

## **Masiphumelele Meeting with Cllr van Minnen – 26 April 201**

### **Present:**

Tshepo Moletsane - ANC Branch chairperson Masi ( TM)

Brian Nompunga –Masi Wetlands community chairperson (BM)

Dr Lutz van Dijk – HOKISA (LvD)

Kim Kruyshaar – Far South Peninsula Community Forum representative (KK)

Livona Powel – City of CT Regional co-ordinator southern & Central Informal settlements and markets (LP)

Cllr Benedicta van Minnen – Human Settlements portfolio (BvM)

Cllr Felicity Purchase – sub council 19 chairperson (FP)

**Discussion notes:** Note that while the actual discussion switched between issues, in these notes the discussions on each issue have been recorded together. So while the order is not exactly as the discussion occurred, the notes attempt to accurately record the discussion issue by issue.

TM opened the meeting by thanking BvMinnen for the opportunity for Masi Community leaders to address the concerns of the community directly to her.

**BM explained that a key focus of the meeting was the proposed fence along the edge of the wetlands as well as the overcrowded conditions in the wetlands and inadequate provision of toilets.**

### **The proposed fence:**

**BM queried the situation that the residents directly affected by the fence first heard about it in an article in the Cape Times.** The proposed fence was a potential trap for residents in the event of another fire in Masi and was a very real safety risk. No one in the community supported the fence which they felt was an indignity as well as a hazard. It was not an appropriate boundary. It would most likely be vandalized or removed piecemeal for building materials and would not serve the purpose of defining the edge of the informal houses and wetlands.

BvM explained that the construction of the fence was a directive from the Western Cape Government Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP) issued in terms of the National Environment Management Act to prevent further encroachment into the wetlands and the Table Mnt National Park. The intention is to protect the water quality of the wetlands as loss of water quality impacts on the health of all communities living on the edge of the wetlands system.

LP explained that it was important for the city to be able to clearly mark the wetland boundary so that people could not say they did not know that they had built in the wetlands.

She suggested that the city paints the perimeter shacks in each of the wetlands housing blocks – especially those on the edge of the wetlands with fire proof paint. This would make the outer edge of the housing blocks very visible and have the added feature of being a fire retardant should a fire start in the reeds. New shacks outside of this block would be recognised as an illegal encroachment. In this way the wetland edge could be identified without a fence.

LvD suggested that a canal could be built along the edge of the wetlands which would be an effective barrier but would not carry the risk of a fence in the event of a fire. Also all four present canals between section A - F should be made functioning again and if connected to an edge canal could improve the drainage.

BvM said that as the City had a directive to build the fence the City could not ignore it. The Masi community needed to write to the DEA&DP suggesting the alternatives of the visual fire paint boundary and possibly a canal and explain the community’s concerns about the danger of the fence. KK asked BvM if the city could also address the DEA&DP to convey the concerns expressed to them by the Masi community leaders. BvM replied that she needed to think about this request.

It was pointed out that the fire paint visual boundary was a short term solution. In the longer term, the people living in the high water table section close to the wetlands would need to be relocated to land that could be serviced. The line of the electricity poles was an approximate edge of what area could safely be serviced. The Greater Masi Development Framework has apparently looked at the redevelopment of the wetland shacks including socially acceptable options for identifying the edge.

**ACTIONS:**

1	BvM to forward the contact details of the person at DEA&DP.	City
2	A Masi community leader to write to DEA&DP to stop the fence in view of discussed alternatives	Masi community
3	BvM to consider writing to the DEA&DP to convey the concerns of the Masi community and support for the fire paint alternative.	City
4	LP and FP to look at funding for the fire proof paint as well as funds from the expanded works programme for the painting.	City

**Post fire land issues in Masi**

The meeting briefly discussed the problems arising from the November 2015 fire which resulted in people being displaced and not being able to find land to rebuild on. BvM agreed that the reblocking, although agreed to by the community, had been too difficult to achieve and that people had been displaced. The extended stay of the people in the hall were finally allocated land on 25 April - a sad example of how hard it has been to find land in Masi.

