

MINUTES OF THE 1ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Of the Vermont Conservation Foundation of South Africa held on 25th November 2024 at 4pm at the Whale Coast Conservation Centre in Vermont.

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1 | Welcome – Duncan Heard the VCFSA Chairperson welcomed members and guests. |
| 2 | Apologies – Peta Kennedy. |
| 3 | Attendance – a registration form attached to Minutes reflect the attendees. Duncan welcomed our guests - Gavin and Bridget Fleming, Ilse Myburgh. |
| 4 | <p>Chairman's Report – Review of VCF projects</p> <p>Duncan thanked the Whale Coast Conservation for providing their venue for our meetings and special thanks to Marilyn Detwiller who prepared the figures for the financials during the year and to Penny Wieffering for preparing the agendas and minutes for all the meetings.</p> <p>Two valuable members retired – Ann Bown and Mike Weekes. Ann spearheaded the transition from the Vermont Conservation Trust (VCT) to the Foundation. Many thanks to Ann for her expertise, guidance and knowledge when the Trust was terminated, and the new Foundation was established.</p> <p>Two new Board members were inducted – William Keenan and Galvin Lloyd.</p> <p>Duncan gave a short background of the journey of the VCT to the Vermont Conservation Foundation (VCFSA).</p> <p>The VCT was formed in 2003 because of funds (R200 000) which were made available by the Developers for rehabilitation who developed homes near and on the sand dunes. The municipality asked the developers to earmark funds for rehabilitation of the developed area. There were changes in the boundaries and formation of the Overstrand Municipality was formed which encompassed many small municipalities. The funds were not utilised because the dunes developed naturally into coastal thickets and the wetlands were populated with alien trees. The unused funds were paid to the Overstrand Municipality but were later transferred to the newly formed VCT.</p> |

	The Trust was instrumental in the compilation of a draft Management Plan. It was returned to the Municipality for further public participation many years ago. It is still with the Municipality and Duncan said that it is one of projects in the future to have the plan approved by the Municipality. The pollution testing of the Vermont salt pan was facilitated by the VCT, and it was proved that Paradise Park sewage was primarily polluting the pan. There was no action to remedy the pollution, but Duncan is pleased to report that the new development at Paradise Park will be carefully regulated and hopefully there will no illegal sewer connections. In the green belts - clearance of many alien trees was managed by VCT. Sign boarding in the Vermont salt pan and green belts was a big task. There was follow up of alien work and the VCT started the first part of the coastal path. An application to register The Foundation as an NPO with the Department of Social Development was approved on 9 November 2022. The Vermont Conservation Trust was terminated and the existing Trust's Bank account with Nedbank was closed. The Foundation opened a new Bank Account with FNB in November 2023. The VCFSA has 7 Board Members who have worked as a team and guided the transition of the Trust to the Foundation. Objectives of Vermont Conservation Foundation: The entity is a non-profit organisation established for the following public benefit, and objectives and aims to care for and ensure oversight of the appropriate environmental management of Vermont, with it's coastal zone, paths and green belt corridors, salt pan and wetlands. The green belts have an extent of 37.3 hectares or 22% of the Vermont land area. The areas provide a good ambiance for the residents of Vermont and increase our wildlife and bird life tremendously. There are 110 bird species recorded in the Vermont area. The green belts have biodiversity value. Membership must be built in the coming year. The following Board Members reported as follows:	
--	---	--

	Grant Pilliner reported on the green belt sign boards. The sign boards deteriorate, and this will have to be addressed in the future. Some of the sign boards were replaced and some of the new boards unfortunately had the Trust information printed on them. We solved this problem by having stickers made with the Foundation information. The green belt sign board project was put on hold, due to budget constraints. William Keenan reported he was tasked to assist with the setting up of the new website. He has digital experience and was able to copy the www.conservevermont.co.za website data and manage the setting up of the new website together with Anne Droomer. VCFSA appointed a company called Lovegreen which was highly recommended and had created approximately 18 websites for entities who dealt with conservation matters. He was guided by the members for the information to place on the website. The new website www.vermontconservation.org.za went live in August 2024. Galvin Lloyd reported on the clearing of aliens. A large section of Breakfast Bay was cleared and then tackled the lower dune area. Some clearing was also done on the coastal path near Bitou parking towards the east. He was pleased to report that the Overstrand Municipality were supportive and provided trucks to remove the cleared bush. OnVerWag Neighbourhood watch also assisted with the cost of transport and some labour who were involved with the clearing of Onrus Beach after the floods known as Tswelopela. Grant reported that it must be noted that Galvin paid his staff and used his equipment at his own cost. Many thanks Galvin. Galvin reported that he wants to develop a more sustainable program for the alien clearing in 2025. In the VCFSA new financial year, the Chairman Duncan Heard shared the following: The Overstrand Municipality were found to be clearing fire breaks in the Vermont Urban Conservation Category 1 Zones (greenbelts) without prior notification or consultation with the Vermont residents. The Fire Department also made use of outsourced contractors and staff with limited or no knowledge of the vegetation types,	
--	--	--

