

■ UNREST

City won't say how vets' pay shot up

Angry, rampaging municipal workers demanding the same deal as privileged 55, while mayor says a probe is under way

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THE eThekweni Municipality refuses to explain how the salaries of 55 military uMkhonto we Sizwe military veterans more than doubled in a year, saying that the matter was being investigated.

Mayor Zandile Gumede said a report would be released after this investigation and only then would she speak on the matter.

Gumede, who has been accused of ordering the veterans to be hired, also denied having anything to do with employing and firing staff.

On Tuesday, the city's water, sanitation and electricity employees embarked on a strike and went on a rampage in the Durban CBD, upset over the increases given to the veterans, which took their salaries from R9000 to R20000 a month.

The strikers are demanding the same be done for them.

On Tuesday, the city said it had decided to halt the increases for the veterans, pending a probe.

"I am worried about the current situation in the city. I tried to intervene last week when a go-slow started and at that time we were dealing with the floods. I reported the matter at a meeting with the provincial executive and the premier appointed a task team. It was already being dealt with at the time," said Gumede.

She said the team met well into the night on Monday and Wednesday and she was a part of those meetings.

Yesterday, hundreds of workers used municipal trucks to block roads in the CBD, including Pixley KaSeme (West), Anton Lembede (Smith) and Monty Naicker (Pine) streets, causing major traffic congestion.

They marched to the city hall, where they gathered as their union representatives met city officials.

The strikers rejected the city's proposal to take their matter to the central bargaining council today or on Monday.



HUNDREDS of striking eThekweni Municipality workers who were gathered at the Durban City Hall yesterday rejected the city's proposal to take their matter to the central bargaining council today or on Monday. | Bongani Mbatha African News Agency (ANA)



CITY manager Sipho Nzuza addresses striking eThekweni Municipality workers.

However, the SA Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) accepted the proposal late yesterday afternoon.

The union's Jaycee Ncanana said

they accepted going to the council because the city was not forthcoming with other options.

"After lengthy consultations between us and the union representatives, we decided to refer the matter to the central bargaining council for further negotiations and determination.

"Discussions at the bargaining council will start on Monday and are expected to be concluded within 30 days," he said.

A task team under the guidance of Premier Willies Mchunu and Public Works MEC Ravi Pillay has been set up to review this process.

City manager Sipho Nzuza appealed to the workers to resume their duties with immediate effect.

"The principle of no work, no pay will apply and workers could face disciplinary action as the city has obtained an interdict, making it unlawful to participate in this strike," he said.

Yesterday, the hostile crowd became

violent towards people taking pictures and videos of them as they marched down Pixley KaSeme Street, forcing them to delete images and footage.

And at the city hall they chanted "We have no money, Gumede", "You messed up, Zandile" as well as "We want Grade 10".

Meanwhile, 80 contractors under the city's water and sanitation department will also march to the city hall on Monday to hand over a memorandum regarding payments owed to them by the city.

One of these contractors, Skhumbuzo Sibiya, said they were owed money from last year by the city – on average each contractor was owed at least R100000.

"I am owed R200 000. This is for work done from March to September. Our efforts to get our money through officials at the Springfield plant have been fruitless and that is why we now want the city manager to intervene," he said.



There was a strong police presence at the Durban City Hall as workers gathered while their Samwu union leaders met management inside.