

Speaker meets protesters

KEN MCHUNU

HUNDREDS of disgruntled KwaManciza residents, near Ntuzuma, this week blockaded roads outside the Remant Alton bus depot in the area, leaving hundreds of commuters stranded.

They were protesting a lack of service delivery in their ward (45), and demanded answers from the City.

Council Speaker James Nxumalo went to the scene on the Mayor Obed Mlaba's behalf to talk to protesters.

He said the angry crowd from the informal settlement complained about a lack of housing and sanitation, and demanded a school be built in the area, as their children had to walk far to get to school.

About 13 protesters were injured when the police fired rubber bullets. Seven arrests were made.

Nxumalo said the City's Housing Committee had inspected the KwaManciza area in November to see if a housing project could be established. He said the inspection followed a similar protest in September, where residents demanded housing from the Council.

Appeal

Using a loudhailer, Nxumalo told the crowd that the City was working on finalising a housing project for KwaManciza and a request had been made to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for a school to be built.

He showed protesters a letter from Education MEC Ina Cronje that said investigators would be sent to the area to see if a school could be established. He urged the community to bear with Council as efforts were being made to meet their needs.

Protesters also complained about their irregular water supply, to which the Speaker responded by immediately phoning eThekweni Water and Sanitation to inform them.

It emerged that a reservoir was blocked, and now two tankers are being sent to provide water until the problem is solved.

A follow-up meeting between the Speaker, Chairman of the City's Housing Committee, Councillor Nigel Gumede and representatives of the Education Department, was due to take place on Wednesday. At the time of going to press, the outcome of the meeting was not known to the *eZasegasini Metro*.

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ABOVE: DSW remove advertising on UMngeni Road

RIGHT: A DSW worker finds a makeshift dwelling near the railway lines at the intersection of Margaret Mncadi (Victoria Embankment) and Maydon Wharf Road



ABOVE: A worker discovers liquor in a trader's cubicle at Warwick Junction



ABOVE: Vagrants have been blamed for some of the filth in Durban

Pictures: DERRICK DLAMINI

iTrump night clear-ups hit the spot

DERRICK DLAMINI

"KEEP our pavements clean." That's the plea to business, informal traders and the public from the Municipality after recent night clear-up operations led by the Inner Thekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme (iTrump) recently.

The night operations have proved effective, with about

1 700 tons of debris removed from the inner city since they were started 10 years ago.

The initiative targets illegal structures, including makeshift shacks, unwanted items, street furniture, crates and boxes left on pavements which, officials said, contributed to crime at night.

Acting iTrump Manager Hoosen Moolla said: "Criminals use the illegal structures

as sleeping places and hide-outs from police. In many containers and structures we've discovered drugs and alcohol being sold.

"Our night special operations play a vital role in dealing with this. Our objective is to clean-up the city and get rid of things that contribute to crime and grime," Moolla said.

"By doing these operations,

we are able to gather valuable intelligence from the streets."

Thanks to the success of the operations in the city centre, they have been introduced in areas in south Durban.

Other municipal departments involved in the operations are Durban Solid Waste, Metro Police, the Business Support Unit, and Protection Services.

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Joy as tenants get title deeds

ROMITA HANUMAN

ENTHUSIASTIC shouts and tears of joy greeted a Municipal delegation at the Greenbury Community Hall in Phoenix last week to hand out title deeds to residents.

The ownership of 1 200 Council flats is being transferred to residents, many of whom have lived in them for decades.

"I am so excited. This is the first time I am owning a home, I am very happy. Thank you eThekweni Muni-

cipality," said Gugu Ntuli, another new homeowner.

"I have been waiting for almost 10 years. I am so glad the Municipality has taken this great step," said Mrs K Reddy.

Deputy Mayor Logie Naidoo said: "These are now your houses, so please save water and electricity, and keep your accounts down. Think about energy saving every day."

Naidoo said about R750 000 had been spent on upgrading the former Council flats.

