

■ SECURITY

Tender fight goes to city hall

Officials under siege by threatening crowd demanding contracts be awarded to them

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A SENIOR eThekweni official fears returning to his office after being attacked by dozens of men who demanded contracts from the municipality.

A shaken Thembinkosi Ngcobo, the Parks and Recreation head, believes the men were Umkhonto weSizwe veterans.

Ngcobo said he was at his offices on Wednesday when a group of about 20 men stormed his office and demanded to speak to him.

They complained that Ngcobo's department wasn't giving them tenders. He was told there were more angry men outside the building. Ngcobo tried to pacify them.

They were "howling most of the time", he said. "It was highly chaotic."

He told the men he did not handle tenders. Police were called to the scene to help control the situation.

Ngcobo said there had been three similar instances last year where he was harangued by the controversial Delangakubona and other business forums, demanding tenders.

He had told his employers about the security breaches and feared for the safety of municipal staff, who had been

traumatised by the incidents.

Ngcobo said he feared going to his office because he felt insecure, and that the working conditions made him unproductive. He said this year's "attack" was by the biggest he had experienced in his years in office.

Metro police spokesperson Senior Superintendent Parboo Sewpersad said they had sent their officers to disperse the men.

eThekweni municipal manager Siphon Nzuza said he had heard of the incident and had talked to provincial police commissioner Khombinkosi Jula about finding ways to beef up security around the offices and to stop the attacks on the city's officials.

He said Ngcobo was not the only person to be attacked by angry people.

Nzuza said there needed to be an assessment of which spaces needed more security.

He cited the city's Supply Chain Management unit at its Old Fort Road Engineering building, where boxes containing tender documents with sensitive information had been vandalised. Security at the building was improved afterwards.

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