

MATWA CALMS DOWN FUMING RESIDENTS

November 9, 2012

Kopanong Local Municipality mayor, Xolile Matwa, and his team of mayoral councillors met with hundreds of Edenburg residents on Tuesday to address their service delivery challenges.

The purpose of the meeting, which was held at Edenburg community hall, was to respond to the community's two memorandums which were delivered to Matwa's office recently.

The first memorandum was delivered in February this year, with several demands which included the reconnection of electricity; money refunds; the construction of houses and the dismissal of a municipality employee, who they allege is corrupt.

Some of the residents who attended Tuesday's meeting said they were very poor and could not afford to pay for services and therefore demanded that Matwa ensure that all indigent families were given free services. They further demanded the removal of municipal employees who they claimed were sick and could not execute their duties.

The indigent community members were infuriated by letters they had received from the municipality lawyers demanding that they pay for services. They threatened to take the matter further to the public protector if the authorities went ahead with the legal action against them. Other community members demanded sites where they could build their houses.

Matwa told the community that his office had worked with a task team that was elected by the community, to address all their demands without any confrontations.

Even though previous gatherings were not a success, Matwa and his team did not shy away from facing the community again. Police were present to keep an eye on proceedings in case the meeting turned violent.

For his part, the mayor said he had taken note of the communities' concerns. He did not deny that the municipality had sent letters demanding payments to the community members. He said when the letters were sent, his office was aware of the indigent families and had previously advised them to register with the municipality's office to avoid such legal action. Matwa promised that the requested developments would start within two weeks.

"As for the people who are demanding land, they can identify suitable areas where they believe they can occupy and live in harmony."

The municipal manager, Lebo Moletsane, disclosed there were plans to put the sick employees on medical parole. "After verifying that they were no longer fit to continue with their jobs, their positions were immediately advertised.

She said the municipalities will move swiftly to ensure that all the indigent households are registered. "As for the indigent, I promise that, very soon, a team from the Kopanong Local Municipality will make door to door visits to identify the indigent families. And, those who qualify will be given a chance to register their names."

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Tieho Motaung, from the department of human settlements, said it was the contractors' responsibility to remove electricity meter boxes which still remained in shacks even after the construction of RDP houses, and install them in the new houses.

"To meet residents halfway, we will work with Centlec to reconnect the meters in the houses. Under the current budget, the aim of human settlements department is to complete the unfinished houses," said Motaung.

One of the community members, Dipuo Moeti, said she was satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. She said although she has been living in a depilated RDP house for years, she believes that, together with his task team, the mayor would be able to reach out to the residents.

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