right on their gas field that adjoins the Mossgas gas field and the Ndlambe Coastal Management Forum. Both these meetings were professionally conducted and information has been posted on the PARRA website.

Finally I would like to thank Port Alfred Tourism and the Port Alfred Business Forum for agreeing to work closely with PARRA in order not to duplicate any activities and together represent a larger and stronger forum within which we can all serve to make Port Alfred a town of choice that attracts tourists and businesses alike to invest and live in our town.