

Notes taken by Anne Binos at the meeting where the Deputy Minister of the Dept of Human Settlements - formerly Housing - Ms Zoliswa Kota-Fredericks addressed the community in the McGregor Municipal Hall at 3pm Thursday 11th November 2010.

The Mayor, Mr John Ngonyama made apologies at 3 pm for the Deputy Minister, saying she had been delayed by 25 minutes – she arrived at 3.35 pm.

The meeting was opened in prayer.

Mayor Ngonyama introduced the Deputy Minister, Ms Zoliswa Kota-Fredericks as well as the Municipal Manager, Mr Mokweni and welcomed the Deputy Mayor, Mr Grootboom and other councillors present.

Mayor Ngonyama advised the meeting was related to an outstanding issue of Housing and referred to the Imbizo held in October 2010 which led to the decision to invite the Deputy Minister of the Dept of Human Settlements to try and resolve the impasse. He relayed that he had tried on many occasions to resolve this issue and referred to the meeting in McGregor just before the World Cup with MEC Modise when it was decided to elevate the housing issue to national level because the local municipality was not resolving the problem.

The Municipal Manager, Mr Mokweni, gave a presentation in English for the benefit of the Deputy Minister and others who were not familiar with the history of the housing issue in McGregor:-

For 15 / 16 years there has been no housing project in McGregor. He showed a diagram of the three proposed areas :

1. The Reservoir area – Smith Street – 27 Erven for 72 houses – apparently the EIA documents had been “lost”
2. The Krans and Grewe Street and Steenoonde – on 26 March 2010 Heritage Western Cape declined this proposal. Steenoonde was the area where most of the people wanted housing, but it was felt that this area did not promote integration.
3. Mill Street – 65 objections to this proposal had been received.

The McGregor Heritage Society felt that the purchase of private land needed to be investigated, but the problem with this is that the two farms, Mouton’s and Swanepoel’s were both highly productive farmland and therefore a “no go zone” according to Province and priced too high.

On 15 July 2010 the Record of Decision was discussed at a meeting of Heritage Western Cape and the Dept of Environmental Affairs and Development:-

1. The wishes of the community regarding Steenoonde
2. The housing backlog
3. The lack of municipal owned land – no go zone – shot down by HWC.
4. The high cost of privately owned land R500,000-00 to R800,000-00 per 4000 sq m
5. The support of McGregor heritage Society for the Steenoonde

The DEADP’s response was the concern that the Krans / Grewe Street / Steenoonde proposal was outside the Urban Edge and the cost of developing the site was high.

There were 3 options:-

1. Withdraw the applications and await approval of the Spatial Development Framework
2. Wait for Record of Decision – 3 years – too long
3. Consider option of buying Swanepoel / Mouton land

Based on this advice the Council withdrew the Steenoonde application.

The Mayor continued.....

The Spatial Development Framework for the Langeberg Municipal region (apart from Montagu) was rejected by Province so Council then looked at Municipal owned land in Mill / Loop Street where no EIA was needed and advertised for Re-zoning in Sept 2010. 65 objections were received, some from as far as Europe.

Jill Hogan, on a point of order, advised that Erf 27 and Erf 72 related to Nic Border's development of the Kampterrein Retirement Village. (This shown on Mr Mokweni's slide presentation).

The Mayor summarised the technical presentation in Afrikaans for the local people saying that all three proposals were problematic and pointed out that Europeans, not Council, had objected to building houses in Mill Street. This incensed the people and the Mayor had to plead for order and asked that people "not pull the skin off people's faces". He said time for questions / comments would be allowed.

1. **MARIA OODSTENDORFF** asked

- why Steenoonde was not inside the Urban Edge?
- why must we buy land when the Municipality owns the land needed for housing?
- why middleclass housing can't be allowed on municipal land for people who can't afford expensive land?
- why Heritage has so much power?
- Why the people have had to wait 30 years for housing?

2. **ALISON BRUCE** explained

Europe is represented in McGregor because she owns a property in Mill Street and she spends time in McGregor although she works in Europe. She has sent money from Europe to renovate her house and give people work. She told that while she was in France on holiday she found that many people know McGregor.

3. **JILL HOGAN** commented

The people in McGregor needed houses and she wants people to have a house that they can be proud of. She believes in transparency and that the whole story needs to be told.

