

# Msunduzi

WE ARE THE CAPITAL



# News



## KHATHIDE SAYS HE WILL BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

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## FIGHT AGAINST COVID 19

# Working with other governments

by Sabelo Maphumulo

**S**AFEGUARDING the health of citizens is one of the key priorities of any government and that is why Msunduzi Municipality moved with speed when the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed at the Pietermaritzburg Fresh Produce Market, in Mkondeni.

Working with the MEC for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Mrs Bongzi Sithole-Moloi, the Municipality put the necessary precautionary measures in place to ensure that the market staff and customers were not exposed to the risk of contracting Covid-19.

Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla and MEC Sithole-Moloi visited the market to assess the precautionary measures that were implemented and whether they were in compliance with the World Health Organisation standards in terms of preventing the spread of the virus.

"I would like to assure people of Msunduzi that it is safe to use our Market and we've confirmed for ourselves that their visit to the market will not in any way put their lives at risk," said Thebolla.

He said after the Covid-19 case was confirmed the Market was closed then thoroughly sanitised.

He said the reason the City decided to reopen the Market was because they wanted to ensure food security in the homes of Msunduzi residents as the facility sells fresh produce in terms of fruits and vegetables.

MEC Sithole-Moloi said: "We are appealing to the public to adhere to the directive given by the President, they must not panic. The person who was found to have Covid-19 is a cashier and she worked in a cubicle enclosed in glass. She also wore a mask and gloves while on duty. What I found encouraging is that the municipal staff also prioritises health and safety."

From the Market the leadership went to the DARD Soil Fertility and Analytical Service Lab in Cedara where the department



MEC Sithole-Moloi and Mayor Thebolla at the Cedara Soil Fertility and Analytical Service Lab (Picture: Andile Mahlaba)

is producing sanitisers. Initially the sanitisers were meant for the department to use in its own facilities but a decision was later made for these to also be distributed to farmers as part of the efforts to fight the spread of Covid-19.

Meanwhile the City has also been on the ground rolling out various programmes as part of its response to the Covid-19 outbreak. These include a clean-up campaign which saw the Waste Department cleaning and sanitising facilities such as

the Freedom Square Taxi Rank. This was done during the period when the minibus taxis were only allowed to operate during peak hours under level 5 of the national lockdown.

The clean-up team also cut the grass on the neighbouring property and ablution facilities were also cleaned. "We will ensure that this is not done in just this rank but all the taxi ranks in the CBD will be cleaned and sanitised so that they are safe for our people to use," said Mayor Thebolla.

# Safety plans for staff and community

by Siyethaba Mhlongo

THE outbreak of Covid-19 has led to panic amongst many South African citizen. It is in this regard that Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla has appeal for the people of Msunduzi to be calm especially amongst those who still have to work during this period, particularly public servants.

The Municipality has also changed the way it does business so as not to put the health of its staffers at risk.

In response to the outbreak the Executive Committee called an urgent meeting to discuss the measures the Municipality should implement in order to safeguard the health of the people of Msunduzi. Acting City Manager at the time, Mrs Nelisiwe Ngcobo, said they felt it was important for the municipality to strengthen its communication with the residents.

Senior Manager in the Office of the City Manager, Ms Madeleine Jackson, said during the committee meeting the administration made presentations of the plans to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 following President Cyril Ramaphosa's March address before the national lockdown was implemented. "Since the President said gatherings of more than 100 people are not allowed we will be postponing all the events that we had planned as part of the public engagements that the Municipality has with its residents. We will also not be having Council as those have more than 100 attendees including councillors, officials and the media," said Jackson.

Public facilities such as municipal halls were closed so even prior booking were cancelled. Parks and all the City's swimming



Ms Madeleine Jackson

Picture: Supplied

pools were also closed. The essential services buildings and facilities were opened and the Municipality ensured that sanitation is done. Everyone entering municipal buildings has to sign a register and to avoid spreading germs everyone has to use their own pen.

The offices normally used by those needing a proof of residence certificate were not operating so residents were advised to

go to the Ward Councillors' offices if they needed one. The libraries only allowed a limited number of people inside the building at a time to avoid crowding.

Officials from the Occupational Health department visited all the taxi rank and old age homes to assist with sanitisation and councillors were also workshopped so that they could pass on the information to their wards.

In her capacity as the Chief Financial Officer, Mrs Ngcobo, said the Treasury gave the Municipality the greenlight to procure the necessary goods and services needed to fight the spread of Covid-10.

Commenting on the postponement of events Ministerial Representative, Mr Scelo Duma said: "The Municipality is not forced to host izimbizo but they give it an opportunity to engage with the community and also present its plans but the Municipality will have to use newspapers to connect with the committees because the regulation permits that."

He added that the Manager did not have the power to issue a directive for emergency procurement so the Mayor has to use his so that the Municipality could use the funds that were not allocated according to the budget.

Mayor Thebolla said: "We must not interfere with the work of the Department of Health. Ours is to ensure that there is adequate water supply to the hospital that will be handling Covid-19 cases."

He said the Msunduzi also had to deliver municipal services to communities.

"What is important is also to protect municipal workers and not do anything that could expose them to the risk of being infected with this disease," he said.

# Msunduzi leads the battle against Covid-19

by Siyethaba Mhlongo

**T**HE Municipality is in the coalface of service delivery because it is part of local government.

The first confirmed Covid-19 case that set off what is now known as South African outbreak was here in Msunduzi.

The spread of this disease led to President Cyril Ramaphosa placing the country under the national lockdown on March 26.

Msunduzi Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla has completed 250 days since his appointment as the first citizen of the Capital of KwaZulu-Natal.

He was appointed into this position after Msunduzi was placed under the care of the Ministerial Representative.

What makes Msunduzi unique from the other local municipalities under uMgungundlovu is that 60% of the people in this district reside within Msunduzi's borders which means they are impacted if anything happens in this Municipality.

