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Good morning.

We are writing to you on behalf of, and unanimously supported by, the full Board of Directors of the Observatory Improvement District NPC.

We firstly wish to acknowledge the enormous strain that the Covid-19 pandemic has placed on the City of Cape Town's departments and functions and the resultant pressure teams have been placed under to ensure compliance with the National Disaster Management Regulations in an ever-changing environment – **specifically as regards those living on the streets (referred to as homeless people in the Regulations).**

The OBSID, as a Special Rating Area / Improvement District, has similarly felt the strain as our rate payers and community members have continuously turned to us for answers on the City's strategy, implementation plans and approaches during this crisis. We have unfortunately not been given the opportunity to input into these, nor have they been shared with us. We desire that the principle of co-operative governance, enshrined in the South Africa's constitution, should be extended to the relationship the city has with CIDs, which remain independent legal entities.

We remain committed to emerging from this crisis with stronger relationships with our community and with our key partners in the NGO, business and public sectors.

Currently, we believe this commitment to be under threat and have grave concerns that the efforts put into strengthening relationships with a number of directorates at the City of Cape Town, as well as a diverse range of NGOs, businesses and civic associations, as well as individual ratepayers and residents of Observatory is being eroded by our inability to provide clear, consistent, accurate and credible information to our partners and community.

When President Ramaphosa made the first announcement on 16 March 2020 regarding a national state of disaster and restrictions on movement, the OBSID immediately recognised the importance of our role and began making plans to try to supply basic amenities to those living on the streets within our boundaries whilst we waited for the City to announce their strategy in terms of Section 11D of the Regulations.

SAFER - CLEANER - SMARTER

Directors: J Allemeier, E Angless, J Ashley, J Cronje, C Everatt, T Figl, M Krause, N. Moodley

We further formulated strategies for the continuation of services (urban management, public safety) that we provide to the community once we were designated an essential service.

As a parallel effort, the community of Observatory established a Community Action Network (ObsCAN) and began mobilising resources. By the time the lockdown was announced, we had activated plans for the following:

1. Installation and servicing of 2 public toilets (the City public bathroom in the community was closed from the 27th March 2020 and remains closed, despite it being an essential city function in our view);
2. Installation and servicing of public handwashing stations in 4 locations within the boundaries;
3. Distribution of meals and other foodstuffs to those living on the streets for ObsCAN;
4. Facilitation of the placement of individuals into shelters at their request;
5. Provision of assistance to individuals who wished to get off the streets and return to family or friends.

We have strong and existing relationships with partner organisations working with those living on the streets, and through them, were able to gain some understanding of what the City's plans were to accommodate those living on the streets during the lockdown.

When the announcement of the opening of the Strandfontein temporary shelter was made, we immediately mobilised and went out to those living on the streets and informed them of the opening of the site.

We continued to inform people of the option of voluntary relocation even in the face of fierce criticism across many platforms from both community members and special interest groups who were opposed to the concept of a single site shelter.

We worked with a WhatsApp group set up by Sub Council 16 to try and facilitate voluntary relocations.

Unfortunately, our efforts to inform people of the option of voluntary relocation had little impact as the groundswell of negative opinion continued to grow with regards to the conditions at the temporary shelter and the lack of transparency in the operational plans for the site. It must be noted that many members of the special interest groups involved either reside or work in and around Observatory – so those living on the streets have had far greater access to information (both positive and negative) than may have been the case in other communities.

OBSID have noted with concern the numerous reports regarding the quality of services at the Strandfontein facility. At this current time, we remain unable to satisfactorily respond to queries regarding matters including but not limited to:

- Regular provision of meals on site;
- Adequate provision of hygiene facilities and consistent enforcement of hygiene standards (including but not limited to social distancing practices);
- Consistent screening for symptoms of Covid-19;
- Access to health care for underlying chronic issues (including arrangements made to collect chronic medication for those now located away from their CHC or hospital);
- Support to and management of those going through withdrawal;
- Individual case management and access to social services;
- Unequal standards of service across the 3 vendors and in the different "tents";
- Safety of women and people with specific vulnerability to abuse or harassment;
- Safety of all in the face of instability and potential uprising;
- Sensitisation training of law enforcement personnel and other security personnel onsite;
- Access to the facility for onsite inspections by accredited bodies or partners;
- Programmatic support available.

We have noted the contents of submissions made by Ndifuna Ukwazi in their communications dated 9th and 10th of April 2020, as well as submissions made by other special interest groups.

We have again reached out to our partners to get answers to these and other questions, only to find that they had similar unanswered concerns.

On the basis of the above, and until these concerns were adequately addressed, our Board took the position late last week that we could not in good conscience advise those living on the streets to take up the offer of voluntary relocation.

The concerns expressed above are not limited to the Strandfontein facility and are likely be the same at any other similar facility.

We were advised on Friday 10th April 2020 that Strandfontein would not be taking further admissions. We have no confirmed information from the City as to what is planned for the balance of those still living on the streets.

We hope that the concerns outlined above will be addressed before other sites are activated and that there will be sufficient transparency and engagement to allow organisations such as ourselves to assess whether we can co-operate in good conscience while being able to answer questions and concerns of our community.

We also urge the City to consider the alternative of a “shelter in place” approach (or the establishment of Safe Spaces in communities as has been done at the Culemborg site). We assure you of the readiness of the OBSID, our current social development partners and the ObsCAN to work with the City structures in facilitating the establishment of a trial site in Observatory.

Again, we wish to reiterate our understanding of the difficulty of the situation in which we are all operating and specifically the challenges faced by the City.

We remain committed to working with the City on this issue – and appeal again for CIDs to be included in further operational planning as we are on the ground and well equipped to share insights into and knowledge about our communities – regardless of what structure they choose to call home.

In solidarity with the Covid-19 response.

ON BEHALF OF THE OBSERVATORY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NPC



**JODI ALLEMEIER
BOARD CHAIRPERSON**



**AMANDA KIRK
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**