Meet Greater Knysna’s new Council

The final official results of the most recent Local Government Elections, from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), gave the DA 10 out of the 21 available seats in Council. The ANC received 7, Cope and the ACDP and the Knysna Unity Congress received one and the last remaining seat went to Independent Councillor, Welile Waxa.

Executive Mayor, Eleanore Bouw-Spies is the executive and political leader, as well as the social and ceremonial head, of the Knysna Municipality. She is the Ward 5 Councillor for the Democratic Alliance (DA).

She was born and raised in Knysna, attending the Rheenendal Primary School and later the Knysna Secondary School before attaining a BA Degree and a Higher Diploma in Education from the University of the Western Cape. Eleanore has more than 16 years of political experience. She started her career as a public representative on the Knysna Council in 2000. She quickly moved up the ranks and become a member of the mayoral committee, moving to become deputy mayor and eventually the Executive Mayor of Knysna from 2007 – 2011.

During 2011, she retired from politics for three years, during which time she served as a Hospice Board Director and honorary rotarian. She busied herself with numerous community projects over the years, many of which focused on sport development and education.

Following the sad death of the Ward 5 Councillor, Magda Williams, Eleanore was approached and asked to consider standing as the DA Ward 5 candidate during the ensuing bi-election. She won the elections and re-entered the political arena serving as the Ward 5 Councillor. As this ward’s councillor, she concentrated on alleviating the many problems that her community faced as a result of extreme poverty, drug and alcohol abuse and inadequate services.

While serving as the Ward 5 councillor she was also appointed as Speaker of the Council. Having served as Ward 5 councillor and now mayor for the second time, she is described by colleagues as a ‘force of nature’, and is admirable that under her watch the Knysna Municipality will continue to protect the South African Constitution and continue to provide clean and effective governance, promoting freedom, fairness and opportunity for all.

From the Mayor’s Desk

Dear Reader,

Following the Local Government Elections on 3 August, the residents of Greater Knysna have spoken and we are happy to announce that the Democratic Alliance (DA) remains the governing party of Greater Knysna. I thank each one of you for braving the cold to cast your vote.

Council has an approved budget in place with which the promises of our Election Campaign Manifesto can be fulfilled.

The time has now come for us to govern Greater Knysna on five important pillars, namely the opportunity town, the safe town, the caring town, the inclusive town, and the well-run town.

Public participation is something that I am passionate about. The effective handling of community queries and communication is of utmost importance to me. As mayor, I am of the opinion that both the public participation and communications departments should sit side by side. Ward committee meetings should be attended by both these departments. If matters are reported, discussed or decided upon, there should be a communication strategy in place to implement it is reported on and questions that arise are addressed. This is crucial and close to my heart.

You, as a resident of Greater Knysna, have the right to lodge a complaint with the Knysna Municipality. Speaker should your councillor not respond timeously to any of your concerns, it is your right and duty to ensure that your councillor gets regular report-backs and promotes stakeholder meetings within your ward.

I give you my assurance as mayor that we as council undertake to continue to work hard, if not harder, to foster growth and delivery within Greater Knysna. We are working towards a better future for all residents by delivering excellent services and achieving reconciliation through redressing the injustices of the past.

In closing, may I remind you of the words of our great Madiba “I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one’s head pointed toward the sun, one’s feet moving forward.”

I encourage each and every one of us to keep pointing our heads toward the sun and to keep our feet moving forward. Together we can build Greater Knysna into the best municipality everyone can be proud of.

Eleanore Bouw-Spies

* Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom