Council NEWS

YOUR MONTHLY INFO ON WHAT WE DO, MAKING PEOPLE AND NATURE PROSPER

From the Mayor’s Pen

tolerance (təl(ə)rəns) noun

“the ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behaviour that one does not necessarily agree with.”

and understanding (an-dər-stran-dəng) adjective

“sympathetically aware of other people’s feelings; tolerant and forgiving.”

South Africa is world renowned for its diversity, in culture, in nature – we are not called the Rainbow Nation for nothing! It’s been over 20 years since our hard-earned democracy, and our Constitution, has been hailed the world over as one of the most progressive of its kind.

The upcoming Holiday Season is a great example of our diversity. Christians will celebrate the birth of Christ, the Jewish community, Chanukah and the Fast of Tevet 10 and in early January, Muslims are celebrating Milad un Nabi. There are also other religions and cultures that have their own celebrations as well.

However, if I look at some of the comments that are made on social media and on other platforms, I have a feeling that tolerance for our diversity as a nation is sadly lacking. This is not a unique situation, one just has to look at what is happening in the world, especially in the Middle East, to see the disruption and sadness that a lack of tolerance, amongst other things, is causing. The refugee crisis in Europe, worsening daily, is heart-wrenching.

I want to urge our residents to be more tolerant, but in addition to that, I want to ask you to seek “understanding”. I think tolerance should always be complimented by understanding, as it lays the foundation for positive relationships to develop, rather than just “tolerate” a situation, person or behaviour.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu mirrored my feelings when he said he does not like the idea of tolerance so much. “The meaning of tolerance to me seems like saying, “I do not like you, but I have to live with the fact that you exist. I may agree to be tolerant of you, but I don’t have to be your friend—I don’t even have to speak to you at all. I just have to accept that you have the same right to your life choices as I do to mine.”

He said he prefers understanding as a word to promote acceptance of our co-inhabitants. “For me, understanding means that although I may not like or agree with everything you do or say, I get where you are coming from. I get it and I can respect you as a fellow human being. I am able to listen to you. I may even be able to learn something from you that will open the door to friendship.”

Our humanity binds us as individuals, and only by understanding and respecting our differences, can we work together to create a town where nature and people prosper. Our democracy and our constitution can unfortunately not give us tolerance and understanding. For that, we need you. I urge you to keep “tolerance” and “understanding” in mind when we have to make decisions for the greater good of all our residents.

Georlene Wolmarans • Executive Mayor
The Greater Knysna is generally associated with natural beauty, peacefulness and of course, being a top holiday destination. According to Trip Advisor, Knysna is ranked second on the list of South Africa’s top ten destinations. Not far from the plush hotels and golf courses lies Ward 6 where one finds some of the lower income and poorer communities of Knysna. We have been busy and there are some exciting projects happening in this Ward.

Strengthen Democracy through Public Participation

Members of this community have shown great interest in the development of their community and play an active role in the public participation processes. In response to some of the requests raised through the IDP process, the following has been achieved:

- The maintenance of the Hornlee play-park and construction of a bridge in Hornlee Primary School were combined as one project and R 22 740 was utilized;
- Through the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP), 15 community members received temporary employment. They were employed to assist Technical Services with paving of roads, maintenance of the play-park and construction of the Hornlee Primary School Bridge;
- In the 2014/15 financial year R 144 996 was spent on paving of Kaalkol Road in Nekkies West;
- The community requested guard rails to be constructed on some street bends and this is currently in the planning phase. Construction work is expected to commence in February 2016.

Upgrade of Sports Facilities

With the prevalent drug and gang-related problems with which our community is faced, Council is focusing on sports facilities as a priority. Sport is at the heart of our community. It not only creates unity, but also helps to keep our youth off the streets. The upgrade of the Hornlee sports field started in October 2014 and approximately R400 000 was spent re-surfacing the playing field. The facility was officially opened in June this year and I hope that our youth not only makes full use of the facility, but also looks after it. The Hornlee Community Hall and Library were also fenced earlier this year.

