

PRESS RELEASE

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MEC TREASURY AND MEC COGTA HOPEFUL THAT UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL SUCCESSFULLY SIT TO PASS ITS BUDGET

IN complying with some of the COGTA and National Treasury's 2021 Municipal Finance Roadshows resolutions that Provincial Departments accelerate their efforts to render more support to municipalities, KZN Finance MEC and KZN COGTA MEC visited uMkhanyakude District Municipality on Friday, 10 June 2022.

Finance MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube and KZN COGTA MEC Siphon Hlomuka were alerted of the risk that uMkhanyakude District Municipality may not be able to comply with Section 16(1) of the Municipal Finance Management Act i.e. to have an approved 2022/23 Annual Budget before the start of the financial year on 1 July 2022, a challenge that carries a further risk of plunging the district council into further financial governance quagmire.

Things had come to a head when a Ministerial Representative's (Administrator) memorandum explained explicitly that such non-compliance was due, inter alia, to the political tensions between the major role players. The Ministerial Representative further cautioned that the municipality was unlikely to have the required number of Councillors for a quorum for the Council meeting to approve the 2022/23 Annual budget together with the Budget funding plan.

Addressing the councillors led by Mayor Cllr Siphile Mdaka at the council chamber on Friday, Dube-Ncube did not mince her words and laid down the law bringing the attention of the councillor to the dire consequences of non-compliance with the MFMA statutes.

"Perhaps let me explain like this, unless you pass this budget before 1 July 2022, uMkhanyakude runs the risk of being unable to seize control of its bank account and will thus be unable to pay salaries. If we partake in these antics we are part of the problems. If you are a councillor that vote for anarchy and lack of progress, it means we have voted in people with no other people's interests," she said.

MEC Dube-Ncube asked councillors to reflect deep and cast aside political differences and divergent opinions for the sake of uMkhanyakude residents and work towards a common goal.

"Witnessing this is painful. It's hard to sit and watch an African shooting himself in the foot. Other races are prospering and are creating generational wealth and we refuse to do a simple task of nation-building. What legacy are you leaving behind?" she asked.

“No one will invest here when there’s no council. Do we need to close shop? Court cases and meetings that never quorate lead to bigger problems. As a government we can only do so much to help but if you don’t work with us what other recourse do we have?” said Dube-Ncube.

MEC Hlomuka concurred saying all he and MEC Dube-Ncube were attempting was to assist the municipality to avoid being dissolved as it was one of 43 municipalities in the country that were under distress.

“No one from outside will come and assist you as uMkhanyakude, you have the capacity to sort yourselves and you should do just that. Me and MEC Dube-Ncube can do everything but if you do not work with us other due processes will take their course,” he said.

The councillors who spoke one by one thanked the MECs and pledged their support of the Provincial Government efforts. Whip Cllr Siyabonga Khumalo said there had been stability before but that this has since been eroded. He said the situation on the ground was untenable and had degenerated into an unsafe environment for the councillors following the court case.

“I fear for the lives of the councillors. This is a shame because when our communities sent us here to represent their interest they wanted delivery of services,” he said.

Council Speaker Solomon Mkhombo concurred saying: “We hate to find ourselves in this quagmire. We started with great commitment and the successes were immediate,”.

Councillors complained that so dire the situation was that some Councillors, even some council employees were highly politicised.

The councillors, including those from the EFF and an independent, all pleaded with the MECs that they be given another chance to pass the budget this coming week.

This was acceded to and the MECs said they were hopeful that the council meeting would sit and adopt the budget with a clear budget funding plan.

The meeting resolved:

- That all councillor appreciate the input made by MEC Dube-Ncube and MEC Hlomuka that, as things stood, the council does not have the budget;
- That councillors understand that uMkhanyakude is one of 43 municipalities under distress;
- That due to current situation if it persisted the matter would be escalated by disbanding the council should it not improve;
- That the province gives uMkhanyakude a chance to self-correct;
- That the province will write to National Government that “we agreed with councillors for a chance to self-correct” and that they acknowledge that they are not doing enough but are determined to improve;

- That we are concerned about the security situation of councillors;

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