

# Inanda: Road woes

HOUSING and the bad state of roads in the Inanda, Ntuzuma and New Town A area dominated the budget hearing at the New Town A hall.

"We have heard this before but we have yet to see development in our area," said resident Bhkinkosi Ntshangase.

"How are we supposed to trust you? We want to, but how? There is no tangible evidence that there ever was a development initiative, or there ever will be," Ntshangase said.

He was speaking after Head of Skills Development Gugu Mji had presented the draft budget to residents of zone 14, incorporating wards 3, 38, 42, 43, 44, 55 and 56.

"Municipalities are required by law to encourage community participation in their budgets. By coming to you and getting your views we want to ensure the money we get from you as ratepayers is used correctly to bring services to you," Mji said.

Some residents complained that the Municipality was not responding quickly to matters concerning them and had made empty promises.

Sipho Mthethwa, a resident, said: "We need to applaud the restructuring of the rates; it will help a lot of people. Pensioners and other people are going to pay according to their property values. However, my concern is that in the documents and the presentation of the hearing there are no programmes or budgets for developing the youth", he said.

"We may not be able to answer all your queries, but we will ensure they reach them and that you get a response from your ward Councillor," said Mji.

THE 60 or so people who attended Saturday's draft budget hearing in Verulam heard that R8.995-billion would be needed to unlock the development of eThekweni's northern corridor.

This would include spending on road infrastructure (R2.959-

UMLAZI residents used the budget hearing at the V Hall to seek clarity from presenter Thomas Mketelwa on issues that affect them. They were also quick to congratulate the Municipality on a job well done so far.

One resident urged the Municipality to consider placing closed-circuit surveillance cameras in the area to reduce crime. "These

## Municipality congratulated in Umlazi

cameras play a significant role in crime prevention in the city centre and it would be proper for a safe city to institute these in the townships," the resident said.

Another said he was happy that the Municipality was involving them in decision-making processes such as the Integrated Development Plan. "I want to thank the Council for enlightening us on the rates," he said.

Residents demanded legal dumpsites and that rates on vacant land be increased to encourage owners to release land to developers.



**PEOPLE POWER: Victor Hlathi requests a chance to comment during the budget hearing in Inanda Newtown A Hall at the weekend**

Picture: THEMBA KHUMALO

## Bread-and-butter issues

ONLY 60 residents attended the hearing at Hammarsdale, Mpumalanga, a poor showing given the zone is made up of five wards.

Cllr Sbu Gumede lamented the low turnout, but Siphwe Madondo's presentation was efficient and there was no lack of questions.

Not much was said on the budget presentation, though.

While residents thanked the Municipality for being transparent, it became clear they viewed the hearing as a platform to voice bread-and-butter issues.

They complained about water leaks, saying they had stopped reporting them

because they were never attended to.

Illegal dumps, uncut verges, unswept roads, poor sanitation and no children's playgrounds were other gripes voiced.

Attempts by Cllr Fana Moyo, who chaired the hearing, to refocus on the budget were in vain. He urged the Communications Department to distribute leaflets with important numbers so that people would know who to contact with problems.

He asked the Community Participation Unit to organise Masakhane campaign activities to help

provide information.

One resident said that as much as they were happy with the budget, they were not satisfied with the way the city monitored capital projects and repair work.

He also wanted to know when and how property valuations were done.

Gumede urged residents to contact with their ward councillors. He said most of the issues raised at the hearing could be resolved at ward meetings.

He apologised that the budget document was only available in English and said the Municipality would look into this for future hearings.

## North needs R9bn

billion), public transport (R21m), sewerage, including new treatment works and pumping schemes (R1.064-billion), water (R1.024-billion), electricity (R1.838-billion), and solid waste

(R10-million).

Major projects for Zone 16, incorporating wards 51, 58, 59, 60, 61 and 62, include electricity substations in Tongaat (R42.3-million) and La Mercy (R14.5-million).

Most of the concerns raised by residents related to property rates, valuations and the rates randage.

Several pensioners raised concerns about how they would afford the new rates.

Most ratepayers left better informed, but many remained unhappy about the valuations.

# Tempers flare in Pinetown

SUNDAY'S budget hearing at the Pinetown Civic Centre deteriorated into chaos early when presenter Ntokozo Chonco, Head of the Community Participation Department, spoke in isiZulu and English to a predominantly white audience.

In accordance with the Municipality's language policy, Chonco was translating as he went along for the benefit of Zulu speakers.

Members of the audience jeered, stomped their feet and even stormed up to the stage, shouting at Chonco, refusing to let the meeting proceed until DA councillor, Tex Collins, appealed for calm.

## Stormed out

But when Chonco continued to translate his presentation into Zulu about half the people who had packed the hall stormed out.

Even more left when they realised they would have to sit through the entire budget presentation before being given a chance to ask questions and voice their concerns about rates.

Those who stayed heard an explanation of how the proposed rates randage had been decided on, viewed a comparison with other major

cities, and heard how the money earmarked for their area was going to be used in the next financial year.

A major portion of the budget proposed for Area 2, consisting of wards 1, 2, 4, 8, and 9, will be pumped into providing infrastructure and services to the largely rural areas.

## Housing

Of the about R235-million to be spent, most will go to housing projects for Lower Langerfontein (R30-million), Rietvallei (R20-million), Molweni (R19-million) and water projects for Thousand Hills (R16-million) and Lower Maphephetheni (R11.1-million).

Questions and comments centred around unfair valuations, clarification of rates rebates, and strong opposition to the rates randage and the budget.

Mlotshwa Mahlase of KwaXimba, however, felt that the people needed to see beyond the rates issue.

"The budget as a whole is a good one as it addresses the plight of the poor," he said.

Thami Gwala of Ward 4 supported the budget even though it would not satisfy everybody.

He sympathised with those who would have to pay higher rates.

## Draft budget hailed

DESPITE heated arguments over the choice of language preference during presentations, dissatisfaction with the current rates system and load-shedding, the Municipal draft budget was hailed as fair at a Saturday budget hearing at the Pinetown Civic Centre.

Shunnon Tulsiram, of the City's Economic Development Unit, presented the draft budget to residents from wards in

area 17 and several of them said they were pleased that it addressed the needs of the previously disadvantaged.

But the new market-related rates and valuation process were the burning issues of the day, prompting Tulsiram to advise residents to use all relevant channels to exercise their democratic right to be heard.

"People still have the opportunity to send us their concerns and comments until the 22 April," he said.

## Bumper KwaMashu turn-out R4m earmarked for Phoenix

THE acceleration of service delivery could only be achieved if Councillors were to properly monitor development projects and do continuous follow-ups in their respective wards.

That was the message to emerge from the draft budget hearing at KwaMashu's Indoor Sports Centre, where hundreds of residents from five wards in area 15 had converged.

The gathering was one of the better attended of 17 budget hearings in the metro aimed at giving ratepayers an opportunity to raise

questions and concerns about the budget.

Despite welcoming the draft budget, residents voiced concerns over lack of sidewalks and speed humps on the township's roads.

There were also concerns that weekly refuse collections were not enough, which was causing sanitation problems. It was suggested that waste be collected at least twice a week.

A presentation, by Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu Area Based Management official Linda Mbonambi, on free basic services outlined in

the draft document proved the highlight of the event.

Long-time resident, Bheki Msane, said: "In spite of challenges of service delivery, it is fulfilling to see that the Council is making strides towards accommodating the previously disadvantaged, especially pensioners and indigent families."

Various municipal departments, including housing, health, electricity, Councillors and representatives of community-based organisations attended the hearing.

MORE than R4-million of the City's draft budget for 2008/2009 will be dedicated to housing, roads and stormwater maintenance in Phoenix and its surrounds.

This was one of the highlights at the budget hearing at Whetstone Library, where residents of Area 13 turned out in their numbers.

Attempts by some residents to disrupt proceedings by protesting against rates valuations were short lived as the police arrived and protesters quietly filtered into the venue.

Some of the area-specific projects accounted for in the budget include housing in Amaoti, Bhambayi and White City, road maintenance and pavements in Avonford Crescent, Lawnhaven Drive and Bramford road, a hall in Waterloo and stormwater maintenance in Batonmore Drive, Ringwood Avenue and Palladium Street.

Cllr Maxwell Mbili, who helped chair the hearing, said the budget for the area was adequate.

"This budget is a reflection of the priorities listed by

ward committees and will attend to the needs of this community."

Mbili said the needs of the poor were being given priority through the provision of the first nine kilolitres of water and 50 kilowatts of electricity free to all residents, subject to certain conditions.

The area, encompassing wards 49, 50, 52, 53, 54 and 57, is regarded as one of eThekweni's better developed areas, with all households having water and refuse removal and 86% having electricity.