

Minutes of the Freeme Annual General Meeting

Held at

Rietfontein Nature Reserve
138 Holkam Road
Paulshof

Date:

Saturday, 29th November 2014

Staff and Volunteers present at the meeting:

Helen David, Peggy-Ann Mist, Petro Theron, Murray Macgregor, Margie Brocklehurst, Sharon Miller, Jacky Wrighton, Nicci Wright, Pauline Walker, Michelle Watson.

Board members present:

Stuart Hancock (Chairman), Neville Pillay, Jonno Buffey, Gunda Kwint, Ros Gerber,

Executive Director: Arend van der Walt.

Apologies: Jean Rayner, Marianne Reichert.

Meeting opened at 09h15 by the Chairman.

The Chairman informed us that there would be a follow up meeting, early February, for volunteers who were unable to attend today.

Chairman's report accepted: Helen David proposed and Ros Gerber seconded.

Financial statements accepted: Pauline Walker proposed and Arend van der Walt seconded

Re-appointment of the Auditors Review: (B.L Anderson) proposed by Stuart Hancock and seconded by Pauline Walker.

Report of the Chairman.

It gives me great pleasure to write this year's Chairman's report, which sets out for our supporters and the general public what FreeMe has achieved in the past twelve months, our current position and our future plans.

It has been a very eventful, exciting and challenging year, with many important developments.

Firstly, on a strategic level, The Board in conjunction with our very skilled, dedicated and valued advisors have started with some fundamental shifts in operations. Historically, the Board comprised of a few key individuals who were Board members as well as full time volunteers. Each ran their portfolio on an operational level on the ground, with staff members and volunteers reporting directly to the respective Board member. Due to both previous Directors leaving the Board as well as deliberate efforts to upskill the Board, we have been on a drive to recruit new Directors based on their skills and experience for the required portfolios, as well as their passion for the FreeMe cause.

This period has seen the addition of Arend van der Walt to the Board, Professor Neville Pillay and Jonathan Buffey who have already and continue to add great value to our strategic direction. This drive for new directors continues with a few more candidates earmarked to be added as advisors and eventually Directors.

On a personal note, it is with sadness that my term as a Director has come to an end and I will not make myself available for re-election. I'm proud to say that this has been my thirteenth year as a volunteer at FreeMe, I have served on the Board for three and a half years now and have been Chairman for the last 18 months. My passion, dedication and belief in FreeMe has never waned, in fact, this is the most positive I have ever felt about FreeMe. Due to ever increasing

day to day work and travel constraints on my time, I feel it is an appropriate time to step down and find a suitable replacement. I have however made myself available to the Board as an advisor when called upon to maintain continuity and succession planning. I hope to stay involved for some time to come.

The last two years have presented some of the largest challenges I have seen in my time with FreeMe. Two years ago, we decided to take a major strategic shift by upskilling the Board, removing the Board from day to day operations and having a full time Centre Manager. The Centre Manager would manage daily operations and with time would sit on the Board.

FreeMe has been bursting at the seams for a few years, needing to grow. We have gone from a small local charity to one with a truly national and international reach. The time had come for FreeMe to move forward. Unfortunately it has taken two years, a lot of energy, time and funding to get our formula right and find the best person to steer the ship on the ground. Arend has filled this gap well and has come at a very exciting as well as a very challenging time. Arend started off as a Director and migrated into operations after retiring from his previous job. Arend has strengthened the Board with his skills and experience and has added much value from a strategic level and from an operational on the ground level.

Arend has been working furiously behind the scenes to get many foundations and procedures in place that have been lacking, from streamlining daily operational structures, cleaning up databases, volunteer and supporter lists, to upgrading our website, social media platforms and starting to rebuild our fundraising. Speaking to international organisations in the last few weeks, they have made it clear that with this more professional management and governance structure they will remain involved and potentially increase their involvement and support. Without this management, not only would FreeMe

battle on a daily operational level but with stringent CSI requirements, gaining support of large organisations, both locally and internationally would be exceedingly difficult. This position adds great immediate value and a professional and stable foundation geared for significant growth potential.