Talking to Msunduzi News recently, Mayor Thebolla said: "For all of us this is the first time we've ever had a lockdown but it is important that we ensure that we continue with the fulfillment of the municipality's responsibilities, which is changing the lives of the people for the better and also be a Government that is closer to the people."

He said after they got clarity on how the lockdown would work, they started with the plan on what the Municipality should do as part of its response.

"From the first day of the lockdown we didn't have any problems in the CBD like people having people who were loitering about and not adhering to the regulations. But the problems started the moment people had to collect their social grants, that's when we had people all over town.

"That's why on the second payout the following month we called on our school patrol officers and deployed them all over town to ensure that people and businesses did not flout any of the lockdown regulations."

Mayor Thebolla said because the Municipality wanted to protect the residents of Msunduzi they decided to make it their duty to monitor the social grants' payout



Mayor Thebolla helps to clean up the taxi rank (Picture: Andile Mahlala)

points in order to ensure that people adhere to social distancing.

"The teams that we have asked to do this are on foot patrol and they walk all over town. If they find you walking around without a mask they ask you to get one and if they see you sitting down they also ask you what you are doing there because the country is still on lockdown so you must go home once you are done with whatever business brought you to town," said the Mayor.

He said residents must remember that level 3 of the lockdown does not mean that everything is back to normal and they have the freedom to do as they please but it only means that some of the restrictions have been eased.

When the lockdown was implemented in March, Msunduzi moved with speed to relocate those who had been living on the streets to the City homeless shelters which were established in response to President

Ramaphosa's call to municipalities.

"The aim of taking the homeless from the streets was to protect them for Covid-19. We have 250 males and 50 females. They don't just live there but they are fed three times a day, given clothes to wear and are receiving health care," said Thebolla.

He said the Municipality is working with non-profit organisations, the KZN Department of Social Development and the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC) to collect donations from the public to run the shelters.

"We decided to work with these departments and organisations because most of the people living on the streets are battling drug addiction so they need specialised care to deal with that in order to start the process of rebuilding their lives."

He said the teams at the shelters have started finding out what kind of careers they would like to pursue so that they can be assisted with skills development

programmes.

Mayor Thebolla said the challenge faced by the Municipal is collecting donations for the shelter because the municipality does not have the capacity so they asked the KZNCC to assist with that.

"The Municipality currently does not have a good reputation because we are under administration as a result people don't want to give the City their money even if it's in a form of donations for a good cause like this one. That's why we are working with other stakeholders that we believe the public will trust with their donations."

Meanwhile, the City has appointed a service provider to sanitise all the municipal facilities on a regular basis.

"We want to ensure that our facilities are safe for the public use. Our offices are also sanitised because we also want to protect all the municipal employees and their families."

He said the sanitisation and deep cleansing process started at the taxi ranks during the time when the lockdown restrictions only allowed them to operate during peak hours. "Last week we appointed a company to deep clean all the taxi ranks so that our people can be protected," said the Mayor.

On the Pietermaritzburg Fresh Produce Market employee who tested positive for Covid-19, Mayor Thebolla said: "We are working with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that the market is safe for the customers and the staff."

He said the Department of Health intervened and the affected staff member and her family were placed on isolation but fortunately no one was infected amongst the staff.

He concluded by saying that since the lockdown started the City employees have only been able to collect refuse every second week. "The lockdown has also given us an opportunity to properly clean the CBD because we were able to see the problematic areas around town. What we found is that hair and cloth tend to block the drains. We have to tighten enforcement in the areas that lead to the City looking untidy otherwise those could give us serious problems. We have restored the dignity of our City and now we have to keep it that way," said Mayor Thebolla.

## COVID-19

# Workers eager to return to work during lockdown

by Linda Ximba

SOME of the employees last reported for duty on March 26 when President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the country would be going on national lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Since then the restrictions have been relaxed to allow some of the sectors to resume operations. Some of the workers have enjoyed getting their salaries without having worked the whole month, but others have lifted their sleeves and returned to work to ensure that their working spaces are properly maintained and cleaned during this period.

Supervisor at the Olympic Swimming Pool, Mr Navesen Pillay, and his team which is made up of Mr Delani Mbanjwa, uMr Sibusiso Sigudo, Ms Bernadine Ranjeeth and Ms Algene Jenneker have decided to come back to clean and do maintenance where they work even though pools are not yet open to the public.

Mbanjwa said: "We put pressure on our managers because we love the place we work at and sitting at home is actually not going to help us because there will

be a lot of work that we will have to do when we come back"

He said there were no benefits for staying at home and they had finished all that they initially wanted to get done so now they had nothing to do.

When Msunduzi News visited them at the Olympic Swimming Pool, Mbanjwa was busy cutting grass.

"In actual fact it's not my job to cut the grass but I'm not going to wait for people who I don't even know when they will come to do it when I can do the job myself."

He said as a team they first discussed the plan to return to work by themselves because they wanted to make sure that everyone was on board before approaching the employer.

Pillay has been the supervisor at the pool for two years and he has a good track record in the management of swimming pools since he started at the Woodlands one then went to the Alexandra and Buchanan Street Baths.

"I fell in love with this place two years ago and even started using my own money to do some of the maintenance. I asked some people to come and fix the fence because there were holes around



Msunduzi employees (Picture: Andile Mahlaba)

the entrance. We also fixed the paddling pool and the lights so that it looks nice," he said.

He said since they are not officially allowed to come back to work, they had to get their own personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, sanitisers and gloves.

"These were donated by my wife's company called Platinum Surgical," said Pillay.

He said about a month ago

while he was driving past he saw how their reputation would be dented because there were weeds growing all over around the property.

"I spoke to my manager Mr Mandla Zuma and asked him if it would be okay for us to at least come back for two weeks to clean up. I informed him that we had PPEs so we would be safe. He checked if they met the required standards then gave his approval,"

said Pillay.

He said he had already used R16000 of his own money on the maintenance of things around the pool.

"I know that I could probably use that money to buy food parcels but what I'm doing is also giving back to the community."

