From the Mayor’s Pen

We had barely recovered from the peak holiday season and the back to school period, when February, the month of love hit. All of these can be quite expensive and leave us out of pocket, and then another season hits us – tax season. Not the most opportune time for tax and I have often wondered whose decision it was that financial year ends should be February?

At the same time it is State of the Nation address and for obvious reasons I will refrain from discussing this year’s event. I’d much rather talk about Minister of Finance, Nhlanhla Nene’s speech and the country’s new budget. Income tax was increased for the first time in 20 years, but at the same time, small to medium sized businesses are set to benefit by the doubling of the turnover tax threshold. His projection of economic growth for the country of a mere two percent was a sobering thought indeed, especially since this municipality has made it a priority to see how we can revitalise an economy once fed by a variety of industries, and now largely dependent on a seasonal tourism industry. A fickle industry influenced by too many factors outside our control. The tax break for small to medium sized businesses is at least something that can be of benefit to this process.

For Knysna this is also the start of our budget season and I would like to hear your comments and suggestions. As the municipal budget is money spent to improve our service delivery to you, who better to comment than our residents? Advice, thoughts and ideas - all constructive input will be appreciated.

For us as a local government, service delivery, as our core business, is obviously the main focus. It is finding an acceptable balance between that and all the other relevant needs that require special skill. The national government will spend an additional R7 billion this year on people reliant on social grants, according to their records a staggering 16 million people. Knysna Municipality is a microcosm of a bigger South Africa, and the increase of people dependent on social grants can also be seen in our society. I’ve mentioned the difficult times our local economy went through the last five to eight years – adding new economies that will create work and bring investment to the town is crucial. If we want to turn the tide we will have to invest in platforms to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich. As this gap decreases, so will crime, social issues and the general wellbeing of our residents will increase.

It is easy for the more affluent amongst us to get impatient with the municipality and query adamantly where we spend the rates and taxes they contribute to, and I understand that. However the bigger picture dictates that we lessen the ever widening gap, and all residents of Knysna will benefit.

We have a wealth of experience and knowledge within the ranks of our residents – will it not be inspiring if a think tank of experience is formed to brainstorm solutions? Finding niche economies suitable to Knysna, solutions for social problems, even alternative energy and housing solutions? I have always maintained that our residents are a crucial part of the wealth of our town, can we create this into an own unique currency that will benefit all? I certainly hope so.

Budget tips can be forwarded to tips@knysna.gov.za or dropped off at reception in Clyde street.

Georlene Wolmarans - Executive Mayor
The role of Municipalities in the delivery of housing

Understanding our Mandate: doing in respect of housing?

The question then arises as to what should Municipalities be responsible for setting housing delivery goals. To set feasible and reasonable targets, municipalities need to have a good overview of the housing demand. This does not only include the number of houses that are needed, but also the types of houses, their locations etc. To get a good overview, the municipality needs to collect information that can assist them in providing the kind of housing that the people need.

Secondly, municipalities must coordinate the delivery of housing to ensure that the housing projects are delivered at the right time, at the agreed price and to the specified quality.

Besides the external co-operation between the spheres of government, the Municipality must have a well-structured and effective internal organization in order to have an effective municipal housing service delivery. After all, the delivery of human settlements includes much more than just houses.

Section 26 of the Constitution of South Africa says that “everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing”. In this regard the “State must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realization of this right.” Thus the Constitution creates obligations for government to take all reasonable actions to ensure that all its people have the opportunity to acquire a home.

Since 1994, the government has taken several steps to address its responsibilities towards housing. These measures include the Housing Act of 1997, which sets out Government’s visions and key principles underlying the provision of housing; the Local Government Municipal Systems Act of 2000, which puts in place mechanisms and principles to ensure all of government to move towards social and economic upliftment and to ensure access to essential services; and further plans such as the National and Provincial Spatial Development Frameworks and the National Development Plan.

