



**CENTRAL OUTER WEST
RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION**

COWRA NEWSLETTER

July 2015

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Comparing cost of electricity

In a recent article by Chris Yelland, well known energy analyst, he made a comparative study of the cost of electricity in the various metros. (Figures valid for end May 2015). While we may wish to consider our area "expensive" for local rates and taxes, it seems we are not doing too badly on the electricity supply scale.

Almost all metros have a sliding scale which starts as low as R0.78/kWh (Nelson Mandela Metro) up to R4.56/kWh (Ekurhuleni). Credit customers in eThekweni, which include most residential communities, pay a flat rate of R1.34/kWh. Cape Town has a sliding scale that start at a higher rate than eThekweni's flat rate. Electricity will be more expensive there, no matter how much you use.

eThekweni charges R0.00 for indigent customers only, up to 65kWh, and R0.94/kWh thereafter. It is the only metro in SA that offers free electricity. Some of the other metros offer subsidised rates for low usage, or area based supply. In most of these metros, high consumption will cost more than here in eThekweni. Ekurhuleni punishes high consumption at a rate of R4.56/kWh.

Only JHB Metro and Eskom charge a fixed monthly fee, in addition to usage.

In a previous article we commented on how well eThekweni is doing in curbing electricity theft. It had scored the lowest (6%) of all metros, in electricity lost due to theft. The policy of free electricity for low usage seems to pay off in this regard, since consumption is monitored, rather than not know where theft is occurring. For these "free" electricity meters, a subsidised rate is charged when you go over a certain threshold, thus discouraging high use for a low-income household. Other metros have been plagued with electricity theft, e.g. Soweto (68% unaccounted for). They may wish to borrow a page out of eThekweni's book.

Unfortunately the free electricity is not available to all. We don't have the figures of how much electricity is given freely under this scheme. Please bear in mind that other metros may offer other services included in an electricity price, which may not be the same for all.

Source: www.fin24.com

Comparing cost of electricity

How does eThekweni fare compared to other major cities when it comes to the price of electricity?

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Please help identify fire hydrants that are overgrown or look damaged.

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REMINDER:

COWRA AGM

24 August 2015 at 19:00

Gillitts Town Hall

Old Main Road, Gillitts

Roadworks Update

M13

Martin Gardiner says: Work is going pretty fast and, although the official completion date is mid-November, the contract is well ahead of programme and work could finish earlier. The contract is only up to the Kloof/Village Road interchange and I'm not sure when the next section down Fields Hill will be let. We are working at night, again, to reduce the inconvenience to the travelling public. Unfortunately, the final surfacing will possibly have to be done during the day to ensure a smooth ride and this will cause a bit of inconvenience for a few weeks. The surfacing will start within the next two to three months. As the contractor moves forward, so is his plant parked at different places alongside the road, but, once the road is complete, he will reinstate any damage caused.

Inanda Road

Councillor Tex Collins gives this update: The Contractor returned to work in mid-January. They spent the first two weeks re-accessing the remaining work and planning their strategy for completion. As they had achieved all the targets of the acceleration programme they reduced their staff and equipment to the original compliment prior



to the start of the acceleration. After the frenzied activities on site in the later part of last year the site now appears very quiet with a much smaller team in place. The works are scheduled to be completed by the end of September 2015 and the contractor's revised programme indicates that all works will be completed by this time.

Currently the following works are in progress on the site:

- Construction of Link Road and Brackenhill Road.
- Sidewalks RHS – Pick n Pay towards Hillcrest. Guardrails.
- Landscaping and grassing – RHS Pick n Pay towards Hillcrest.
- Street lighting.
- Traffic Signals.
- Completion of relocation of electrical cables.
- Completion of relocation of watermains.
- Construction of Blessing Ninela Road (Widening and overlay).
- Construction of retaining structure Valley to Hilltop Roads – RHS.
- New signage.

The Search for Fire Hydrants



A couple weeks ago there was a fire at a residence in Waterfall. When the Fire Department arrived they battled to find the hydrants due to the fact there were no markings on the road and some of them were hidden by overgrown bush.