ABSA Project

The ABSA housing project has created a lot of interest within the community. I am delighted to report that the Provincial Department of Human Settlements has approved a budget of R16.7 million for 312 serviced sites and 88 top structures. The municipality has appointed Absa DevCo as the development partner for the design, development and implementation of an integrated human settlements project. Civil and electrical contractors will be appointed soon and they will be on site by January 2016 to start work for the installation of services.

The project will consist of:

- Breaking New Ground (BNG) units: less than R3500 per month income earners;
- Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme (FLISP) and affordable housing: R3501 to R18 000 per month salary bracket;
- Open market - more than R18 000 per month income earners.

A project of this magnitude can only be successful if all the relevant stakeholders, which include the community, the municipality and the Provincial Department of Human Settlements, work in a collaborative manner and have regular engagements. Community members will benefit greatly in terms of employment opportunities and the municipality wants to ensure local residents are prioritized.

Hornlee Bathroom Project

I am thrilled by this project, which kicked off earlier this year. Some of the first government houses in Hornlee still had external bathrooms and after consultation with residents, 270 individual dwellings were earmarked to be upgraded. New bathrooms adjoining the current housing structure will be built and the project is funded by the Knysna Municipality. A contractor has been appointed and to date 20 bathrooms have been built. The project is scheduled to be completed by June 2016.

Municipality set to begin R2.3 million upgrade of storm water system

The municipality has commenced with the upgrade of two existing storm water culverts in Sunridge Street, Hornlee.

The upgrade, set for completion at the end of January 2016, will improve service reliability by helping to alleviate roadway flooding and reduce erosion of the road and nearby residential properties. By reducing future maintenance problems, it will also be a contributing factor to keep infrastructure in good condition for years to come.

Culverts preserve the road base by draining water from ditches along the road, keeping the sub-base dry. After recent heavy rains flooding was experienced and the aging pipe lines in the area only added to the problems. The upgraded culverts will be a huge help to control storm water runoff.

In addition to replacing aging pipe lines, the upgrade will include removing unsuitable material and replacing it with approved granular material. To remove excess water from the soil surrounding the roads, loose soil and vegetation will also be removed from the bank where the inlet and outlet structures are to be built, and a sub-soil drainage system will be installed.
Pariksha Gobrie has been appointed as Knysna Municipality’s new Director: Financial Services and joined the administration at the beginning of November. The position was previously held by Mr Grant Easton who vacated the position to head up the administration as Municipal Manager.

“A chartered accountant with ten years’ broad based financial management experience, her business experience covers a range of industries from mining and aviation to tourism and the public sector,” said Easton.

Gobrie was previously elected to represent South Africa on the United Nations Board of Auditors for the UN peacekeeping operations in Haiti. She has also performed internal control reviews and accompanied external and internal audits of many of South African Tourism’s branch offices abroad. Originally from Richmond in KwaZulu-Natal, Mrs Gobrie has moved to Knysna with her husband of two years. “I first came to Knysna a couple of years ago on a vacation,” she explained. “My husband and I fell in love with the area – especially the scenic beauty, wide open spaces and tranquility of the area.”

She explained that she applied for the position as she believes that her skills and experience will add value to the running of the department. “Knysna Municipality has a proud record of clean audit reports and outstanding service delivery that needs to be sustained. With ever-changing legislative and statutory requirements and a government under pressure to stretch its resources, we will have to constantly adapt our internal policies and business processes to both comply and do more with less money.”

“I believe that my main challenge will be to do more with less, for instance increasing the return on municipal expenditure so that more services can be rendered to the community, while also investing in upgrading municipal infrastructure,” she said. “Further challenges include stimulating economic growth and job creation.”

Status on Human Settlement Projects

There are approximately 22 746 formal households and 5706 informal households in the Greater Knysna Municipal Area. The biggest challenge is that the demand for housing grows annually out of proportion, in correlation with the funding resources that are available. The topography of the areas also makes it difficult to install bulk services and infrastructure for housing development and the construction of the top structures. Due to the hilly terrain, especially in the Northern Areas of Knysna, and the lack of alternative land, it becomes very costly to deliver quality housing units for the subsidy amount available from government.