Where are we currently then? FreeMe has over the past few years enjoyed having more than 6 months' worth of operational cash in its reserves. As of today, we have between 3 to 4 months' worth of cash reserves. On the cost side, this is attributable to increased costs both in new staff positions, additional security required at the premises, increased case volume and general inflationary pressures in electricity and food costs. On the income side, fundraising has been slow due to both internal and external factors including pulling back of donations during recessionary pressures, corporates favouring "people and educational" charities in CSI programs and redirection of animal charity funds towards critical causes such as Rhino conservation.

I noted earlier that this is the most optimistic I have been about FreeMe with the enhanced operational structure. FreeMe is geared for growth and massive scalability in the work we do, the impact and the reach we have. This all requires substantial and regular inflows of funding to achieve our goals. Fundraising is on the mend and inflows have improved, largely due to the Masai Mara Raffle. We have two weeks left of this wonderful initiative and hope to raise another two months' of operational cash flow.

So where to from now? Firstly, Carol Mitchell joins FreeMe as our new fundraiser. Carol joined in November and has already done some good work, we welcome Carol to the FreeMe family and are confident she will add great value in her new role.

We are currently in talks with multiple large organisations, locally and internationally. We trust we will show them the impact their support can have

through FreeMe's structures. There are also some very exciting possible strategic partnerships which are in very early stages of discussion which we are exploring. These will add immense credibility, support and impact in achieving our Vision and Mission through these key collaborations.

Hosting an international wildlife rehabilitation conference has always been something the Board and I have wanted to do. I think we are now in a position to successfully do this. Some US based organisations have indicated that this is something they would help fund. This conference would host leading experts from around the globe with educational presentations from each. This is a significant opportunity to increase skills internally, to teach skills to other organisations from around Africa and the rest of the world, to enhance credibility and to increase FreeMe's visibility. It is also a fantastic networking opportunity and something that can really push us forward. This is in the very early stages of discussion but would be planned for late 2015.

In the past two weeks, we have received news of a few larger planned contributions which will alleviate some of the financial pressures in the short term. We need to rebuild fundraising on many levels from regular annuity type funding to larger institutional support for specific planned projects.

There are no silver bullets in this tough economic time, but we are actively pursuing all available options. It is a worrying time but we continue to be optimistic about the future but very cognisant of the immediate challenges that are being currently addressed.

It goes without saying but certainly needs to be said, that none of FreeMe's achievements so far, and none of the planned growth would be possible without the continued support of our many sponsors, partners and donors, which we refer collectively as our treasured "Friends of Freeme". We thank you.

I would like to say thank you to all of our volunteers for your continued hard work and dedication. We often say thank you for your invaluable contribution. I would like to value this actually, to give some perspective to the enormous value added by our volunteers each year. Volunteers contribute an estimated 10,000 donated hours every year which is no small feat. This adds over a million Rand per year in contributed time on very conservative estimates.

I would also like to say thank you to the Board and our valued advisors. I would specifically like to say thank you to Jenny Phillips for her endless dedication to FreeMe as our legal advisor as well as Ed Clark for his continued involvement, guidance and advice from abroad. It has been a period of large flux on a Board, strategic and operational changes and each Director has put in countless hours of donated time to see us through this tough period. The fresh energy and perspective from our new Directors has contributed considerably.

Lastly, I would like to thank our dedicated and passionate staff. You enable FreeMe each day to further our Mission, to conserve wildlife and to inspire the world. You constantly inspire us and we thank you for your contribution over the last year.

It has been an exceptionally trying time, through very uncertain economic conditions, but through it all, we have grown, strengthened, stabilised and continue to grow and achieve our goals. We are one of only a few refuges for the animals we care for and this care continues to improve as we treat more animals each year and touch more people and communities each year. It is very humbling and makes one very proud to be a part of this work.

I am so grateful to have shared in another year with FreeMe and look forward to seeing continued achievement of our goals.

Stuart Hancock

FreeMe Chairperson

Executive Director's report

1 Overview

Following the sudden resignation of the previous MD in November 2013 there was a period where there was no senior management of FreeMe on site. I was requested to take over the management of FreeMe from 1st March 2014 for an initial period of one year. This report covers the period from March to November 2014.