Pillay also bought a brush cutter to use around the facility.

"I decided to buy the brush cutter because I could see that the staff was having to wait for the municipality to provide us with one. This way they can use it whenever they feel it is necessary."

Pillay said he will continue doing whatever is necessary to keep the swimming facility clean but they will not drain it until they receive the go-ahead to allow bathers in. "We can't drain the pool now because that would be like wasting resources because we will have to put clean water only to drain it later when we're given a permit to resume operations. But we will continue keeping the rest of the premises clean."

He concluded by thanking his staff for their dedication saying over the past two years he has never received a single complaint from them.

# Oribi Airport is ready to resume operations

by **Siyethaba Mhlongo**

**D**URING the announcement on the easing of the national lockdown restrictions to level 3 by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the beginning of July, he said that airports would also be opened for business travel.

Msunduzi's very own Oribi Airport was amongst the seven that have been given a go-ahead to resume operations.

Airport manager Ms Nontobeko Mofokeng spoke to Msunduzi News about the measures they have put in place to ensure safety of staff and airport users as the country continues to battle with the scourge of Covid-19.

"Our airport is ready to resume operations. After we received the directive saying we could open we sanitised the entire facility for the fourth time since the implementation of level 3 of the lockdown because aviation schools were given permission to start operating when level 3 started so they were using the airport all along even though we were not yet allowed to have passenger planes," she said ahead of the opening on July 6.

Going forward she said the airport will be sanitised on a regular basis and that includes the swabbing of the frequently touched areas an hour before and after every flight.

Mofokeng added that the airport has screening stations where people also have their temperature checked and hands sanitised before entering the premises and going through the boarding gate.

"Anyone found to have a temperature higher than 37.5 degrees will be given a "cooling off period" of five to ten minutes. If their temperature still doesn't go down then they will not be allowed into the premises."

With regards to the safety of the airport staff, Mofokeng said they have procured screens and face shields and masks.



**Manager of Oribi Airport Ms Nontobeko Mofokeng**

Picture: Igunundu Agency / Siyethaba Mhlongo

"We've also ensured that we have hand sanitisers across the airport, especially in frequented areas, and these are for use by both the staff and the public."

On the day Msunduzi News visited the airport Ms Mofokeng was on the ground working with her team to put the final precautionary measures in place, including marking the floors to ensure social distancing.

Mofokeng said for now the airport will

only have morning and afternoon passenger flights.

"Planes from here fly to the OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. For now we think we are going to get more charter planes because only business travel is allowed and they fly to all parts of the country."

Mofokeng appealed to passengers to check-in online and submit their travel permits upfront when they are booking

tickets to avoid having queues at the airport. To minimise traffic, Mofokeng, said only passengers will be permitted inside the buildings so those who are doing pick-ups and drop-offs will not be allowed to enter the building.

"We are also appealing to people to ensure that they wear their masks because they will not be allowed into the airport without one and they will also not be allowed to fly without their masks," she said.

Passengers will also have their temperature checked before boarding the flight and if it does not go down after the "cooling off period" they will not be allowed onto the plane and the airport will assist them to get medical attention.

She said the extensive health protocols that passengers have to go through when they get to the airport are the reason why they are advised to come at least two hours early.

"Before walking through the scanners passengers must take off everything that has metal, like your jewellery and belts to avoid having security personnel patting people down. If you beep you will have to go through it again and if you continue beeping they then will use a hand-held scanner," said Mofokeng.

She said travelling with pets is not allowed at the moment as the regulation only permits business travel.

"Our airport is mostly frequented by pupils from other parts of the country who are enrolled in schools here in Msunduzi so they must also have letters from their schools saying they are allowed to travel."

She said they also have hand sanitisers next to the parking machine and the section where passengers pick up their luggage.

Airlink's African regional manager Shameel Deeplaul said the flights for business and essential service travel between Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg resumed on July 6 because the company wanted to ensure that all health protocols were in place before resuming operations.

## HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

# Programme to sanitise informal settlements

by **Anathi Mtaka**

THE statistics of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlement indicate that there is a total of 269 337 shacks in this province of which 208 434 are in eThekweni then seconded by uMgungundlovu with 39 394.

As part of the measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is working with the Department of Human Settlement on programme that makes it easier to clean residential areas, especially informal settlements.

These departments are working in partnership with uMgungundlovu District and the family of its local municipalities. District Mayor Councillor Thobekile Maphumulo said: "The areas we are prioritising for the sanitisation is Jika Joe, Sacca and Merrivale because they have a large number of shacks and we don't want people to end up spreading this virus."

She said what is of paramount importance is for the public to go back to using the trusted and proven hygiene practices such the regular washing of their hands. She said they must also follow the guidelines issued by the Department of Health.

Mr Thokozani Magagula from the Department of Human Settlement said: "The Department handed out bars of soap to the residents. We also sanitised around



**Msunduzi Municipality's slum cleanup campaign**

(Picture: Igunundu Agency/Siyethaba Mhlongo)

the informal settlements and Msunduzi Municipality installed a static tank in order to ensure easy access to water because it is a backbone of hygiene."

He said they handed out bars soap to 3000 households in Jika Joe, 4000 in Sacca and 250 to Merrivale residents. Each household received two bars of soap.

Magagula said the Jika Joe informal settlement covers a distance of seven hectares and that resulted in the cleaning team using 581 litres of sanitiser to cover every square metre. In Sacca, which is about 10 hectares, 880 litres of sanitiser were used while Merrivale was covered with just 124,5 litres.

"The total amount that was used for these three areas is R201 000," he said.

Inkatha Freedom Party's (IFP) Councillor Mr Dennis Ntombela said: "This epidemic requires all of us as leaders to work together so that we can deliver on what is expected of us. We must put our political differences aside and work towards protecting the lives of God's children.

"Our organisation is also working with the Government in this. You will remember that the IFP also made a contribution to the Solidarity Fund because we also want to help the people of South Africa."