"We replaced window-frames, doors, and did painting. We want people to own flats that are decent and one's they can be proud of."

"You are allowed to upgrade your flats, however you cannot do structural work that will affect other owners in the same block."

Residents were also told about rates. "If anybody owns a flat that is worth less than R120 000, they are exempt from paying rates."

"The City has taken a decision that pensioners and old

folk shall not pay rates if their homes are worth less than R400 000," Naidoo said.

He later dismissed opposition party claims that the hand-over amounted to electioneering.

He said no one could force residents to vote for the ANC.

"Even if I told them to vote ANC because I'm giving them homes an individual has the right to put the cross where they want. People are not stupid that they can't think for themselves," he said.

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Energy Office sparks power-saving drive

MACK MAKHATHINI

THE City launched an Energy Office at a candlelight luncheon at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre last week.

The office, which employs five energy specialists, is aimed at educating citizens on how to save energy and use it more efficiently.

Deputy Mayor Logie Naidoo said the City wants

households to cut energy use by 10% and to put energy-saving mechanisms in place.

Councillor Visvin Reddy and other councillors read an energy-saving pledge at the launch.

Busani Ngcaweni, of the Deputy President's office, congratulated eThekweni and encouraged other municipalities to follow suit with similar initiatives, for the good of the environment.

Energy Office Manager Manoj Singh said they were committed to improving Durban's energy efficiency, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy sources.

Partnership

"To achieve this we will form partnership with voluntary organisations, the government, colleges and

universities, businesses and the public," he said.

Singh said the Municipality planned to lead by example and was surveying its buildings to see how energy was being used so plans could be made to cut use.

A "Switch off, Unplug and Save" energy awareness campaign is now under way and will continue to provide technical advice on cutting energy use.

The Energy Office has hired consultants to develop a plan for the use of solar energy. It will later be made available for public comment.

The office's other responsibilities include helping develop green projects, securing funding for projects, helping develop by-laws to support green energy use, and creating incentives for clean energy use.

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IN BRIEF

Gandhi's life celebrated

ABOUT 300 people packed the Gujarati Hindu Sanskriti Kendra Hall near Greyville last week, to mark the 61st anniversary of the death of Mahatma Gandhi.

The event was organised by the Consulate General of India and the Gandhi Development Trust.

The Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature, Willies Mchunu, said although Gandhi's life was taken away by an assassin's bullet, his spirit lives on.

He encouraged the audience to be guided by Gandhi's beliefs so that reconciliation could be achieved. "South Africa was fortunate to have this icon brought into the country at a young age," said Mchunu.

Also at the event were the Judge President of KwaZulu-Natal, Vuka Tshabalala, Bishop Ruben Phillips of the KZN Christian Council, Consul General of India, Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla, and the Mahatma's grand-daughter, Ila Gandhi.

Nominate a legend

DO YOU know of a Durban-born person who deserves recognition for his or her contribution to society?

After the success of last year's Living Legends campaign and gala awards, the City is now seeking nominations for the 2009 event in the fields of sports, music, arts and drama, politics, and social responsibility.

Nominations must include a brief profile and motivation.

Send them to Mlungisi Ngubane, Director of the KwaMuhle Museum, at 031 311 2222 or e-mail Ngubanem@durban.gov.za, or Hlengiwe Tenza, Education Officer at Old Court House, at 031 311 2228, or e-mail Tenzah@durban.gov.za.

The closing date is 27 February.

Election day announced

PRESIDENT Kgalema Motlanthe has announced 22 April as the date for South Africans to go to the polls for the country's fourth democratic elections.

The Independent Electoral Commission said more than one million people used the final weekend for voter registration to register, re-register or check their status at voter registration stations across the country.

Learn how to sail a dinghy

POINT Yacht Club invites families interested in learning more about youth dinghy sailing to attend their beginner's open day on Sunday. Call 031 301 4787 or 083 432 4354.