From the Mayor’s Pen

During the months of February to May there is one word that is buzzing through all the various Directorates – BUDGET. The budget for the 2015/2016 period was approved at the Council meeting on the 29th of May. In some ways it is exciting, with some key projects scheduled for roll out in the next three to six months, but in others also worrying, as the NERSA escalations loom and add to tariff hikes, which is bound to impact on the quality of life of our residents.

I’ve been reflecting on what it takes to make a town work. There are so many different facets, especially in Knysna where you have millionaire developments bordering low income housing and informal settlements. It is, and always will be, an extremely tricky environment to find balance.

For a capitalist society to thrive, you need the higher income groups to keep the ball rolling so that the lower income groups have an opportunity to become part of the movement. What is also important is that the higher income groups understand that sometimes one has to give back. The healthier the various levels of society are, the better for the whole.

I want to thank our ratepayers for helping us to build up Knysna, especially the previously disadvantaged areas. If one looks at our achievements in the 2014/2015 period, most of these happened in the Wards with the least representation of ratepayers. They were, however, essential projects that strove to create a more balanced society, a healthy society where people may be poor, but have access to basic human rights, as was made provision for in our Constitution. Thank you for helping us to make this a reality.

The winter school holidays also heralds the highly anticipated annual Pick ‘n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival. We are looking forward to welcoming all our visitors to town, including the SA Navy who are expected to arrive on July the 7th. To those of you working hard to make this happen, including our own staff, thank you and good luck with all the events, we hope all goes well and that you will have time for some fun as well.

Georlene Wolmarans • Executive Mayor

How the 2015/2016 Budget will affect you

The Mayor reflected on the past financial year, from 1 July 2014, ending 30 June 2015. It is expected that Knysna Council will have spent over 90% of its capital budget (R70 Million) and probably the full operating funding of R540.7 million.

“The new budget for Knysna Municipality amounts to some R738.5 million. This is made up of R102.7 million for capital expenditure and R635.8 million for operating expenses. It is considerably more than the budget approved for 2014/15. This new budget represents an increase of 21% from the 2014/15 approved budget.

Mayor Wolmarans listed a number of significant projects that will be rolled out in the year ahead. These include an amount of R29 million for housing and related
How the 2015/2016 Budget will affect you

Mayor Wolmarans explained that this will “involve the investment of R150 million in the Knysna municipal area by the successful tenderer, including the establishment of businesses in the data management value chain. It will also create a range of economic opportunities in the media, education, business and conferencing sectors.

Fibreoptics is merely one of the economic development initiatives designed to harness the resources of private sector investors, together with what funding can be obtained from government, that are planned. These include a convention centre; developments along the Concordia Road and in Nekkies; developments in the Hornlee business area and in the centre of Knysna town. These projects will come to light during the course of the year and should place the economy of the town on a clear upward trajectory by the end of the financial year.”

She said the successful ward capital projects will continue in 2015/16, with an allocation of R200 000 per ward, and an additional R500 000 will be allocated under Community Services for operating related Council projects. These community projects will be fully integrated with the ward based development program.

Despite the significant public investment by the Municipality in information technology; bulk infrastructure; housing and social facilities, the Executive Mayor did warn that it is highly unlikely that the economic position of Knysna will change much in the next three to four budget cycles. Some of the more significant reasons for this is outside of the control of Council, such as the NERSA approved Eskom increase, and the union pay demand of a basic 15% rise.

Wolmarans said in order to meet the financial requirements placed by the Integrated Strategic Development Framework and the Integrated Development Planning processes, defined in conjunction with our various communities, a number of initiatives are required.

“Firstly, the Municipality has embarked upon a major debt restructuring exercise to work in conjunction with the Integrated Strategic Development Framework. This will assist to finance investment and economic based capital infrastructure identified for inclusion in the budget via the IDP. It will also ensure the Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework remains pragmatic and therefore economically and financially sustainable rather than the often theoretical and usually meaningless planning followed by public sector bodies.

Much of the economic activities in Knysna are heavily dependent upon the national economy and thus are not major forces in the drive for local job creation. Furthermore, much of Knysna’s retail property is owned by businesses outside Knysna and thus any profits obviously flow outside of Knysna. Hence, Council will be looking at a differential rates tariff for businesses owned within Knysna as opposed to those owned externally.”

She said that Knysna Municipality continues to grow, as do the demands of all our residents. “There is an increase in demand for services from areas where services and service standards were historically poorer, and an expectation from the more advantaged areas that service levels and standards be maintained at least at current levels and not be allowed to fall.

The movement towards communities wanting and receiving a higher standard level by means of an additional premium will become the norm. Hence, special rating districts or areas are now being investigated within the greater Knysna community and will be encouraged.

Additionally the Municipality will be undertaking a review and analysis of the utilisation of domestic property by means of measuring electricity usage. The possibility of an absentee property owners charge, similar in principle to the electricity...
**Tariffs**

daily charge, will then be examined for possible future introduction.”

In late 2015 a new tender will be awarded to undertake a general valuation of all properties in the municipal area. Wolmarans said that this will include all transferred properties in the previously informal areas such as Nekkies, Khayalethu and White Location, and as from 1 July 2016 all privately owned properties will be fully taxed in all areas.