Sacca's Cllr Ms Sandy Lyne said it is difficult for the Municipality to develop the informal settlement and "the challenge is that the land is owned by someone else."

She said they welcomed the provincial government's efforts to protect even those living in informal settlement from Covid-19. "The problem is that we don't know when we will finally be able to eradicate the informal settlement here in Sacca. We can see that the Municipality is trying even at Jika Joe because there is a construction of proper housing for them."

Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla expressed his gratitude to the provincial government for reaching out to the people of Msunduzi, especially those living in poverty, to ensure that they are also protected from Covid-19.

"Our aim is to flatten the curve where we no longer get any new infections reported so those who are not infected yet must be assisted to stay that way."

# Budget protects local residents

Covid-19 changed the way the Municipality engages on the budget with stakeholders. It focused on water, waste management and housing

by Siyethaba Mhlongo

**B**EFORE the start of the new financial year the first citizen of Msunduzi, the Mayor delivers his budget and the integrated development plan (IDP) at public meetings which are normally attended by hundreds in different parts of the City. This is also an opportunity for community members and organisations to make their contributions on how they believe the City should spend funds and which development projects they would like to see prioritised.

This year was however different due to the lockdown restrictions which prevented crowd gatherings which saw the City resorting to technology to engage with its stakeholders. The City hosted virtual meetings on Msunduzi's Facebook and Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla also went on the radio to present the Municipality's plans for the 2020/2021 financial year as well as solicit the views of the listeners on the subject.

The Municipality also roped in local businesses such as Chilla Nathi, Sundance and Cookiers Experience to host Mayor Thebolla's presentation live on their Facebook pages as they have thousands of followers not only from different parts of the City but all over the country.

When Mayor Thebolla presented his budget of R5,9 billion for 2020/21 this year marked the 65th year since the adoption of the Freedom Charter "let us be the first to ensure that all South Africans truly believe they are indeed citizens of this country."

"For the Msunduzi administration, Madiba's long walk to freedom must inspire us to serve, and do so selflessly and put the people first. We must run a clean and competent administration, and normalize the idea of being true servants of the people."

## Covid-19

Thebolla said the coronavirus or Covid-19 is real, and required collective and decisive leadership. He said this was not the time for cheap politicking but one in which all members of society exercise optimal responsibility and comply with the spirit and letter as set out in the National State of Disaster regulations.

"We are well aware that the pandemic is worsening the vulnerability of the poor and the destitute, and urge that we collectively do what we can to shield the people of Msunduzi from the worse ravages of this frightening pestilence."

Thebolla said the government had limited fiscal spaces to support the poor, even in the best of times. In addition, in many cities, the infrastructure that supports a prolonged home stay, such as online purchases and home delivery, did not exist. Therefore, he said, their options were severely constrained. "We are grateful that in the next phase risk adjusted level 3, instead of declaring a city-wide lockdown, a gradual opening of the economy is encouraged within regulatory provisions. This will by far assist the city economy to begin a process of recovery, along with neighbouring municipalities. However, emphasis is placed on the elderly and those with compromised immunity to remain on lockdown."

Thebolla described Msunduzi as "a City



Mayor Thebolla (Picture: Igunundu Agency/Siyethaba Mhlongo)

On the Move" which means "we are agile and responsive to the needs of our people. Singomabizw'asabele."

Mayor Thebolla paid tributes to his predecessors and comrades; Rob Haswell, the late Sphiwe Gwala and Omar Latiff, Cadre Hloni Zondi, Zanele Hlatshwayo, Chris Ndlela and lastly, Themba Njilo.

## Key positions

He said he had been disturbed to see the beautiful city dirty in recent times and on behalf of the Municipality he again apologised for this unacceptable state of affairs saying a dirty city was shameful, and cause for justifiable public outrage.

"The good news is that Msunduzi has now hired a full-time Senior Manager and Manager Waste Management and a turnaround strategy is now in place. A great deal of improvements that have been made in the waste management value chain and will soon be visible to all residents as the lockdown eases and most people are returning to work."

He described the appointment of Mr Madoda Khathide as a Municipal Manager as a major milestone for Msunduzi towards a path of administrative stability. The accounting officer's role is important for the formation and development of an economical, efficient and accountable administration ready to implement the IDP, and complies with the municipality's performance management prescripts.

"We are also in the process of appointing two General Managers for Infrastructure Services and Community Services, respectfully to ensure leadership and administrative stability," said the Mayor.

## Fighting crime

On the City's stance against graft, Thebolla said there would be serious consequences for public officials working for the Msunduzi, who secretly also do business with the state. He said this was even more imperative in light with the Municipality's current financial position. He said Council also wanted to eliminate the tendency for over-pricing when businesses provided goods and services to municipality – "the municipality price".

"We will intensify our partnership with organised business and labour in crime prevention in line with the noticeable successes of the Safe City Project. The Municipal Integrated Command Centre, where public law enforcement agencies and private security companies will share resources and crime fighting technological capabilities is being enhanced. This centre will among others, integrate all surveillance

cameras in the CBDs and on the roads to help track down criminals quickly."

## Economic growth

Thebolla said Msunduzi's major economic goal is to grow the economy in order to massively increase the number of new jobs, while sustaining existing jobs in the City. He said the City's number one goal is to create jobs and will achieve this by focusing on high growth sectors and new industries that have a greater potential to create new jobs. He said Msunduzi will be working with relevant national departments, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), development finance institutions and business leaders to develop detailed implementation plans for all the 10 high growth sectors that have been identified by the Municipality.

The Mayor expressed his gratitude to the KZN's Department of Economic Development and Tourism for choosing Msunduzi as a pilot project for the installation of a digital satellite internet connectivity covering a radius of 50 km in Caluza. "We continue to bolster this major initiative through private sector support, especially ICT companies. We must speed-up the rollout of affordable broadband connectivity and free Wi-Fi to the poor communities in the city.

