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# Funded budget a turning point

## Liezl Scheepers

May 30 marked a significant milestone for the Ngwathe Local Municipality with a first ever fully funded budget of R2.099b tabled for the 2025/26 financial year.

The budget, presented by executive mayor Clr Victoria de Beer-Mthombeni, during the State of the Municipality Address (SoMA), put a strong focus on service delivery.

With senior management appointed, the municipal leadership has been strengthened in the past year, and job creation and economic development stimulated through various major development projects announced.

These include the Damlaagte Solar Plant, the Sedibe Solar Project, a mixed-use development between Schonkenville and Tumahole to include a retail mall and housing, and the Parys Mega development planned along the R59.

Ngwathe invested in a new municipal fleet including 13 bakkies, a honey sucker, two

cherry pickers, three compactor trucks and a TLB to improve service delivery response time and operational capacity.

Another milestone is the re-establishing of Ngwathe's long-defunct traffic unit to among other boost by-law enforcement and generate revenue.

The mayor spoke on the refurbishment of the water treatment plant, mentioning areas in Tumahole that started receiving water for the first time in years.

The municipality is also one of only two in the Free State to have its Blue Drop Corrective Action Plans approved by Department of Water and Sanitation.

Capital projects underway include the refurbishment of the Parys Water Treatment Plant, 2km paved roads in Vredefort, 3km waterborne sanitation in Phiritona, sewer upgrades in Kwakwatsi, a pipeline construction between Koppies and Edenville and an industrial sewer line development. Capital project funding amounts to R135m.

The mayor said infrastructure

rollouts across all Ngwathe towns created 562 jobs through municipal grants and Expanded Public Works Programme.

What is of note is the mayor's mention of the deputy minister for tourism that has started assessments for upgrading the Mimosa Gardens.

"With all responsibilities and accountabilities ascribed to persons in specific positions (as opposed to 'acting' positions), the municipality now finally moved forward with a funded budget that we can support," the non-political community organisation, Aaron, said in response to the budget.

Aaron in their statement emphasised that a funded budget was also one of the key recommendations during a recent community meeting on the IDP and budget held on May 19.

The organisation added that many of the concerns mentioned during the public meeting are in the process of being remedied.

"In addition, and support of the above, we encourage an in-depth investigation into overtime, and



From left is the municipal manager, Dr Fethuli Mothamaha, the executive mayor, Clr Victoria de Beer-Mthombeni, and the director technical services, Patricia Morokolo.

support the implementation of a 'three shift system' as proposed by the late Clr Philip van der Merwe." Aaron said in their statement.

They requested all underspending and unspent funds (should it occur) be clearly explained.

With regard to the Auditor-General's Consolidated Report on Local Government Audit Outcomes for 2023-2024, the organisation highlighted several concerns including non-

compliance with procurement and contract management legislation, Ngwathe's lack of proper performance management systems and records, little or no action to address material irregularities and late payments to Eskom and Department of Water and Sanitation resulting in interest.

The DA, FF Plus and EFF voted against the budget.

The DA said although it is a funded budget, the feasibility of the budget still seems unworkable, showing an unrealistic income.