It came to our notice that fire hydrants are nowadays installed by Metro Water who are also responsible for the maintenance and upkeep.

We are asking all our members, whenever they get the chance, to take a look along their road and report to us should they find a hydrant or hydrants which are in the same state as above. This is for your own protection for, in the event of a similar

emergency, it would be dreadful should the Fire Brigade not be able to fill up their tanks as the hydrants are either not visible or have problems.

Additionally, when we discussed this at our meeting last night, the point was brought forward that, by law, factories and the like are responsible for ensuring all Fire Fighting Equipment is in order and properly maintained therefore eThekweni Municipality should also be held responsible for guaranteeing that their own hydrants are routinely checked and properly maintained.

Chairman's Report

The greatest problem we have experienced these past few months, and which is continuing, is of course load shedding. I have been in touch with members of Metro Electricity to explain to them the difficulties we are experiencing here in the Outer West. I am now trying to analyse this latest schedule they put out in April of this year and have come to the conclusion that Blocks 1 to 8 experience most of the load shedding in the hours between 6 pm and 10 pm. The map they sent me shows Block 8 which covers all of us out here is certainly the largest in area whilst I get the impression certain areas here and there, Fields Hill being one of them, are listed under other Blocks in order not to experience the severe times we do.

Our next problem judging by the news will be water shortages. My intention is to ask a senior member of eThekweni's Water and Sanitation Department to be the speaker at our AGM which will be held on 24th August at Gillitts Town Hall. (ED: speaker confirmed) We would like to see a good number of you there so please diarise it for we are sure you will find this talk of some use.

Other than the above we are finding the Outer West Town Planning Department to be very slack in dealing with various problems that have arisen. It takes constant reminders by e-mail and phone to get anywhere as a number of them working there have the culture why work hard as

salaries are paid whether you do your job or not!

At the end of this month when you receive your Metro Bill you will notice it is something like 12 to 14% higher than the 2014/2015 financial year!

Finally I am asking you to try and assist our membership by encouraging your relatives, neighbours and friends, should they live within the boundaries of Ward 10, to support COWRA for their own good. Each month we appear to lose a few more members even though we truly believe we are assisting ratepayers with our news and information.

From the Editor

This newsletter is sent out in anticipation of the upcoming COWRA AGM. While COWRA has a fair number of members who are paid up to date, it seems, like with other ratepayers associations, the numbers are rapidly dwindling, and the association is under threat of continued existence.

People tend to rally to a cause when there is an urgent need. This can be seen in matters of security, education, electricity supply, and even the opposition against e-tolls in Gauteng is drawing a lot of support from locals here in KZN. However, when things go well people get complacent and established associations collapse due to lack of support.

You often see or hear of a community who, after experiencing a spate of crime in their area, employ patrolling guards (day and night) to deter crime. This is usually well supported until there are fewer or no reported crimes in the neighbourhood. Soon

people begin to question the need for additional security, and before long there are not enough contributors to afford the patrolling guards. This reactive approach may work to a degree for matters of security, although I question why people would leave themselves vulnerable again after they had already been targets of crime.

We cannot start a ratepayers association when there is an urgent need, an abandon it when things are going well. In many cases the "going well" is directly attributed to the efforts of the ratepayers association, without which a local council may be unaware of the urgent needs of the community. Not only does such an association make council aware of the needs of the community, the association also keeps pressure on the departments to perform their duties, as required by laws, rules and regulations. A functioning association builds up important contacts with council departments, and

sometimes even have contact details for work-crews.

We have all seen examples of areas where the ratepayers and/or residents are ignored by the councils. Images of tyres burning in roads are seen too often on TV. Let's not become one of those. It is only through constant pressure by organisations such as COWRA that councils are reminded of their duties. The National Taxpayers Union (NTU) has taken a number of municipalities to court on behalf of ratepayers associations. It seems that councils will forget about their ratepayers and residents, unless constantly reminded there-of.

While we have a functioning ratepayers association, let's continue to support it. Please keep paying your membership, and encourage others to do the same.

Contact Details

Chairperson: Alan Smaldon

Email: admin@cowra.co.za

New members:

Email: treasurer@cowra.co.za

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