2 Confirmation of Strategy

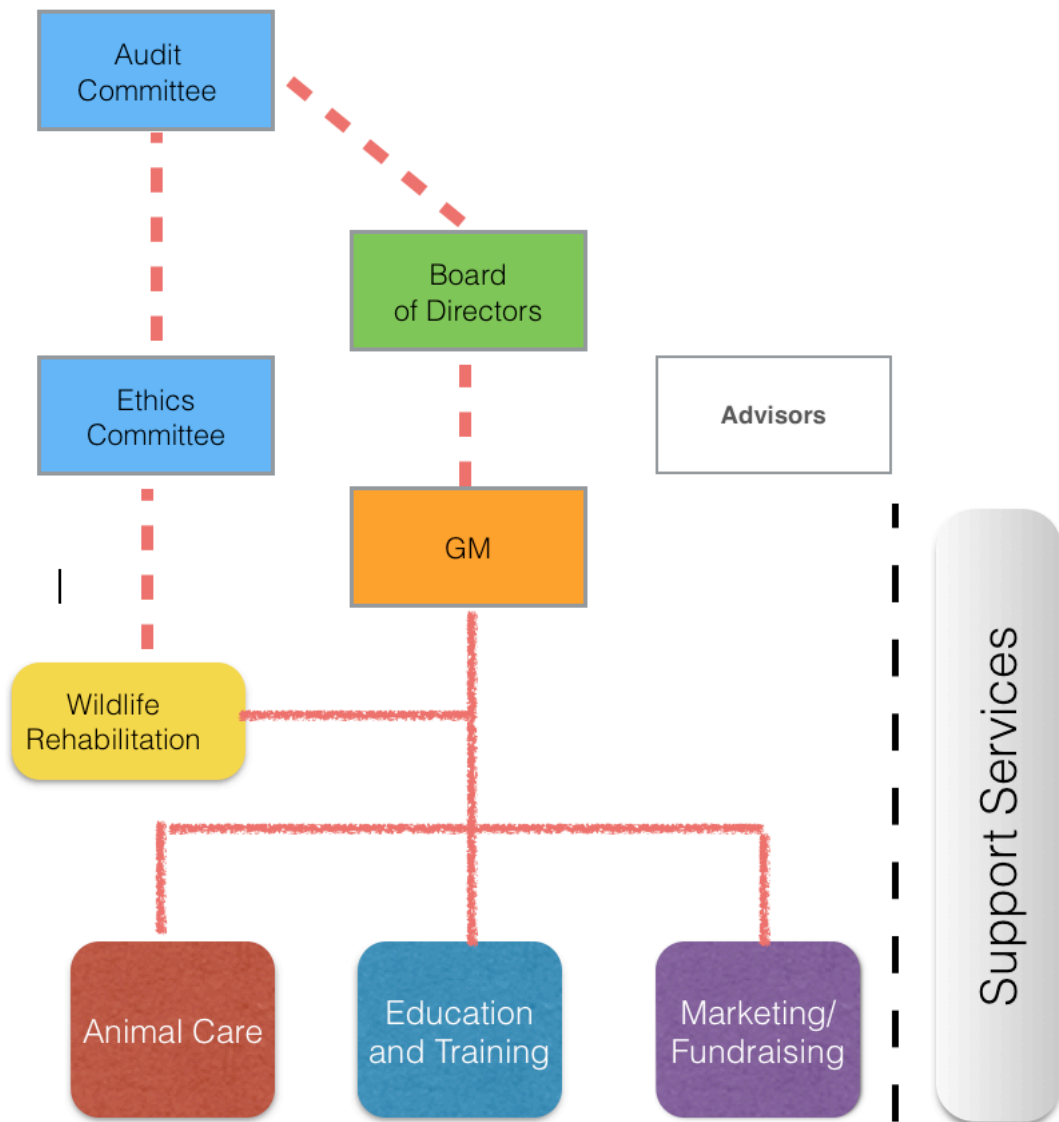
Following the strategic sessions in the past, the strategy of FreeMe was confirmed as follows:



The Strategy will have two main legs - Animal Care as well as Education with Fundraising the third leg to sustain the business FreeMe.

The proposed high level structure to implement and manage the strategy going

forward is given in the following figure:



3 HR

- **Current staff structure**

The current staff structure was implemented in 2013 and will be optimised to fit in better with the confirmed strategy as indicated above.

