



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Unfounded allegations made against Knysna Municipality**

The beautiful coastal town Knysna once again fell victim to unfounded allegations brought by serial blogger, Mike Hampton and Knysna resident, Susan Campbell.

Hampton's initial petition was first heard by the Committee in February 2016 during which he alleged that the municipality was illegally funding Knysna Tourism with taxpayer's money. The petition further alleged that the municipality illegally awarded the municipality's Integrated Strategic Development Framework (ISDF) tender to Knysna Creative Heads, a consortium.

Knysna Executive Mayor, Eleanore Bouw-Spies explained: "When the allegations were brought to the Parliamentary Committee during 2016 the Knysna Municipality provided the committee with a file of more than 600 pages containing their written submission on the facts of the matter. This file was accompanied by supporting documents offering substantial proof negating the allegation.

"The then Municipal Manager, Grant Easton and Executive Mayor, Georlene Wolmarans accompanied by top officials travelled to Cape Town and made representation before the committee on the allegations of maladministration, fraud and financial irregularities at huge expense to Knysna's taxpayers."

On receipt of the invitation to attend the committee sitting, Bouw-Spies wrote to the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Petitions and Executive Undertakings requesting that the matter be postponed until sometime in June. "Our council and administration is currently extremely busy with the legislatively required process of approving our 2017/2018 municipal budget," read the letter.

She further alerted the committee that the municipality had not received a copy of their recommendations relating to the previous submissions made by Hampton in April 2016. "We require a copy thereof in order to provide you with the requested progress report. Therefore in order to respond effectively to any queries and to make submissions to the allegations of Mr Mike Hampton, we request that the matter be postponed to a later date in June."

Two days later the mayor once again requested a continuation of the petition hearing stating: "We trust that the committee is well aware of the consequences of a local authority not

complying with Section 24 of the Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003 and the effects thereof on the local community.”

“We were very surprised to hear that, despite the undertaking received from the committee of a postponement, the matter appeared before the committee,” said the mayor.

In a media statement issued by Parliamentary Communication Services on behalf of the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Petitions and Executive Undertakings, Moses Mhlanga, the Committee “strongly condemned the threats and intimidation allegedly directed against a petitioner, Mr Mike Hampton, by the Knysna Municipality.”

To this the mayor said that this conclusion made by the chairperson is extremely unfortunate as neither she nor the Municipal Manager were aware of any threats and/or intimidation directed towards Hampton.

“Mr Hampton is by no means a victim here,” she said before adding: “Notwithstanding the fact that all applications and actions were opposed by Hampton the courts have ordered a myriad of orders against him.”

The previous Council’s Deputy Mayor, Esme Edge was awarded a high court interdict prohibiting Hampton from defaming her, commenting on her private life and publishing any photographs with costs. Hampton was further found to be in contempt of that order and the high court has issued a suspended sentence of 60 days, which is still of force and effect.

Final orders in terms of the protection from Harassment Act in favour of Knysna Tourism CEO, Greg Vogt, who was also awarded costs, Magdalena Moos and Advocate Julie Seton had been granted.

Criminal charges have been laid in respect of his contravention of some of the above orders and an interim protection order in favour of a municipal employee, a matter which is still sub judice has also been ordered. Hampton has orders against another Knysna resident, Mark Allan and Adv Seton, prohibiting Seton from mentioning Hampton directly or indirectly on social media.

Recently Campbell had advised the Knysna Ratepayers to approach the Western Cape High Court to ask that a decision taken by the Knysna Municipality to approve the construction of a mosque be set aside. Judge Daniel Dlodlo dismissed with costs, the application to set aside the construction of the place of worship on 5 April.

The Knysna Municipality is aware that, as was submitted to the committee on Wednesday, 25 May by the Public Protector, the complaint by Hampton had been finalized by their office and no adverse findings were made.

It must be noted that previous extremely costly oral submissions have been made by the previous council and yet again no charges arose and these submissions seem to have been ignored.

“In the light of the fact that both petitioners, Hampton and Campbell seem to be incapable of accepting this and clearly do not seem to have any regard to the cost to ratepayers that the Knysna Municipality must incur in a sincere effort to address any legitimate concerns that we have not yet noticed. At the time of this release we have not received any evidence that required any further response to what has already been submitted by us.

“We await to hear from parliament as to whether any further response is required and whether there is any actual complain that needs to be addressed by the Knysna Municipality,” concluded the mayor.

**ENDS**

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