5	resulting in the complete devastation of natural vegetation, including protected species such as Milkwood. Duncan reported that VCF immediately engaged with the Environmental and Fire (Fire, Rescue & Disaster Management) departments to stop the process. An urgent meeting was arranged to allow for appropriate consultation and to provide acceptable guidelines for managing fire risk in the Vermont greenbelts. The VCF contracted a professional wildfire consultant who assessed the risks and produced alternative vegetation and size-based proposal in place of the default 10 metre fire breaks required by the Fire Chief. We need to engage further with him as Duncan felt his initial proposals were still “over the top” based on his short visit to site. Further detailed assessment of all the greenbelt vegetation types is required for each of the greenbelt boundaries to prepare an accurate risk profile along all the greenbelt boundaries. The Environmental department of the Overstrand Municipality were uninformed about the process. The administration framework will have to be put in place before the contract can continue. Johan contributed a spreadsheet-based model which could be used to determine the fire risk factor and appropriate mitigating measures to be taken instead of the default 10m fire breaks. Most of the indigenous vegetation in the Vermont greenbelts is not fire prone and can even be an effective fire-retardant. Awareness must be created, and we must bring this to the attention of the Fire Department. This will be an ongoing matter. Treasurer’s Report - Grant handed out the financial Statements which will be attached to these minutes. He pointed out that page 13 contained most of the information which needed to be considered. The financial balance for the year was R361 152. The timeline was explained by Grant. This was also contained in the report. Duncan thanked Grant and asked if the members were satisfied with the financials. He then proposed them and seconded was William.	
---	---	--

6	Appointment of Auditors - Grant was extremely disappointed with level of service and expertise of the auditor in drafting the financials. VCFSA was charged R3 726,00 for the service which was of extremely poor standard, and he had to deal with a Junior Clerk who was uninformed and could not deliver the professional service required by an auditor. Anne proposed that VCF obtain alternative proposals from Auditors. Duncan confirmed that the AGM and financials were within the legal limits of the timeline. The next one is early next year. Anne formerly proposed that the appointment of Auditors be held over till quotes were received from Audit Companies and that the present auditors are not nominated in the future. Proposal was seconded by Johan. Bridget commented that heavy penalties were levied against her own NPO when financials were not in order, so advised that particular attention be paid to this matter.	
7	Nomination and Election of Board Members - Duncan handed over to Anne who steered the nomination and election of the board members. Anne thanked all the board members for their input and dedication since inception. She proposed that the board members be nominated "en Bloc". The board members with a designation step aside and be nominated as ordinary board members. The same applies to the rest of the board members. Penny – the Minute taker has indicated that she will not be available for a permanent appointment but will assist with minutes until a replacement has been identified. Anne asked someone to propose the Board Members "en bloc" and second the proposal. The following were nominated: Duncan Heard, Johan Myburgh, Grant Pilliner, Galvin Lloyd, William Keenan, Peta Kennedy and Anne Droomer. Duncan proposed and seconded by William. Anne said that the constitution requires that a Chairman is nominated at the AGM and asked Duncan if he is available. Duncan indicated that he would be available for the next year. Proposer – Johan and secondee was Galvin	

	Duncan thanked everyone for their help and support.	
8	General - Anne invited our Guests, Gavin and Bridget to join us for eats after the annual general meeting.	
9	Closure – There were no further matters to discuss so meeting closed.	
	 SIGNATURE : <i>D.H.W. HEARD</i> Chairman date : ...28/8/2025	