



MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR ASSISTANCE MSHUDULU IN RELATION TO SERVICE DELIVERY, SAVE COURT INTERDICT, RECENT PROTESTS AND APPOINTMENTS OF SENIOR MANAGERS, ON FRIDAY, 17 APRIL 2009.

Let me first express my appreciation to all members of the media who have heeded our call for a media briefing. We are fully conscious of the fact that there are more appealing and interesting stories associated with electioneering out there but you chose to honour our invitation.

We felt as a municipality we need to interact with you to deal with a number of issues that are already in the public domain.

SERVICE DELIVERY PROTESTS

Recently you would know that there have been a number of protest actions by various groups in our community. As a municipality we did not adopt a cynical attitude and dismissed these as mere electioneering ploys but we fully engaged our people and responded to their needs.

You would all remember that early in January this year, residents of Rus-ter-vaal were up in arms raising important issues. We are pleased to announce that most of their issues such as housing, street lighting, maintenance of sport facilities, refuse removal etc were attended to and resolved.

This was followed by protests in Sebokeng, Palm Springs and Beverly Hills about possible evictions by banks. We moved swiftly again and resolved their issues. As we speak now the situation is under control in those areas.

Likewise we experienced violent protests again in Tshepiso North Extension 3 where residents barricaded roads and burnt tyres, angered by the slow movement in allocation of houses. In no time we acted decisively and ensured speedy allocation of housing units to their rightful owners. We are still continuing with the allocation and fixing defective units in this area.

There were many other protest actions in areas such as Sebokeng Zone 6, 3 and 14. In all these areas we intervened and addressed the needs of our communities.

We have also out of our own volition visited places like Maplankeng, Malgere, Evaton, Roshnee, Boitumelo and others to assess our interventions and corrected various weaknesses identified. I have formed a trouble-shooting team led by the Acting Municipal Manager and staff in my office to monitor progress in various areas where we have identified weaknesses in service delivery. This team looks at quick wins such as street lighting, grass cutting, refuse removal, crating of roads and general cleanliness.

SERVICE DELIVERY HIGHLIGHTS

Over and above these interventions we have achieved significant milestones in delivery over the period under review, which include inter alia, the following:

- R52 million spent on maintenance of road infrastructure,
- Installation of high mast lights in Boipatong, Rus-ter-vaal, Roshnee, Sebokeng, Lakeside and Debonair Park,
- Repaired 155 high mast lights in Sharpeville
- Replacing 4 840 lamps in Vereeniging, Sebokeng, Evaton, Bophelong, Boipatong and Boitumelo,
- 1142 light fittings were replaced
- Replacing 708 Traffic signal lamps,
- Secured funding for electrification of Tshepong,

- Provision of Bulk Water supply in Sonderwater for 1200 units
- Providing over 37 000 240litter bins as part of the Evaton Renewal Project,
- Launched three Thusong Centres in Bophelong, Evaton and Sebokeng,
- Upgraded Sewer System in Kwa-Masiza and secured funding the upgrading of the Hostel into family units,
- Securing funding for housing development in Rus-ter-Vaal and Quaggasfontein of over 5000 housing units;
- Rehabilitation and upgrading of Leeukuil and Reitspruit Water Care Works for over R120 million.
- Providing job opportunities to over 1000 people through Extended Public Works Programme
- Attracting investments of over R3 billion in housing developments, building of hotels, retail centres and expansion of existing retail businesses.

COURT INTERDICT BY SAVE AGAINST EMFULENI

We have been inundated with enquiries from the media wanting to find out the reasons for the interdict by SAVE. Yes indeed there was a court action by SAVE on 09 April 2009, which sought to hold us in contempt of court, to have our Acting Municipal Manager and one of our senior technician jailed for a period of 90 days and four months order for us to rectify the situation regarding the pollution of the Vaal River.

However, the ELM contracted an independent company (ERWAT). The analysis presented to court showed that there has been a great improvement since December 2008 and that the municipality has spared no effort to ensure compliance with the set standards by DWAF and the court order.

Naturally, the question that arises therefore is where did SAVE obtain their analysis which is not similar to that which the ELM presented to court? Or whether the organisation wants to see matter resolved amicably. Does the organisation view itself as a partner or opponents to the ELM on the question of a clean environment? If this was the case they would have approached the Municipality to check if we had complied with the court order and we would have presented them with the same analysis that we presented to court.

Currently we can say without fear of contradiction that the ELM is about 75% compliant with the standards set by DWAF and National Water Act of 1998. The court has given us further four months to correct the situation.

The upgrading of the Reitspruit Water Treatment Works is well on course. Currently the operational status of the plant is at an acceptable level. Although some of the component would still need to be replaced and others refurbished in order to be fully functional.

The quality of effluent that is discharged so far into the river is complying with the set standard. The second phase is going to focus on all the components that are outstanding on the treatment plant that would require replacement.

The personnel at the Water Treatment Works e.g. operators, process controllers etc are on an ongoing training provided by ERWAT to up skill them on range of operational, process and management issues of the plant. Maintenance which has been somehow given scant attention has also been upgraded.

ERWAT also assist the ELM with the analysis of effluent samples on an ongoing basis, as part of monitoring to ensure compliance of our effluent discharge in the river. The latest report compiled in February 2009, on chemical and bacterial results show a compliance of effluent discharge with the set standards.

CAPACITATING OUR DELIVERY MACHINERY

We had made an undertaking in our 100 days plan among others, to fill about 400 mission critical positions. I am pleased to announce that so far we have filled over 200 of these positions. I am confident that by June 2009 over 300 positions will be filled. Of these positions were very critical positions of four senior managers namely:

Deputy Municipal Manager for Corporate Service, where we have appointed Ms Lindi Mahlangu, who worked for the municipality previously and went to join Tshwane University of Technology. She is now back with us. We also appointed Mr. Alpheus Ramokolo as a Deputy Municipal Manager for Basic Services, who was with the Polokwane Municipality heading their department of Water Affairs.

For the position of Chief Financial Officer, we appointed Mr. Ahmed Lambat who was the chairperson of our Portfolio Committee on Finance and a qualified Chartered Accountant. Lastly, we also appointed Mr. Diek Mahlaba as a Manager for Employment Equity from the Department of Labour.

You might have also noticed that we have advertised the position of the Municipal Manager and hopefully a decision will be made before the commencement of the new financial year.

I am confident that we have made important strides in our quest to accelerate service delivery in Emfuleni. If we all join hands we can achieve more.

I thank you.