



THE SOCIETY OF MASTER MARINERS SOUTH AFRICA

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2010

On the 9th of December this year the Society turned 70! I hope most of you have seen the November edition of the South African Shipping News magazine with its well-written feature on the Society and its history – our thanks to Brian Ingpen for putting it together (a scanned copy of the article is attached in case you missed it). Also thanks to Svitzer and P&I Associates for their supportive advertising linked to this article. It is appropriate that we shared this edition with a feature on the Grinrod group who are celebrating their centenary this year.

2010 has been an eventful year for the Society and hopefully one we can look back at in time and recognise as the year in which we turned a corner. Behind us we will see a Society in decline where apathy and membership indifference has become endemic.

Our low point has been the collapse of the Durban Branch and the necessary emergency relocation of the Executive to Cape Town to try and salvage the Society. It is sad that this should all occur in the year in which we celebrate our 70th anniversary!

A small core of members has however stepped forward to do what we can to ensure the Society survives. My thanks to Colin Flockhart and Brian Greenwood particularly for their contributions to the Cape Town Branch and Exco. Also, Keith Burchell who has recently relocated to Cape Town and has offered his services to the Society in the coming year.

It should be noted that both Port Elizabeth and Richards Bay Branches remain active and keep our flag flying in those ports.

The harsh fact remains however that if it were not for four members, Exco would collapse and about a dozen active members are keeping the Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Richards Bay Branches alive. This out of a membership of 172 (i.e. 7%).

For those members who need an update on the changes within the Society as a result of Congress 2010 decisions, the new Cape Town-based Executive Committee consists of:

President – Graham Mannall

Vice President – Rob Whitehead

Honorary General Secretary – Colin Flockhart

Honorary General Treasurer – Brian Greenwood

Of these four office bearers, all are based in Cape Town except for our President who lives in Durban (the President is elected for a 2 year term – this current year being the second year of this term). The practicalities of this arrangement are such that the Vice President and our Cape Town-based committee will run the day-to-day activities of the Society and will consult electronically with the President as required.

Congress 2010 tasked Exco with certain specific things to do and we can report on progress of the main ones as follows:

Congress task:

Serious concern was expressed over the poor presentation of the Central Fund and Benevolent Fund financial reports and further required that a Chartered Accountant be appointed by the Executive Committee to review the two funds finances within 3 months and

1. produce properly audited sets of accounts
2. make recommendations on the optimal investment of these funds
3. Apply for Public Benefit Organisation status for the Society and Benevolent Funds.

Exco action:

1. *Our auditors produced new sets of audited accounts which Exco received at the end of October 2010 and found acceptable.*
2. *On the acceptance of the new, audited accounts Exco initiated the transfer of the Central Fund and Benevolent Fund assets to Cape Town. The Central Fund Current a/c and Benevolent Fund Money Market Call a/c have now been successfully relocated to Standard Bank in Cape Town (something that takes time given all the FICA requirements) and we are busy doing the same with the Benevolent Fund's Old Mutual Unit Trust a/c at the moment. As soon as these final signing authorities are in place, Exco will be seeking professional advice on the optimal investment of these funds.*
3. *Our Cape Town auditors have been briefed on our requirement to apply for Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) status and we await their advice in the New Year.*

Congress task:

The Society is to fully fund (via the Central Fund) and to appoint a properly mandated and qualified contractor to research and make recommendations to the Society on the specific strategies required to upgrade the Master Unlimited Certificate of Competency from NQF level 6 to NQF level 7. The Society to seek an alliance with SAIMENA on a shared cost basis given our common interest in this matter. Congress further decided that outside bodies such as IFSMA and The Nautical Institute should be used as resources in collecting information about international practice and that we should benchmark ourselves against other international maritime nations with special emphasis on India and China if possible.

Exco action:

On the 4th October Exco formally invited SAIMENA to meet with the Society to discuss this matter. The meeting duly took place on the 1st December and both organizations agreed to work together on this issue. Each organisation will appoint a representative to lead their organisation's participation. The first target is to have a fully motivated submission ready for presentation to SAMSAs by the end of March 2011.

Exco has realized that given the emergency relocation of Exco to Cape Town and the unreasonable workload being placed on the few willing members, we can only focus on a limited number of issues this year. The priorities therefore will be:

- Sort out the finances, tax liabilities and PBO status,
- Sort out the membership subscriptions of arrears members,

- Get Durban Branch functional again,
- Modernising of the Society's Constitution.

In the background however we will be quietly working on several other issues. We believe that despite a full workload being carried by Exco (who run the Cape Town Branch as well!) it is important for members to feel issues of relevance to their professional status are being dealt with. Examples of some of these are:

- The Master Unlimited Certificate of Competency upgrade mentioned above will be worked on during 2011.
- Exco has written to the CEO of SAMSA reminding him of the Society's interest in maritime matters particularly in regard to the maritime Human Capital Development project currently being led by SAMSA as well as in the work of the Marine Navigation Syllabus Working Committee. We have formally asked to participate in these important initiatives.
- Attracting more young members into the Society. The maritime industry has changed beyond recognition for many of our members. We need to focus our attention and reliance on the new generations of Master Mariners and Deck Officers.

Further, the Society remains available to Government for our input into changes in maritime legislation, Marine Courts of Enquiry and any other issues that effect the professionalism, safety or employment of South African seafarers.

Key to all our efforts however is the voluntary contributions of time and effort from our members.

This is not as onerous as it is often claimed. With emails and internet banking, communication and administration can be managed easily and on a daily basis. Monthly meetings are rarely more than an hour long and offer a great time to catch up on the comings and the goings of members and other industry colleagues.

Without your active participation, the few who contribute now will lose heart and all the work of the last 70 years could come to nothing. That would be a disgrace and I am sure the our member's pride in their profession and their desire to support the new generation of seafarers by passing on their experience and knowledge will ensure our Society grows in the years to come and once again attracts the respect our members deserve.

On a sad note we have been informed of the passing over the side on the 26th December of Dave Sievwright of the NSRI. Dave was always been a great supporter of the Society and will be missed. Our thoughts are with his family at this time.

In closing then we offer best wishes for 2011 – **Let's make it the year of a rebuilt Society!**

Executive Committee.

P.S. When last did you check out these websites:

www.mastermarinersa.co.za

www.ifsma.org