

Daily News

Former KZN legislature in uLundi still operating, functional: Public Works

Durban - Infrequent visitors to uLundi, in northern KwaZulu-Natal, would be forgiven for thinking the old legislature building became a white elephant when the provincial government relocated its sittings to Pietermaritzburg. Little has been said about the facility since the relocation 13 years ago. However, those who are regulars to the Zulu nation's traditional capital would know the massive modern facility, the face of the rural town, was still a hive of activity with various government departments occupying it.

The building and gardens appear to be well maintained, with some minor damage seen on the doors inside. There is also round-the-clock security. Mbulelo Baloyi, Public Works provincial spokesperson, said the building was operating, although it is no longer used for its original purpose. The democratic government abandoned the uLundi building when the ANC took over the province from the IFP in 2004, with S'bu Ndebele replacing Lionel Mtshali as Premier. "Most of Zululand's regional government offices are there. The office building is fully functional," said Baloyi.

The offices are occupied by various Zululand regional departments such as education, human settlements, health, public works, transport and community safety and liaison. The Zululand District Municipality also occupies space. Baloyi said the former legislature building, situated behind the office facility, was used to hold government meetings and conferences "as part of cost-cutting measures, instead of using private properties such as Holiday Inn".

King Goodwill Zwelithini also uses the the facility for meetings. Last week, the king and Education MEC Mthandeni Dlungwane addressed principals in the building, which is also where the KZN House of Traditional Leaders sits. "Each department uses its own budget to maintain the space it occupies, or sometimes they ask Public Works to do it for them and re-imburse us."

Baloyi said the former legislature building would continue to be used as a government facility in the future. Inkosi Phathisizwe Chiliza, KwaZulu-Natal House of Traditional Leaders chairperson, said the buildings should be officially handed to the king.

"His majesty always says when Parliament relocated, the building should have been handed to him to be used as a chamber of traditional leadership. This should be the Zulu king's facility officially. With current negotiations between the king and

government, such agreement could be reached. A senior official at the Zululand District Municipality, who did not have authority to speak to the media, applauded Public Works for regularly updating water bills.

“The only money due to us is R2756 for water and R88.98 for sewerage. The building does not default when it comes to services. These buildings are in B-North and South, C and D-sections. They owe the district about R5million from 2005 to date. D-Section alone owes up R1.1m in water dating back to 2014. “We had been trying to cut off or limit water supply to defaulting tenants, but they would illegally restore it. We have 37 households that have illegally reconnected water.”

The official said that in February the district’s credit control department held a meeting with Public Works to get it to pay for water supplied for homes instead of the district directly billing the tenants. “Government employees do not pay, and some houses belonging to Public Works are occupied illegally, which is why we need Public Works to pay.”

Baloyi said water was to be paid by the tenants, “because when they moved into the houses, they registered with the district to be responsible for the bills”. “The department is only responsible for rates. We are not responsible to pay for water used by individual consumers.”

Daily News