

The Weekly

MASILONYANA SUSPENDS TOP OFFICIAL

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In a dramatic move to clean the administration, the Masilonyana Local Municipality council suspended the municipal manager Mohanwe Mpakane amid his spirited rebuttal.

The municipal manager of the Masilonyana Local Municipality, Mohanwe Mpakane, has been suspended for insubordination and failure to act on corruption.

Impeccable sources told The Weekly that the decisive decision by the council last Friday to suspend Mpakane is a clear signal that the municipality's leadership intends to fight corruption tooth and nail. More senior officials are expected to be shown the door after the Auditor-General (AG) exposed insinuations of financial mismanagement and violation of tender procurement procedures.

Mpakane's suspension comes after he failed to implement a council resolution taken to suspend the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Itumeleng Tlatsi. The council resolved to suspend Tlatsi due to missing financial documents.

The municipality, which falls under the Lejweleputswa District Municipality, has been under Section 139 of the Constitution since 2009. Government intervened in the management of the municipality because it failed to pay its staff and third parties. The municipality was also unable to collect revenue and its debt escalated to R129-million at the end of 2009. Money owed to creditors now stands at R10-million.

Investigations found that there had been financial maladministration, a high vacancy rate, and the existence of ghost workers within the municipality. There was also a breach of various municipal laws with regard to management. However, the municipality was declared fit to again handle its own finances in September 2011.

The municipality received a disclaimer from the AG in the 2010/11 report. One of the reasons cited for this poor score was the unavailability of relevant documents. The council demanded answers from Tlatsi, who failed to provide the documents.

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On September 21, the council decided that Tlatsi should be suspended. Mpakane was expected to implement this decision. According to the Masilonyana mayor, Kunatu Steve Koalane, Mpakane failed to act on the council's decision.

"The municipal manager as the accounting officer failed to implement the resolution of the council to suspend the CFO. The decision was taken based on the AG report and other matters that I cannot reveal now. This is not based on this financial year report only. This has been going on for years.

"There has been disappearance of documents that the CFO could not explain their whereabouts. We expected the municipal manager to take remedial action but nothing happened. On December 9, I decided to suspend him based on all of this, because what he did amounted to insubordination," Koalane told The Weekly.

Mpakane, however, believes he was unfairly suspended. He said Koalane decided to inform the provincial government, during the Premier's Coordinating Forum, in his absence.

"I advised him not to suspend the CFO because in so doing, he will be singling him out. The former administrator must account for the AG report. The administrator did not follow supply chain procedures and we brought this to the mayor's attention. But this does not mean I did nothing. I wrote a letter to the CFO asking him to explain why I should not suspend him. It was during this process the mayor decided to talk to act. My role is also to advise the mayor and I did that. I do not know why he did not give me a chance to respond," Mpakane said.

He added that Tlatsi responded to his letter and Koalane was aware of this. He emphasised that this means he was already implementing the council resolution. Mpakane believes he was used as a scapegoat.

When The Weekly approached Tlatsi, he responded by saying that he was not aware of the council's resolution. He is still working as the Masilonyana Local Municipality's CFO and has no idea why the municipal manager was suspended.

The former administrator, Chris Mekomela, said he could not speak on behalf of the municipality as he no longer works there.