## Water

Mayor Thebolla said water is increasingly becoming a scarce resource globally, especially due to global warming. At Msunduzi, he said, people use on average of 800 litres per person per day - way above the world average of 173 litres per person per day and the national average 235 litres per person per day.

"This is the case especially at Vulindlela, Greater Edendale, Imbali and to the large extent in our informal settlements. We are urging that residents help us by preventing and reporting internal leaks and illegal connections."

He said the City currently has close to R4 billion uncollectable debt for water usage and other services. This affects a large section of its customers including child headed households, pensioners and other members of the community that are supposedly deemed indigent.

## Waste management

For community-based recycling co-operatives, Thebolla said the Municipality is looking at establishing Waste Buy Centres across the City. He said they have formed partnership with private sector companies such as Hulamin to assist the Municipality

with its waste management programme especially that of discarded aluminium cans.

"We want to create a sustainable source of income for our people. In intensifying cleaning campaigns and access of households to refuse removal, the City will seek to deliver 240 litre bins to every household," he said

An amount of R30 million has been set aside to procure waste related fleet and equipment, R15 millions of this amount is funded from council own discretionary and R15 million is MIG grant funding.

Additional R 3 million has been appropriated in this budget for rehabilitation and maintenance of the waste fleet in order to mitigate breakdowns and improve the equipment availability while R2,5 million has been allocated to procure additional brush cutters.

## Human settlement

Thebolla said the City is deeply committed to the struggle for the provision of affordable housing units and service. In the past three years, the Municipality had 30 590 houses built in our housing programme. This includes the rectification, and so far, 2383 under new built plan already connected to electricity during the period under review.

"The City has allocated R244 million to completing the housing projects funded by department of human settlements. The City will also continue to provide basic infrastructure to all our communities, approximately R 65 million has been set aside for basic water upgrades," he said.

Additional R 1 million has been set aside for enabling basic infrastructure in new land pieces for burials in Holling Wood and Ethembeni in order to relieve Mountain Rise Cemetery that is already reached its optimal use. Additional crematorium sites will also be constructed within the City. This alternative method of burial will ensure that families who seek the service are not disadvantaged.

"It must also be noted that in response to Covid-19 related emergency, we allocated R15 million for anticipated increase use of water and more especially in historically marginalized communities in order to improve a new normal household hygiene protocols," said Thebolla.

## Municipal services

The Mayor said Msunduzi Municipality is facing significant fiscal and service delivery difficulties, which undermine the effective and efficient performance of our functions and mandate. He said more importantly these difficulties are becoming increasingly severe and unless focused action is undertaken to address the underlying causes, or else the Msunduzi Municipality will run a risk of becoming a grant dependent and find it increasingly difficult to perform its mandate. "The Revenue Enhancement strategy has been developed to improve collection and reduce debtors book of about R4 billion and a panel of 23 debt collectors have been appointed to provide the necessary support," he said.

## Tarrif hikes

Mayor Thebolla said the preparation of Municipality's tariffs is informed by national norms and standards and its utility prices for electricity and water are always dictated by NERSA and Umngeni Water Board.

"Water will go up by 9%; electricity by 6,9% and it will be 4,5% for refuse, sanitation, property rates and the rest of the other tariffs," he said.

The rates residential exemption limit, Thebolla said, was maintained at R100 000 and an increase of 4, 5% was applied for 2020/21 budget year.

"All other tariffs increases were 4,5% which is in line with the inflation in line with CPI projection as per National Treasury Guideline immediately after declaration of National state of disaster."



## COVID-19: We need to work together as leaders

**N**ORMALLY when people speak about councillors they refer to them as leaders or their leadership.

Under the democratic government it is you our community members who elected us into the leadership positions but most importantly to be your servants. But in this trying period where we are living with Covid-19 I believe that we are all leaders in our own right.

When our head of state, President Ramaphosa, announced the easing of the lockdown restrictions to level 3, he spoke deeply about the situation we are facing and said “It is now in your hands”.

These words remind me of the comments once made by our first democratic President, Mandela, when he announced that he would be stepping

down from his daily duties at the time. President Mandela said it was all in our hands to continue with the struggle that his generation had led after taking over from their elders.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 our Government, under the leadership of President Ramaphosa, has done all it could to implement the necessary measures to prevent the spread of this disease. A lot has been done to educate people about it and our Government also did a lot to collect funding to assist citizens and different industries that were economically impacted by the outbreak. But our Government was also the first to admit that what has been done is not enough because the need is just too great.

As a Municipality we are adhering to the directives from President Ramaphosa and our Premier in KwaZulu-Natal in doing our

best to ensure that our people are safe and businesses are able to operate so that the economy is not further impacted.

Today we are faced with a challenge that does not just need leaders but members of the community as well. We need you as Municipal employees to do everything in your power so that we can get out of this hole. The provision of municipal services must continue uninterrupted otherwise we will all be in trouble. And for you as a member of the public, it is in your hands to ensure that everyone you come in contact with is protected from this disease, whether it is your family or colleagues or it is another member of the community.

The leadership that I’m talking about does not need qualifications but it requires residents that do not just know their rights but also their responsibilities in terms of

ensuring that our country is protected. As your Mayor I know I’m speaking on behalf of our Local Government when I say we need all of you to play your part if we are going to win this. We need you the same way that you need us. The risk of not working together is that we will all perish.

As I mentioned when I delivered the report of my first 100 days in office last December, we are all in this journey together in this ship but should it sink we must not think we can just blame one person because they were heavier than others. We must work together so that we can get out of this dangerous situation we are in and once we are safe then we can talk about what should have been done to prevent it so that we don’t find ourselves in the same position in future.

## Msunduzi is gearing up to open its libraries

by **Siyethaba Mhlongo**

THE outbreak of Covid-19 affected operations in many sectors as some had to close but since the start of the national lockdown in March the South African government has eased some of the restrictions which allowed some of the sectors to resume work.

