

Hundreds wait for temporary jobs while officials bicker

Frustration as huge

Bay clean-up stalls

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A multimillion-rand campaign to clean up Nelson Mandela Bay's townships and the northern areas, which is expected to provide temporary work to 200 unemployed people, has been stonewalled.

After weeks of delays in getting the project off the ground, a senior manager has turned in desperation to acting city manager Noxolo Nqwazi, asking her to step in and rescue the campaign.

The metro's public health political head, Yolisa Pali, has twice put a stop to attempts by acting executive director Tsietsi Mokonyane to get mayoral committee approval, saying she wanted to "get involved" in the "Green and Clean" project.

Adding to this, Pali allegedly told Mokonyane that she wanted to amend the mayoral agenda item, which would be in contravention of municipal procedures.

The R5.8m project, once rolled out, is set to create 200 temporary jobs through the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP).

The plan was to implement the project from November 1 to December 31 – before an anticipated increase in the volumes of rubbish over the festive season.

In a memorandum to Nqwazi, Mokonyane wrote: "On 31 October the MMC [Pali] advised that she would

be amending the item and furnishing the outstanding information and then resubmitting the item to the mayoral committee herself.

"The department was and remains concerned by the deviation from normal procedures as amendments to items are required to be done by the official administrators of the institution and not political principals."

Mokonyane said his department had as yet no knowledge of the status of the report

'The department is extremely concerned by the delay'

Tsietsi Mokonyane
ACTING PUBLIC HEALTH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

to the mayoral committee.

"The department is extremely concerned by the delay in the implementation of this project as the timetable and work required for a successful conclusion of the project has now been seriously jeopardised with the continual delays for reasons unknown to this department."

In the letter, he warned that the delay would lead to a massive backlog of waste.

Other consequences of delaying the project include:

- Increased illegal dumping;
- A deterioration in the standard of cleanliness in townships;

- Further delays in the turnaround time for complaints;
- The amount of litter would be doubled;
- Excessive overspending in the budget due to overtime hours that would have to be worked to get the areas clean on time; and
- Underspending on ward-based community projects as the budget would not be spent in the time frames as planned.

"Taking cognisance of the aforementioned concerns, this department requests your urgent intervention to secure the timeous resolution," Mokonyane wrote.

At the October 24 mayoral committee meeting, Pali asked the Bay's new mayor, Mongameli Bobani, to defer the report on the clean-up project as she wanted to "get involved".

She was, however, instructed by Bobani to withdraw the statement as the media – whom he referred to as "Ward 61" – would call it interference.

Pali subsequently withdrew her statement and rephrased her input, saying the item lacked some information.

She did not say what information she sought.

Mokonyane said in his letter to Nqwazi that he had attempted to ascertain what additional information she required, but he was still unsure what the cause for delay was.

The letter was dated November 13. However, on Thursday Nqwazi said the matter had been resolved.



DESPERATE PLEA: Acting city manager Noxolo Nqwazi was asked to help rescue the clean-up campaign

"There is no such thing. This item served before the mayoral committee was withdrawn on the basis that the MMC [Pali] needed to inquire about some of the content of the report.

"It's important that executive directors brief their MMCs, and when MMCs have not been taken on board it becomes a problem when they have to speak on the items," Nqwazi said.

She said she understood that Pali had confused the project with another ongoing project involving co-operatives cleaning up in Bay townships and the northern areas.

Nqwazi said she had since discussed the matter with Pali

and they had signed off on the "Green and Clean" project, which could now go ahead.

The clean-up campaign is meant to be rolled out across wards in the northern areas, Uitenhage, Motherwell and Despatch, as well as some suburbs.

The aim is to clear the areas of illegal dumping sites, to ensure litter is picked up in public areas and to raise awareness about the need to safeguard the environment. The project also involves grass-cutting and bush-clearing.

The municipality's EPWP office is supposed to handle the recruitment process, which will see officials sifting through the CVs of job-seekers, which

are then submitted to the offices of ward councillors. The names are added to a database and selected from there.

During a public health portfolio meeting in October, some ANC councillors said the city needed to look at allowing ward councillors to be more involved in the recruitment process.

After declining to comment earlier in the day and referring questions to municipal spokesperson Mthubanzi Mniki, Pali later said: "I do understand the urgency of [these] items and the implications thereof.

"It is our responsibility as politicians to make sure all the items we pass through council processes are competent enough and meet all the expectations of what the current administration wants to achieve."

Pali said she needed to know where the money for the project would come from.

"As an MMC I also need to know the budget amount of the project. These are the issues I will have to account for in council committees, and ultimately in council.

"If seeking information and demanding transparency is viewed as interference, let it be."

Pali said that the new administration aimed to achieve "strict political oversight".

"It is pointless that I [do not] do my oversight work in the fear of being accused of political interference."