The scale of the fire and the challenges of finding immediate solutions especially for the vulnerable members of the community tested the trust between the city and the community. Community leaders had an impossible task of trying to help the process of ensuring fair allocation of sites. Bold opportunists took advantage of the situation to get sites where previously they had been borders and created more challenges. LP commented that realistically it is not possible to reblock a high density area without `decanting` some people. Where do these people go? BvM replied that the City was working on a new approach to dealing rehousing after large scale disasters such as the November 2015 Masi fire.

LP said the city officials were running around trying to help people get back into their lives, but the city needs more support from the community leaders. “community leaders have most of the solutions because you live there. We need the leadership to come to the table to help drive and voice a process of winning solutions. We get frustrated because we need the community and political leadership to work together.”

### Working with the community

LvD responded that there is a strong effort to unite the community across section borders. He gave the example of BM’s selection by the different Wetland leaders to be their spokesperson. The ‘old’ leadership is still there but when there is a need for one voice, they have chosen BM. He also mentioned the good cooperation with neighbours of Masi as evident with the establishment of a Masiphumelele Working Group within the FSPCF (Far South Peninsula Community Forum). A letter by the chairperson of the FSPCF, Marti Weddepohl, in support of the Masi community’s rejection of the fence and for more land (erf 5131) was handed to BvM (dated 22 April 2016, see also attachment to these minutes).

BM confirmed this by saying they were already functioning as a viable group. They worked with Cllr Nikelo to find a solution for the people who had finally been relocated from the hall.

LP / FP suggested that the households in the wetlands should be surveyed to find out how long individual people had been waiting for a RDP house and who was old or disabled and needed to be given a priority. This would assist with a fair allocation of houses as they became available with the completion of phase iv on a portion of Erf 5131.

She mentioned a study by the city to see where in the wetlands there was land high enough above the water table to build more community toilets. Once sites were identified the city would need to discuss the sites with the community leaders.

TM reinforced the need for better communication from the city. He reminded everyone that in the absence of official information, people make up their own information which caused problems. He appealed for the release of the Masi Development Framework and a process to inform the Masi public about the plan. He gave the new developments at Lavender hill and Rondevlei as examples of successful projects involving all three levels of government. BvM agreed that the city would look at a process of community engagement over the Masi Development Framework. She expressed concerns about a big public meeting that in her experience could be less effective as some people became confrontational and side tracked the meeting. The concern was expressed that small meetings with community leaders often placed too much of the burden on them to explain city plans to the rest of the community. While no date was given for the release of the Masi Dev Framework, BvM said that it was being processed.

### ACTIONS:

1	Commitment to treat Masi as <b>one</b> community and not a group of competing factions.	All
2	City to look at a survey of the households in the wetlands to determine priorities for who first moves to an phase iv house	City
3	City to look at a process of effective community engagement over the Masi Development Framework.	City

## Future developments for Masi

FP explained that phase IV on the approved portion of Erf 5131 had started. It was a three (not: two ?) year project. The civil works for the whole site was underway. The blocks of accommodation for the first houses, about 50% of phase iv should be completed in year 2. The remainder should be completed within year 3. The remainder of Houmoed Road needed to be completed to access the site. Households currently on the TRA and a few other groups such as some households on Houmoed road reserve and a city electricity substation site needed to be temporarily relocated to the triangle of community land at the top (north end) of erf 5131. This area was being electrified at present so that the relocated people will have electricity.

After phase IV, the remainder of erf 5131 will be planned for additional development including houses and community facilities. There is in principle agreement in council that the remainder of erf 5131 not affected by high water table will be developed. This also forms part of the Masi Development Framework study.

### ACTIONS:

1	Three (two ?) year development of phase IV has started	City
2	Longer term - Remainder of erf 5131 to be developed for additional houses and community facilities	City

Kim Kruyshaar – 28 April 2016