Jill again pointed out that Erven 27 & 72 were private land for development of the retirement village and not for housing.

Jill pointed out that the rejection of the Krans / Grewe Street proposal was due to the Geo-Technical report that the land was solid rock – it was turned down by Province and not by Heritage.

Jill passionately declared that McGregor is a rare and beautiful village and she had met with Tokyo Sexwale who agrees that decent housing for humans is important – they had discussed earth houses which were energy efficient with dry toilets and enough ground for gardens. The Mill Street proposal had such small erven there would be no space for gardens.

Jill felt that cramped, RDP housing would produce slums, the crime rate would soar. We need safe housing we can be proud of and would promote Tourism.

4. **MR MOKWENI** replied to Jill Hogan

Erf 27 & Erf 72 had been confused with the Smith Street, reservoir site – it was 27 erven for 72 houses.

5. **THE MAYOR** replied to Maria Oostendorff that Steenoonde had been brought in to the Spatial Development Framework by Council but that the whole SDF had collapsed apart from Montagu – it was thrown out by Province. He said ultimately McGregor was not going to grow like Robertson has – people are expected to go to Robertson which is problematic. He said that what we are saying is that what the people want is what the Municipality wants.
6. **JANE BANKS** asked to hear what the Deputy Minister had to say.
7. **THE MAYOR** replied by saying the people of McGregor must have their say – those people who don't have houses – let us hear them.
8. **SQUATTER CAMP RESIDENT** – how long have we waited? Houses have been built in Robertson, Ashton and Montagu – where must we go?
9. **WILLIAM STANFLIET** – asked what about all the backyard dwellings? Robertson will not give jobs to McGregor. He urged the people not to sit still – ask questions of the Minister – we want to hear the Minister's answers.
10. **DENIA JANSEN** – commented on the need for the 55 houses. She made a plea that she had been born in McGregor, was 39 years old and wants to stay in McGregor which is not Europe's heritage. She said Tourism was not feeding the whole of McGregor – there are a lot of farm workers – only a percentage works for Tourism. She felt Heritage was important but not so important that the people don't get houses – the coloureds want to stay in McGregor at Steenoonde, Krans & Grewe Street. When you go to bed tonight think about it.
11. **THE MAYOR** asked what Heritage's problem with Steenoonde was? There are no other places in McGregor.
12. **JIMMY BINOS** thanked the Mayor for the opportunity of speaking and said he had no doubts whatsoever that the people need houses and that it has gone on for 15 years. He asked for the classification of the objections – what are the reasons? He felt the planning of too many small RDP houses at Mill Street should be rather be larger houses – human beings can't live in small houses with small plots – they should be proud of their house and their children should look up to their parents in a dignified house – the densification of Mill Street is problematic. Let us also look at Steenoonde again.
13. **ATHOLL HAY** referred to the last Imbizo where a reserve of R70 million was mentioned – why can't land be bought? Why is the Mouton farm a “no go” area?
14. **SQUATTER CAMP RESIDENT** – the squatter camp area is very wet and unhealthy – why is this a McGregor secret?
15. **RESIDENT ON A FARM OUTSIDE MCGREGOR** – has been living for 7 years on this farm – has 3 children – is suffering and not well treated by the farmer – she is prepared to squat at Steenoonde – the squatters must be allowed to squat there.
16. **MARYNA VAN TONDER** – regarding the establishment of the present squatter camp – there were many meetings about housing and the Minister was here and saw that the people voted for Steenoonde.

17. **RESIDENT OF SQUATTER CAMP** - the squatters are suffering as a result of fires and there are many snakes frequenting the squatter camp – she pleaded for the Deputy Minister to visit the squatter camp and see for herself the conditions there. Why can't we stay in decent houses? We just want a roof over our heads.