Schedule 4 of our Constitution stipulates what functions each sphere of government is responsible for. It states that housing is a function of our National and Provincial Governments. But in reality, although the finance for housing development is provided by National Government, through Provincial Government, the management of the implementation of housing projects has become the responsibility of Municipalities. Because of the resources required to take on this responsibility, this is often referred to as an under-funded or unfunded mandate, which are mandates or responsibilities where a sphere of government performs certain functions or activities for which they do not have any clear source of funds. In particular, Municipalities are expected to carry out functions that are not specified or not allocated in the Constitution, such as housing, libraries and museums.

Municipalities have thus become the implementing agency for the roll-out of housing projects, and the housing programme is an under-funded mandate which creates additional burdens and challenges on the strained resources of a Municipality.

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National Water Week 2015 took place from 16 March under the theme “Water has no substitute” and concluded on World Water Day on 22 March. Knysna Municipality partnered with the Lunchbox Theatre in bringing the message to learners of the greater municipal area of how important water and its conservation are.

“We are very excited about the Lunchbox Theatre’s show “The Last Drop”, as it will take children on a time travelling journey to find ways of saving water now so that we don’t face any catastrophes in the future,” said Wolmarans.

“Water is an inextricably important part of nature and, although it is a cliché, our children are our people’s future,” Wolmarans concluded. “As such, raising awareness of Water Week and working with Lunchbox Theatre to educate our children on this valuable resource is a huge step towards creating a town where people and nature prosper.”

Library Week
Knysna Municipality proudly joined in observing South African Library Week during 14 – 21 March. This year’s theme was ‘Connect @ your library’.

Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans explained that the theme reflected the fact that libraries connect people to each other. “More than that, libraries also connect people to knowledge and information as well as print and electronic resources. And it introduces people to technology through its public computers.”

“I encourage all residents to join and visit the library regularly. Make use of all of the resources on offer, or simply browse through the incredibly large selection to find your next literary escape. Not only during South African Library Week, but every week thereafter.”
**Council Snippets:**

*Update on appointment of new Municipal Manager*
A recommendation on the appointment of a new Municipal Manager for Knysna will serve before the Council at its meeting of today. More details next month.

*Draft Budget*
Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans will table the 2015/2016 draft budget during the Council meeting today, and will afterwards be available on the municipal website for public comment: www.knysna.gov.za The final budget must be adopted by end of May this year.

*Policy for the electrification of backyard dwellings*
Council is in the process of developing a policy on electrification of multiple dwellings on registered residential properties. Principles considered by the policy may include but are not limited to, i.e. residential properties with existing supplies with a capacity higher than 40A; supplies be split and each unit receive a capacity of 20A; structures must be safe; only three units will be permitted per erf; split prepaid meters be used; and prior consent from the owner is required.

*Second phase of Waste Water Treatment Works*
Council is investigating viable options and has started deliberations on the second phase of upgrading for the Knysna Waste Water Treatment Works. This phase entails upgrading of the Sequential Batch Reactor (SBR), to a full nutrient removal activated sludge plant, which will increase the capacity of the plant, to 10.2 megalitres per day.

**Municipality Supplier Registration**
Knysna Municipality in collaboration with the Western Cape Provincial Government, Eden District municipality and the B municipalities of the district are migrating to a centralised supplier database for all suppliers as from 1 July 2015. The purpose of the database is to facilitate uniformity, develop best practice guidelines, inform sound financial governance, promote and maximise service delivery.

All existing and prospective suppliers of municipal goods and services are therefore invited to register on the supplier database. For further details visit or contact our Supply Chain Department at 044 302 6232 or 6438.

**DATES TO REMEMBER - MUNICIPAL MEETINGS**

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>7 April</td>
<td>Governance &amp; Economic Development Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>Finance Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>14 April</td>
<td>Community Services Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>15 April</td>
<td>Planning, Development &amp; Infrastructure Committee Meeting</td>
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**DATES TO REMEMBER - COMMEMORATIVE DAYS & EVENTS**

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<td>3 – 5 April</td>
<td>Sedgefield’s Slow Festival</td>
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<td>27 April</td>
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Knysna, where people and nature prosper