2014 WILL BE A HIGHLIGHT ON THE CALENDAR!

As we start the New Year it is a time to re-assess the year past and I think there is so much for Knysna to be proud of! We’ve had numerous successful events, including a fantastic Oyster Festival and summer holiday season. These events and achievements are due to the hard work, commitment and determination of organisations, volunteers and businesses that make them happen. To them, thank you, from all of Knysna.

2014 will hopefully not only follow in the footsteps of the previous year, but is bound to provide some of its own highlights. To start with this is an election year! We celebrate 30 years of democracy and we urge everyone to vote and make your voice heard.

My hope for 2014 is that we will, through hard work and commitment, look back at the end of the year and say that we have really made a difference where it matters most. More importantly, that we worked together as a community to bring these changes about.

With the country’s sad farewell to Nelson Mandela still so fresh in our minds one of his most used quotes comes to mind: “It always seems impossible until it’s done”.

Let this be our motto this year. Let us support our businesses so that they can flourish and create jobs.

Let us support our youth to live healthy and purposeful lives by acknowledging their worth and celebrating their uniqueness.

Let us reach out to the elderly and tap into their wisdom and experience so that we can accelerate our growth as a community.

Let us be the change we want to see in the year.

Executive Mayor, Georlene Wolmanans

KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY’S HIGHLIGHTS 2012/2013

- Good corporate governance and sound financial management resulted in Knysna receiving a clean audit for the 2012/13 financial period.
- The Integrated Strategic Development Framework (ISDF) process, which promises to change the face of the greater Knysna over the next 20 to 30 years, was launched.
- Four new Directors in the Departments of Planning and Development, Corporate Services, Technical Services and Community Services were appointed.
- The Knysna Municipal Public Accounts Committee was appointed.
- The first projects in the on-going Lagoon Action Plan were implemented.
- Two Blue Flag Beaches: Buffalo Bay and Brenton-On-Sea.
- Electricity infrastructure was installed, including new intake substations, new transformers, fibre optic cables and hundreds of new electrical connections to homes and businesses.
- Several water projects have commenced and the Karatara River Weir was opened. The master planning of the total water reticulation system took place and the Rheenendal Water Augmentation Project, as well as a crucial water pipeline to the Northern Areas, was completed.
- The upgraded Waste Water Treatment Works were launched.
- Roads and sidewalks were upgraded and constructed in the Northern areas as well as the greater Knysna area.
- Sedgefield’s First proper taxi rank was opened in June 2013.
- Guard rails, wheelchair ramps and retaining walls were constructed in disadvantaged communities throughout the municipal area.
- Play parks were established throughout the municipal area.
- Nine high-mast area lights were installed and another four are on its way.
- Hundreds of poles were installed and the upgrade of several pump stations took place.
- 294 low cost houses were completed and 320 new slab houses have been built. A further 300 properties were connected to services.

Interview with New Manager: Integrated Human Settlements Matthew Penxa

“I’m not in the business of building houses. Bricks and mortar is overrated. I’m building integrated and sustainable communities with people as the building blocks and respect the foundation.”

These are the words Matthew Penxa used to describe his vision for the last 19 years of his life, that of managing housing departments.

What is your background?

I was a teacher before I started to work in local government, which I think is where I really belonged! Nineteen years ago I started at Beaufort-West Municipality managing the housing department. Consequently I moved to Cape Town then Stellenbosch and then the farming communities of Theewaterskloof and Berg River on the West Coast. 19 years is a long time, have you never been interested to move to another section of local government?

It is a fantastic experience to see the concrete results. The joy of being able to hand over those keys is real, it brings hope and happiness to people who lost hope of a better, secure, and dignified life.

Why the decision to move to Knysna?

This municipality has a stable administration, as proven again with its clean audit, well-managed by professional and experienced people. Here I have all the resources at my disposal to do my work to the best of my ability.

What will be your immediate focus areas?

An informed community is an empowered community.

We will work towards creating partnerships with all role-players within the human settlement implementation value chains and internally with all relevant departments. Our clients are the same.

We are currently updating our waiting list to adequately address community frustrations with regards to housing allocations. It is important that the criteria are made clear. We have to ensure that our housing plans are linked with the ISDF’s thirty year vision that is now in the process of being developed and that the five year housing pipeline/plan is executed with the long term plan in mind.

Everyone in this department will get the necessary support to develop skills to effectively work towards our common goal and the challenge to speed up housing transfers will be addressed.

The support and co-operation of this community, we can make it happen.”

She will also be focusing on forming a women’s empowerment group where issues can be addressed and where they can find support from other members. “We have to work together to combat the breakdown of morals and values in our communities. We must be the driving force to change this and, an example for other women of what can be done. Teenage pregnancies and the abuse of alcohol are destroying our children’s future. We, as women, must find ways to support each other and guide our children.”

Cllr. Grootboom said there is a lot to look forward to in Ward one. “The Ward Allocation for 2013/14 will ensure adequate beach access to Sedgefield river mouth and the construction of a look out at Myoli beach parking area will be completed before June 2014. The Ward allocation for the current financial year was used to create a play park that was officially opened by the Executive Mayor in December 2013. The pedestrian crossing and speed bumps in Fynbos lane, David Culley and Millwood lane have improved road safety considerably.”

The community, and especially the children, have been exposed to the benefits of recycling by the Swap Shop initiative in Smitriver. “This created new opportunities for the children, and we plan to extend this venture to include adults as well,” said Grootboom. “I am also excited about the first phase of the under roof multi-purpose facility in Smitriver that will open soon. This, and the upgrade of the sport fields, will add tremendously to the quality of life of the residents.”

Feature Ward 1 - Cllr Irene Grootboom

Smithville, Sizamile, Myoli Beach, The Island & Rondevlei

Councillor Irene Grootboom is a born and bred Smithville resident.

“Sedgefield lies close to my heart and being committed to positive change here comes naturally.”

“My family has always been my priority and I am happy that since I’ve been elected as Ward Councillor, I now have an extended family the Sedgefield community. They are my mothers and fathers, my grandparents and my children. I care for each and everyone as if they were my own.”

She said that job creation and inspiring the youth is her main goal. “We have to create more opportunities for them. They need to be exposed to more possibilities and a wider variety of career choice. Entrepreneurship is essential in the economic climate and I am working closely with the municipality’s Youth Advisory programme to assist us with this empowerment process.”

Cllr. Grootboom said she is proud to be part of the Sedgefield community. “We stand together. This was once again demonstrated when six homes in Smithville were destroyed by a fire just before Christmas. Local business and people from all walks of life opened their hearts and provided these destitute families not only with a roof over their heads, but also clothes, food for the table and something special for Christmas.”

“My initial reluctance to join local government has changed into gratitude. The overwhelming support I received thus far has helped me to realise there is so much more to be done and that, with the support and co-operation of this community, we can make it happen.”

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