18. **THE MAYOR** – responding to questions:

a) to **Mr Binos** – we want to be constructive and densify – typical RDP houses – already there is an objection, we are only talking about the ground and already there is an objection – don't just object – for instance, the owner of Kingsriver – I asked him what his objection was and you don't want me to tell you what he said.

b) to **Ms Bruce** – everyone in France knows about McGregor (Ms Bruce objected saying that was an exaggeration by the Mayor) – it should not be that the people of the area are going to suffer – I have a problem with this.

c) to **Mr Binos** – we feel people should get bigger houses and land – we should work together and take a look at the 60 objections – Lets work together! A few people will object to anything – eg the community hall – a property we developed for the people of McGregor and our offices – the trees were physically protected when we started to build! What do we want? Housing! Please assist – lets work together!

d) to **Mr Hay** – there is R70 million in reserves – that is correct, but why purchase when we have the land already? Highly agriculturally productive land is a “no go” option.

19. **THE DEPUTY MINISTER** Ms Zoliswa Kota-Fredericks – I can see housing is a very hot potato! Its Human Settlements now – not Housing – we want to bring back dignity – where there are houses there must be water, electricity, roads and jobs. We will try and create opportunities and transference of skills.

One thing! The community must speak with one voice – McGregor as a community must develop. Province will find it difficult to develop McGregor if there is disagreement.

People who are born in McGregor must stay – the quality of houses and decent homes is important. Human Settlements say NO to RDP houses – breaking new ground – quality houses.

Comrade Tokyo Sexwale wants houses that people can be proud of. The typology of houses must be agreed with community involvement – the EIA / Heritage – what info do they have?

20. **THE MAYOR** - For 16 years there has been no housing – this is a big problem for Human Settlement Department. Three applications have been turned down. That is why we requested National intervention – a meeting together so that at the end of the day we can find a solution.

21. **MR BINOS** – The 65 objections – is it about the quality of housing? What are the people saying? Let's find a solution. Why are they objecting? The children of McGregor need a future – we need to be integrated and united.

22. **THE MAYOR** – We might be wrong – we agree with the Minister – he translated into Afrikaans for the people to make sure they understand. To say more is to throw water on everything. We must keep in touch – he's sure Binos will be on the phone to ask when and how! Even the people with houses, even the white people must participate. Binos must lead that! Don't send objections to Province that I don't know about – we will work together to develop McGregor.

23. **MARIA OOSTENDORFF** – let's sit together – if there is no money for houses there is money for ground.
24. **THE MAYOR** – the money is there – the object is to work out the solution.
25. **HELAINÉ SHAND** – Referring to the withdrawal of Steenoonde proposal – is it being re-looked at now?
26. **THE MAYOR** – we have been advised by the Dept of Environment and Planning – any application will have to be looked at and the decision to withdraw Steenoonde was because the SDF was not accepted – that is why we need National intervention.
27. **RACHEL HULL** – How long are we going to allow objections to delay procedures?
28. **THE MAYOR** – This whole meeting agrees that Binos will spearhead the movement to find a solution together – to find a point to start.
29. **BRONWEN CHUTER** – Thank you for the opportunity to speak about our problems. We came here four years ago and we have 4 self-catering cottages. The squatter camp is a disgrace – it was pushed through and a mistake was made. Now we must make the right decision. The main reason for objections is that money has been poured into Barry Street, the high density of old properties has been turned into a little showcase – we have 2 big websites - a great tourism attraction. Housing is long overdue but McGregor Country Cottages and Fountain Place will suffer. Employment is a problem – Tourism has taken off – most guests spend 7 – 14 days in the area – they spend money at restaurants, shops and pubs, they create job opportunities – this has a knock on effect and indirectly a large number of people are employed because of Tourism. Why take Barry Street for high density, low cost housing? Yes, you must have houses, 100% but not at the expense of Tourism – we'll go backwards not forwards.
30. **THE MAYOR** – I am the first person who wants Tourism to flourish – I am tasked to do that, but it cannot be that in order to attract tourists the people of that area must suffer. We must advertise Tourism, B&B's and Krans as well as the non-racial community in McGregor – we must be integrated from the left to the right hand side – saying to people in Europe, such as Holland, where I have visited often – here black & white are together – not coloureds on one side and white on the other. Human Settlement means integration of people – we could have a wonderfully integrated community – quality housing – nobody wants to destroy anything. It could be interesting for tourists to see other colours staying together – perceptions that are not there now – that is why people don't want it and shocking objections are given.

The Deputy Minister and the MEC will soon form a strategy for housing – all ingredients regarding what needs to be there – this is for our children in McGregor and the New South Africa in the Langeberg Municipality.

The meeting ended at 17h03.