Some of the other fundamental challenges that influence housing delivery in Knysna Municipality include:

- Inadequate capacity of existing bulk infrastructure;
- Lengthy environmental and other statutory approval processes;
- Alignment of identified pipeline projects;
- Exorbitant service costs, R 90 000 per erf instead of R 43 000 being the financial norm.

Despite these challenges, Knysna Municipality has spent a hundred percent of its R46 million DORA allocation for housing in the 2013/2014 financial year and R70 million will be spent in 2015/2016 financial year.

Knysna Municipality has already delivered 3 500 Breaking New Ground (BNG) serviced sites and 2 456 housing units through the different BNG options available during the last 5 year IDP cycle. In the 2014/15 financial year 200 sites have been serviced and 194 top structures have been put up.

The following developments will be rolled out in the 2015/16 financial year.

- Nekkies – 40 houses
- Dam se Bos – 150 serviced sites and 40 houses
- Concordia – 40 houses
- Oupad – 50 serviced sites and 30 houses
- Hlalani – 165 serviced sites
- Happy Rest – 120 serviced sites
- Ethembeni – 200 serviced sites
- Bloemfontein – 158 serviced sites
- Xolweni – 220 serviced sites
- Hornlee/ABSA project – 359 serviced sites
- Hornlee Toilet/Bathroom project - 270

Opportunities and economic upliftment were created and distributed to local contractors - monies paid out to them in the 2014/15 financial year was R 3 783 000.

The current waiting list for accommodation is 12 589 as per the National Demand Database, which also includes the applicants currently staying in the 5 706 informal dwellings.
Economic Development Department hosts

**Basic Business Skills Programme**

The Economic Development Department held several workshop projects in the Greater Knysna area in October, one of which was the Basic Business Skills Training held at Knysna Town Library and Smutsville Community Hall from 15 – 23 September. Forty one participants completed the course and received their certificates.

The Department also arranged for a Market Day to be held at the Sanlam Mall in Nekkies on the 3rd of October. The entrepreneurs and locals in support of the Market Day were officially welcomed by Ward 3 Cllr. Migiel Lizwani. 19 entrepreneurs attended and proudly exhibited and marketed their various businesses.

The SARS Tax Workshop was held at Hornlee Library from 28 – 30 September. The aim of the workshop was to provide taxpayers with information that would create a basic understanding of the various tax types, how these taxes work and what is expected of taxpayers in order to be tax compliant at all times. All participants were happy to receive the training and due to this they will be able to apply their new-found knowledge come tax season.

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**Executive Mayor announces Mayoral Committee Reshuffle**

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on the 29th October, the Executive Mayor announced changes to her Mayoral Committee. Effective immediately, Councillor Peter Myers will become the Mayoral Committee Member for Planning, Development and Infrastructure replacing Cllr Louise Hart.

Mayor Wolmarans reiterated her statement of earlier this year when Myers was elected to Council saying that “his knowledge and skills put him in a strong position to make a positive contribution to the DA’s ability to deliver an even more capacitated and effective local government for Knysna. His understanding of local government will allow him to address the many issues and concerns of residents in Knysna.”

Wolmarans thanked Hart for the years she has served on the Mayoral Committee. Hart will now replace Myers on the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) “She did an exceptional job and I wish her well in her new role”, concluded Wolmarans.

**Dates To Remember**

**Municipal Meetings**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 November</td>
<td>Ward Committee Meeting; Ward 7</td>
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<td>26 November</td>
<td>Mayoral Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>10 December</td>
<td>Council Meeting</td>
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**Commemorative Days & Events**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>28 November</td>
<td>Knysna Marathon Club Cross Country</td>
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<td>05 December</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship Market Day – Love Life Centre</td>
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<td>16 December</td>
<td>Slide the City Knysna</td>
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**Water Restrictions Still in Place**

The use of hosepipes for gardening and other purposes and the use of irrigation systems are permitted from 17h00 to 18h00 until the end of November. From December, watering times will change to 18h00 to 19h00 until May. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for residents with even street numbers and Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays for residents with odd street numbers.