Since schools have also reopened with a few grades being allowed to return to class this means that learners will have homework and other academic projects they need to complete. Msunduzi is ready to welcome them to its libraries. Director of Msunduzi Municipal Library Services, Mr Mandla Ntombela, said they have put all the safety measures in place to protect the public and the staff.

“We are ready. Each desk has its own hand sanitiser and we have enough personal protective equipment supply to last us at least eight months,” he said.

He said all the library staff in all the Msunduzi branches will have their own hand sanitisers as well.

Msunduzi Municipality has 11 libraries across the City three of which are mobile libraries which travel to schools and old age homes.

“Our libraries are waiting for the directive from the Minister of Arts and Culture on when to open because they don’t just fall under SALGA but we are expecting to resume operations in July,” said Ntombela.

He said they will also have a special sanitising tunnel that people will have to walk through. “They are using a special chemical which will not make you sick even if you pass your food through it, that’s been tested by the Department of Health. We are



doing this because we want to be certain that whoever comes into our libraries will not infect the staff,” said Ntombela.

He said they will limit the number of people allowed inside the library at any given time and some of the chairs will also be removed from the floor to ensure that people adhere to social distancing.

For those who come to do their reading or academic work, Ntombela said there is a designated area that will be monitored by security personnel.

Ntombela said patrons and staff will also have their temperature checked before they are allowed to enter the libraries but the library staff will also do random testing on the visitors any time of the day.

“We don’t yet have the number of the people that will be allowed inside a library at any given time, normally it is 50 but our

buildings are big enough and also people who come in use different sections of the libraries but we know that the numbers are properly going to go down compared to what we’re used to.

“It’s going to be on the first come, first served basis but once you are inside we will not put any limitation on the time you get to spend inside because we know that people go to the library because there is a need, some even go there to write their assessments,” he said.

Ntombela said anyone who walks into the library will be given a ticket granting them access into the section they want to go to and this will also assist with ensuring that there is no overcrowding. He said those who just want to come and read, even if it is their own books, will also be allowed.

On the return of library officials

Ntombela said: “For starters we are going to look at those with illnesses and we are going to work with the occupation health department on this one because for example a person might have a problem with their foot but that does not have anything to do with Covid-19 unlike someone who might have a respiratory disease like asthma.”

On the mobile libraries he said they will still be operating but that will be dependent on whether services such as water are available where they are supposed to go.

“For the library teams going to old age home there’s still a challenge because scientific reports indicate that people over the age of 60 years are vulnerable to Covid-19 so we can’t send our staff there,” he said.

Ntombela said once the libraries start operating the buildings will be sanitised every second day.

Msunduzi’s pride, the Bessie Head Library is amongst the only five Legal Deposit Libraries in South Africa which are responsible for the protection of the country’s heritage. The others are the Bloemfontein Public Library in Mangaung, the National Library of South Africa in Pretoria and Cape Town, the National Library for the Blind in Grahamstown and Library of Parliament in Cape Town. The Legal Deposit Libraries collect every piece of work that is published in the country and authors also have to give these libraries copies of their work. The Bessie Head Library has works published from as far back as 1830.

Ntombela is also the President of the African Library & Information Associations & Institutions which is the body that oversees libraries in 54 countries across the continent and he also has a seat on the African Union.

# Khathide says he will be part of the solution

by **Siyethaba Mhlongo**

**T**HE much anticipated appointment of the City Manager happened this year with the seasoned Mr Madoda Khathide assuming office in April.

His presence at the City Hall is hoped to bring change in Msunduzi and improve the situation for the better.

“Normally when I’m appointed as the Municipal Manager I usually plan ahead but this time I’m not bringing anything new,” he said.

He explained that he had already seen that the management team that Msunduzi has is made up of people that he can rely on because they are highly-skilled, driven and dedicated.

“We came from where one doesn’t look at problems as problematic but see them as solutions, that is how we are going to work here in Msunduzi because even though there are problems but if you follow up you find that they were caused by people, therefore it is also the people who are going to find solutions to them,” said Khathide.

He added that Msunduzi Municipality covers an extensive area and it has a lot going for it so it should not be having financial challenges so he will be working with the officials to get the City out of this situation.

“It’s not just the issue of finances but also waste management and both these problems were caused by people along with the potholes. All of these can be addressed because it was people who did these but we must delve deep into the root causes,” added Khathide.

He said he will listen to all municipal employees, bring them closer to him and develop a bond based on trust so that whatever fears they might have had will disappear.

“I will also be visiting their work stations and not just call them to my office because they might find it intimidating for them to come here. Sometimes when you ask questions while sitting in my office you don’t get all the answers,” he said.

Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla said he was looking for three things before Khathide’s appointment and those are consumer debt collection, addressing issues of waste management as well restoring the culture of accountability and the City’s employees.

Khathide said these are the backbone of restoring the work ethic of municipal staff.

“When there is no trust amongst the Municipality’s workforce we can’t progress. I’m saying this because municipal workers are supposed to operate in a synergy not in silos or where someone is withholding information from colleagues. Therefore it is important to the employees to trust each other,” said Khathide.

He added that that he will be visiting even offices that are not for managers and he might come unannounced but the aim will not be to find wrongdoings but to make him more accessible to all the staff members so that they know that they can come to him if they have any issues.

Khathide has extensive experience in local government. He has served as councillor from 1996 to 2006 and was also an executive committee member. While he was a councillor he was also an Accounting and Business Studies’ teacher and previously served as a school principal.

“From 2006 I was working for the Ladysmith Municipality where I was an Executive Manager Local Economic Development which made the Deputy Municipal Manager. Then from 2012 I was appointed as Municipal Manager. In 2018 I was then appointed as the Municipal Manager in Dumbe,” said Khathide of his experience.

Commenting on Msunduzi’s finances, he said in the meeting he had with Chief Financial Officer, Mrs Nelisiwe Ngcobo, and she told him they are issuing monthly statement to consumers but only about 40% of the people are paying.

He said he also followed up on the matter of the electricity contractor that was appointed to fix faults but is also doing the disconnections.