The following changes in personnel occurred during the past year:

- Adele Vincent Resigned as Marketing Manager
- Carol Mitchell was appointed as Marketing Co-ordinatorThe Receptionist post is currently vacant.
- Penny Morkel gave notice that she intends to study full-time from February 2015 but later postponed it until 2016 to enable FreeMe to fill the post she currently holds.
- o Restructuring
 - We have started with the restructuring process and it should be completed by the end of December 2014.
 - A Job description will be done for each post.

4 Volunteers

- o Database
 - The information of the various categories of volunteers and members was unstructured in the past and was managed in at least 5 different databases. This was combined into one single database.
 - The combined database consisted of about 6 500 e-mails with additional information only available for about 2 500 of them. The total was reduced to about 4 500 e-mails through a process of elimination that is currently used as the base of our communication. The current database consist of:
 - Board Members : 6
 - Staff : 7
 - Active Volunteers : 152
 - Other : 4 726

The Communication to the database is done through a program Oempro that is sponsored by Imagine ISP

- o Volunteer work Groups
 - To assist the staff, work groups will be formed in various categories, including:
 - Fundraising
 - Volunteer shift Management
 - Facilities Management (including maintenance)
 - Marketing
 - Newsletter

- social media
- Courier services
- IT
- etc
- o Volunteer shift Management
The volunteer shift management was changed to an online system “Volunteer spot” . A Shift Coordinator was selected per shift that manages their shift through the online system
- o Volunteer communication
The volunteer communication was identified as one of the problem areas in the past.
 - As mentioned above the databases used in the past were cleaned up and combined into one database.
 - Regular e-mails are sent out via the bulk e-mailing system, but unfortunately only about 25% of e-mails are opened on any mail that is sent out
 - A survey program called Survey Monkey was purchased to facilitate easier feedback. Unfortunately, due to the low feedback, the data received back only reflects to feedback of about 25% of the Volunteers

5 Finance

- o Current status
As per the Chairman’s report, the reserve of FreeMe is reducing at an alarming rate. The average monthly cost to run FreeMe is about R 250 000 pm, which can roughly be subdivided as follows:

- Staff	45%
- Animal Care and food	40%
- Maintenance	8%
- Utilities	5%
- Other	2%
- o Initiatives for cost cutting
 - Due to the nature of the FreeMe’s cost, it is very difficult to reduce the animal care costs (especially during the summer months).
 - The type of animals that is admitted, also have a marked effect on the cost and with the current amount of carnivores and tortoises at FreeMe, the cost of Animal Care is very high.
 - The biggest impact on cost cutting can be made with the Staff costs and this is being investigated now
 - Maintenance costs are kept to a minimum.

6 Fundraising

The following initiatives have been taken and are under way to increase

the income

- Appointment of Carol Mitchell as Fundraising and Event Coordinator
- The property that FreeMe owns has been put on the market to sell. If it has not been sold by February 2015, an auction will be held to sell it.
- The fundraising will focus on Corporate donations as well as members of the public to establish an annuity income to cover FreeMe's basic cost

The Members of the Board has started with a campaign to contact Corporates for fundraising

The annuity income will be covered by fundraising through the inter alia the following initiatives:

- Associate Members (Friends of FreeMe)
- Adopt an animal Species
- Sponsor a cage
- Migration Raffle
- Golf Day
- Annual Gala
- Migration Raffle
-

7 Communication and Social Media

FreeMe will expand the Social media activities and the following initiatives are under way:

- A new website has been launched
- Photo of the week will be done more regularly and be incorporated with the Adoption and cage sponsorship
- The following social Media will aggressively be targeted:
 - Facebook,
 - Twitter,
 - Youtube,
 - LinkedIn,
 - Instagram,
 - Pinterest,
 - Blog on the website
 - Quarterly e-News magazine

The FreeMe Magazine will in future be done in an electronic format that will be available to all Friends of FreeMe. The current edition is about 80% complete. The delay in the publishing of e-Magazine is due to the withdrawal of the designer. We have agreed with a new designer to complete the Magazine and the anticipated completion is now Early in 2015.

We will try to source funding to publish a limited amount of hard copies of the magazine

8 Operations and Facilities

- Health and Safety

A Health and Safety Manual has been compiled and it will be implemented early in 2015. This will include the official appointment of the responsible people in terms of The Occupational Health and Safety Act

- Projects

The following projects was completed and will be undertaken in 2015 (depending on funding)

- Completed during 2014

- Euthanasia system
- Tortoise Enclosure
- Cold room
- Selected paving
- Otter enclosure

- Planned new projects

- Reintroduction of Aviary cage (no 40)
- Completion of stables
- General maintenance to comply to Health and Safety standards
- Terracing of areas and additional cages
- Industrial Washing and Drying machines
- Revising the kitchen layout
- IT System including a central server for a backup system
- Improved Data connection
-

- WILD-One

WILD-One is a Rehabilitation Centre Management Database that was donated and "Africanised" by the Virginia Wildlife Centre and The Humane Society.

We have started with the training of staff and implementation of the system, but due to the slow and unreliable data connection that FreeMe have, the system can not be implemented yet.

9 Board of Directors

The current Directors are:

Name	Appointment date
Stuart Hancock (acting chairman)	2011/03/01
Ros Gerber	2012/06/01
Gunda Kwint	2012/06/11
Neville Pillay	2013/06/29
Arend van der Walt (executive)	2013/06/29
Jono Buffey	2014/10/01

10 Quo Vadis?

For FreeMe to Effectively function in future, the following must be addressed:

The fundraising must be optimised and an annuity income sourced to cover the operating cost of FreeMe

The long term strategy of FreeMe must be finalised

The future use of the current premises must be confirmed

Associations with other local and International Rehabilitation organisations must be formed

The data connection and IT infrastructure must be upgraded as a matter of urgency

General

The Masai Mara Draw is being marketed on many media fronts. We have paid for 3 advertising slots and 702, made a further donation of 9 slots.

Jonno- Suggested that we have a dedicated Fundraising Committee. He also backed the very important use of Social Media.

Helen David-Can the volunteers be informed about the amount of money raised for the events that the volunteers participate in.

Nicci is going to manage the Blog on the website. She will write articles on research.

Margi Brocklehurst- will run a monthly volunteer meeting.

Michelle Watson- enquired about the membership details to give to the public in reception. Arend will look into this.

A complete Database to be made available to the staff, Volunteers and Board. This so as each of us can check if our contacts are on the list. Arend agreed to make it available.

Helen David- Releases are the cherry on the top for the volunteers. It has been mooted for a long time. Arend replied that there will be scheduled releases in the next couple of months, for the volunteers. Sponsors will be invited to bring clients to the watch these releases.

Financials posted on the website. There is no statutory need for an AGM in the future but a General Meeting will be held annually as this is seen to be good corporate governance nonetheless.

The present balance in the bank accounts is R510,000.00

Sharon Miller suggested we keep certain cages for specific animals and birds, so less work and changes in cage cleaning and cage enrichment.

Arend replied that this is already being discussed and also the idea of a pathway with less sensitive wildlife for sponsors to view. More webcams for cages for easier monitoring. Two way mirrors for public friendly viewing.

Arend said he has had meeting with GDard. He asked what the regulations are and what we are allowed to do as an organisation.

Volunteers - we discussed the entry age of the volunteers. We can accept people over the age of 16 from the schools to do the Community Service, which they are required to complete

Overseas Volunteer Programme to be discussed in February strategy session.

Helen David-Suggested maybe there is accommodation nearby, within walking distance of FreeMe- Contact Hazel Schreiber.

Neville Pillay- Spoke of his overseas Volunteer Programme at Wits. They pay upfront and know what they are getting for their money. Visa Laws are not easy so a 3 month programme is more successful.

Stuart Hancock-proposed a strategy session in February.

Sharon Miller-feels little has changed since our strategy weekend with ed Clark

two years ago.

Stuart Hancock- Disagreed. He said now we have structures in place which the international wildlife community and the local corporate community require before they would help with any sponsorship. Strategy sessions must be held regularly and adjusted to meet changing landscapes. With enhanced structures in place, strategy outcomes can now be more effectively implemented.

K60- Still an ongoing problem we must bear in mind for the future.

Helen David-Feels there is a need to present a paper, to the Diamond Route Conference, on research of successful releases, of different species,

Stuart Hancock - stated that communication with volunteers is being addressed via monthly volunteer meetings starting with Margi's Christmas function initiative.

Jonno Buffey- confirmed that the Board is very aware of the problems and poor communication with the volunteers and this is being addressed.

The meeting closed at 11h00

Signed

Stuart Hancock
Chairman