The National Electricity Regulator (NERSA) has approved an increase in the bulk tariff from Eskom of 14.24%. The National Treasury has advised local authorities “to limit electricity increases to 12.29%” but that excludes a 2 cents in the rand for the Environmental Levy. Thus an average increase of 14.24% will be implemented for electricity.

Minor tariffs will be increased by 9% on average unless specifically shown in the tariff book.

The increases on the availability charges for vacant land will also be 7.5%.

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**Water Consumption Charges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Consumption Charges</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 6 Kl</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 10 Kl</td>
<td>R11.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 20 Kl</td>
<td>R17.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 30 Kl</td>
<td>R20.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 40 Kl</td>
<td>R21.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 41 Kl</td>
<td>R36.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Minor tariffs will be increased by 9% on average unless specifically shown in the tariff book.

In terms of assessment rates, the increase in the rate in the rand will be 7.5% for domestic as well as non-domestic properties. The assessment rate rebate currently applied to domestic owners remains at 15% and the first R100 000 of property value will remain exempted.

The current rural rebate and the green rebate will both be reduced to 10%. Pensioner rebates, heritage rebates and the new business rebates will all remain the same.”

Mayor Wolmarans thanked her fellow Councillors, the Municipal Manager and staff. She also made special mention of the Executive Deputy Mayor, Cllr Esmé Edge, who was absent from Council today due to her daughter, Nadine, undergoing a series of medical interventions due to a traumatic accident.

She concluded her address by acknowledging that the challenge for Knysna remains the reversal of a legacy of hundreds of years of discrimination. “It is not an easy battle to wage, but I am sure you agree that we are on course. The leadership of your town continues to grow, develop, and innovate in order to ensure change for the better.” She called on all community members to join her and the Knysna Council on the exciting and promising journey forward.

Council also bid farewell to two Councillors, Cllr Michelle Wasserman and Cllr Richard Dawson. Cllrs Wasserman and Dawson both served as Speaker to Council, as well as Members of the Mayoral Committee. Both will be undertaking activities in the private sector.

The full tariff book is available on the municipal website:
### Water Restrictions & Latest Water Usage Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>SEDGEFIELD CONSUMPTION</th>
<th>RAINFALL (mm)</th>
<th>KNYSNA CONSUMPTION</th>
<th>RAINFALL (mm)</th>
<th>AKKERKLOOF DAM LEVEL % FULL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 – 17 MAY</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>😞 1.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>😞 0.7</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 – 24 MAY</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>😞 0.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>😞 0.0</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 – 31 MAY</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>😞 52.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>😞 50.0</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 – 7 JUNE</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>😞 97.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>😞 57.5</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Revise Watering Times**

Watering times for June – November are **5pm – 6pm** on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for gardens on even street numbers and Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for gardens on odd street numbers. *Water is precious, please use responsibly.*

### New events planned for the Pick n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival, 3 - 12 July 2015

South Africa’s premium sport and lifestyle event, the annual Pick ‘n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival, will take place this year during the winter school holidays, from 3 to 12 July 2015. Now in its 32nd year, the festival offers an incredible selection of over 100 gourmet, sporting, entertainment and family activities planned over the festival’s 10 days, which is what makes it so appealing to the more than 50,000 visitors who travel to the area each year from all around the country.

Festival Manager, Nicci Rousseau Schmidt, says this year’s programme will offer a diverse mix of new events, including two very special events on Sunday, 5 July: the decadent Oyster, Bubbly and Chocolate Experience; and the all new Forest Family Dam Ride, which will traverse the spectacular scenery in and around three Knysna dams.

“The Forest Family Dam Ride is a 30km guided ride for MTB riders of all ages into the forests above Knysna,” said Rousseau Schmidt. “Groups will be guided by marshals, and will stop at scenic lookout points for cyclists to catch their breath and take in the spectacular views. This is a fun ride and not a timed race, and is open to adults and children with some riding experience aged 12 years and over.”

Those wanting a bit of indulgence will absolutely love the Oyster, Bubbly and Chocolate Experience, taking place at the luxury guest lodge, Villa Castollini, in the evenings. Experts will be on hand to provide tutored tastings on a thoughtful selection of bubbly from five different wine estates, including some from Plettenberg Bay, as well as sample delicious oysters and indulge on handcrafted chocolates made right here in the Garden Route region.

As always, visitors can look forward to the festival’s classic events, such as the everpopular road and mountain bike races, which form part of the Momentum Weekend Argus Knysna Cycle Tour presented by Rotary; the Knysna Wine Festival and Night Market; midweek signature events such as the Pick n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival Flavours of Knysna presented by Tabasco; the Pick ‘n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival Shuckle (where oysters and comedy take centre stage) and the Tabasco Knysna Classic.

And then of course there’s the famed Momentum Cape Times Knysna Forest Marathon & half Marathon, the Pick ‘n Pay Women’s Walk and much, much more to keep the whole family entertained at this wonderful event.

**Dates to Remember - Municipal Meetings**

- 18 June: Mayoral Committee Meeting

**Note:** Council will be in recess from 26 June – 19 July

**Dates to Remember - Commemorative Days & Events**

- 20 June: Epilepsy SA Fun Run/Walk
- 3 – 12 July: Pick ‘n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival

Registration costs and ticket prices vary for each event. For more information visit [www.pnpoysterfestival.co.za](http://www.pnpoysterfestival.co.za), contact Knysna Tourism at 044 382 5510 or connect on Twitter @OysterFestival or on Facebook/KnysnaOysterFestival