“I’ve requested the CFO to allocate three employees to do the disconnections so that

the contractor can focus on doing the repairs instead of the disconnections because that is what their contract states. Also if we have our own internal staff doing disconnections it will be easier to regulate and to hold them accountable if they fail to perform their duties,” said Khathide.

He said he was also appraised on the R4 billion consumer debt which made him come to a realisation that in fact Msunduzi has a lot of money so his responsibility is to collect it so that it can be put to good use.

“When it comes to the R1 billion for water I have to make peace that I will never be able to get that and I don’t want to waste the City’s money by taking people to court because I will never win that one since a large number of the debtors are actually people living in poverty. However I will be following up on some of the debtors until they pay what they owe because they can afford to,” said Khathide.

The Municipal Manager said the Government gives municipalities a grant so that they can continue with a provision of services to indigent households but the municipality needs those who qualify to come forward and register so that the City can be able to get that grant.

“What should be amongst the key priorities for this Municipality right now is for it to be able to pay its

creditors and have a cash coverage of three months.”

Khathide said those who owe the City for municipal services, including businesses must sell their assets if need be and settle their debts. He said he knew that there are fears that businesses will leave the City if they are pressed to pay their municipal debt but he knows that properly-run businesses budget to pay their debts - they are not just about making profit - but should they decide to leave then he hopes those who will come will do things the right way.

“I want to first look into the top 100 debtors and that is the group I’m going to chase and before we reconnect them they must pay at least 60% of their debt,” he said.

Khathide concluded by saying: “Measures to prevent spending money unnecessarily are still in place.

“I’m also going to review all the posts that have been advertised to see if they are critical and in doing this I’m going to be guided by the provisions of the Municipal Systems Act (60-61) which state the responsibilities of the accounting officer because we cannot advertise positions that are not critical for service delivery.”

**New Msunduzi Manager  
Mr Madoda Khathide**

(Picture: Igunundu Agency/  
Siyathaba Mhlongo)



ADMINISTRATION

## Mayor expects three things from new Manager

by **Siyethaba Mhlongo**

**AFTER** more than a year with the Acting Municipal Manager, Mrs Nelisiwe Ngcobo, at the helm Msunduzi finally appointed a City Manager in the first half of 2020. Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla said amongst the things the new leadership prioritised when they arrived in Msunduzi in August was finding a resolution in the matter of the former City manager, Mr Sizwe Hadebe.

“We reached a point where we parted ways with Mr Hadebe and then commenced with the process of appointing the Municipal Manager because this is a critical position that shouldn’t be held by an acting incumbent for too long,” said Thebolla.

He said on February 26 Council took a decision to appoint Mr Madoda Khathide as the Municipal Manager.

“Mr Khathide accepted the offer that was put on the table by the Municipality.”

Mayor Thebolla said the lockdown dented some of the plans but they understand it was necessary to protect the lives of people. He said they wanted him to hit the ground running because they know him to be a man who moves with speed. He said Khathide previously served as a councillor and a member of the executive committee in Alfred Duma Municipality in Ladysmith where he was later appointed as the head of local economic deployment then a Municipal Manager. Khathide was the Municipal Manager at eDumbe when he was offered a job at Msunduzi.

Mayor Thebolla said while as the Municipal Manager at Dumbe Local



**Mayor welcomes new Municipal Manager** (Isithombe: Igunundu Agency/nguSiyathaba Mhlongo)

Municipality, Khathide achieved a clean audit for two conservative years, which makes him the most sought-after Municipal Manager in KwaZulu-Natal. “What also made us believe that he deserved this position is his experience as a manager in the only municipality in South Africa where there was no outright winner in the 2016 local government election. When the votes were counted both political parties got eight seats on the council.”

Thebolla said Khathide outperformed the competition because his track record

showed that there was never a time under his leadership that eDumbe did not approve its budget or the integrated development plan.

“You can’t have a functional municipality under the conditions he worked under unless you have a Municipal Manager of a high calibre who can get different political parties to work towards the same goals. We are not undermining the work done by the Mayor of eDumbe but it is the responsibility of the accounting officer to advise council, and this is what made Khathide a suitable candidate for us.”

On the three things that Thebolla expects Khathide to prioritise now that he is in Msunduzi, it is financial stability, waste management and reviving the work ethic of municipal employees.

In restoring financial stability Thebolla said Khathide must ensure that the debt owed to the Municipality is collected and put measures in place to curb the theft of water and electricity by those who cannot afford to pay and who must be registered as indigents. He said the City must also connect those who are currently not getting municipal services but can afford to pay so that the municipality can collect revenue.

With regards to waste management, Thebolla said: “We have a problem of fires erupting at the landfill site and one of the things that led to this is because it was not properly regulated and it was not managed the way it was supposed to. We want him to continue with the work that we’ve already started whereby we appointed a company to restore functionality in that facility.”

He said they also want Khathide to get the Municipality the assistance it needs to be able to collect waste, especially refuse, and also clean the City.

On the third priority on the work ethic of municipal employees, Thebolla said: “With his experience I have no doubt that he will be able to restore the work ethic of our workers so that they are motivated to get up every morning and come to work. Our employees must know that we can see what they are doing and we are pleased with their performance so that we can continue delivering the services to the people of Msunduzi whom we are here to serve.”

# Msunduzi's star ready to dazzle the Miss South Africa stage

by Siyethaba Mhlongo

**M**SUNDUZI'S very own star Miss Matshepo Sithole from Imbali has put her City on the map in this year's Miss SA pageant where she is amongst the finalists.

Sithole has appealed to the residents in her hometown and KwaZulu- Natal to help get her to the finals by casting their votes as she's already amongst the top 15 semi-finalists in the renowned pageant.

"I fell in love with modelling when I was still at the Pietermaritzburg Girls High. When I entered my first beauty pageant I came third and was crowned the second princess. Last year I entered Miss Tuks Village at the University of Pretoria and I won and walked away with the queen's crown," said Sithole.

She said it was only last when she won Miss Tuks Village that she realised that she could actually have a shot at the most sort after crown of Miss SA.

"There was nothing in particular that pushed me but I just got that feeling that I should enter because it's something that I love," she said.

She said she planned on making the City of Choice and the province proud.

"Our province is known all over because we've had people who have done well in some of the big competitions in South Africa such as Noma Khumalo who won Idols and she's from right here in Msunduzi.

"I also want to grow the creative industry right here in my hometown and for this industry to be protected, respected and embraced because there are still those who look down on it.

"We are talking photographers, actors, authors, poets and musicians – I want all of them to get their opportunity to shine but that has to start right here in our province."

She said sometimes there is a problem when parents reject the idea of their children going into the creative arts industry because they want them to choose careers



Matsepo Sithole from Msunduzi is contesting in the Miss SA pageant (Picture: Andile Mahlaba)

such as law, medicine, teaching or being a nurse.

"That breaks my heart because choosing what you want to study is the first step towards realising your dreams and I also

believe that as people we all have different dreams and wishes which we would like to see coming true."

Sithole said the problem is that societal issues end up influencing what happens

inside people's home and that leads to parents wanting their children to take a certain path because they believe that is what will lead them to success.

Miss Sithole is in the fourth year of her law degree at the University of Pretoria. She is very passionate about the modelling industry which she said she would like to see getting the respect and recognition like other sectors as it is currently underappreciated by many.

"It's important for people to do what they love. I want to see people being able to make a living through their talents. Covid-19 showed how much this sector is still very much undermined and not protected at all," she said.

She said the public can cast their votes in two ways. Those voting with credit cards must visit Miss South Africa website [www.miss.co.za](http://www.miss.co.za), click on the Miss South Africa 2020 tab then click on Top 15, select No.8 which is Matsepo Sithole's profile and her Computicket voting link will open where the voter must put their email address and password then enter the amount. Each vote costs R5.

To vote using cash, people can go to the money market counter in store (at any Checkers, Checkers Hyper, Shoprite or Usave). Choose your voting bundle of R20, R50 or R100 and the cashier will cast your votes on the Computicket system and print your voting receipt. There will be three voting bundles available: R20 - 4 votes; R50 - 12 votes (plus two free votes) and R100 - 25 votes (plus five free votes).

"My message to the youth of this province is that you must know yourself and be certain about what you want – and that has nothing to do with where you come from. Your dreams will come true but you must work hard if you want to succeed," said Sithole.

She concluded by thanking the public for the support – those who voted for her and those who wanted to because they wanted the flag of this province to continue shining.

## HERITAGE

# Gwala's name and contribution shall live on

by Anathi Mtaka

FRIDAY June 20 this year marked the 25th anniversary since the struggle stalwart, Mr Harry Gwala, departed from this earth. He would have turned 100 years old this month (July) if he had not died in 1995.

While he is no more, he lives on in uMgungundlovu, in Msunduzi where the City's pride, the Harry Gwala Stadium bears his name. The soccer field known all over the country with even matches of the ABSA Premiership having been hosted there on numerous occasions.

As one moves deeper into the Midlands there is also a Harry Gwala District which is home to the family of local municipalities including Creighton's Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, uBuhlebezwe in Ixopo, uMzimkhulu as well as the Greater Kokstad.

But that is not where ends as the MEC for Health, Mrs Nomagungu Simelane-Zulu, recently announced that one of the most renowned health facilities in KwaZulu-Natal, the Edendale Hospital, will soon be renamed to also carry the name of the Lion of the Midlands. The renaming of the hospital is the decision of the provincial government to honour the struggle hero popularly known as Mdala. This is a fitting tribute to Gwala who also worked at the Edendale Hospital.

MEC Simelane-Zulu made the announcement when she presented the

KZN Department of Health's budget vote recently.

"In honouring the legacy of Mdala, we have made a decision to rename Edendale Hospital after him. This is informed by the fact that that this hospital has its own rich history in the struggle for liberation.

"We have engaged the Gwala family in this regard and they have agreed to lend us the name of this struggle icon".

She said the department has already started engagements with uMgungundlovu District and Msunduzi on the matter. "We will be continuing with these talks, as times allows us. In line with this decision, the department has also decided to revamp the hospital, while also working to improve staff attitudes and overall client experience in order to ensure that this facility is a reflection of the true statue of the man," said Simelane-Zulu.

Mrs Lindiwe Gwala-Gwambi, who is the daughter of Harry Gwala, said her family is honoured that her father's legacy will continue to live on.

She said her father was not only being honoured

because he was a struggle hero but also because of his involvement in the recruiting of doctors and other hospital staff to join the ruling party during its days as a liberation movement.

"My father worked at the hospital as a clerk but he was dismissed because of his activism as he was recruiting other employees to join the party. We believe that that the hospital really deserves to be named after him," said Gwala-Gwambi.

She added that the

process of renaming the hospital after Mdala started a long time ago and as a family they are happy to see that the plans are inching closer to finality.

"The process started when Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo was still the KZN MEC for Health but there were some challenges along the way so the plans had to be put on hold."

Meanwhile the MEC for Education in Gauteng Mr Panyanza Lesufi, urged people to follow the lessons and wisdom imparted by Harry Gwala. He said this during his visit to Dambuza where the Harry Gwala Foundation, which he leads, donated groceries to 150 needy families. This was part of the organisation's planned activities in the lead up commemoration the Harry Gwala centenary as he would have celebrated his 100th birthday on July 30.

He said Harry Gwala's name will always live on because of the role that he played in this country's liberation.

"His wisdom and sharp mind is needed right now to give us guidance," said Lesufi.

Mrs Ntombi Mthembu of the Harry Gwala Foundation said the donation of groceries was one of the activities the organisation is planning to get people to unite and make a difference. She said Dambuza was the third area they visited as they had also been to Soweto and Tshwane.

"We hope that through this we can help change the lives of people in the name of Harry Gwala," she said.

