

The Weekly

MAYOR ROASTS CRITICS

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Following allegations of nepotism, the Mayor of Masilonyana has emerged guns blazing and accused his detractors of using the media in a quest to halt his anti-corruption crusade.



On the offensive ... The Mayor of Masilonyana Steve Koalane condemns the attempts to discredit his efforts.

Heads are once again rolling at the Masilonyana Local Municipality. Recently, the municipality was rocked by renewed allegations of financial maladministration, insubordination, and misconduct, which left some positions vacant due to suspended officials.

Municipal manager Mohanoe Mpakane will be subject to a disciplinary hearing. This comes after he was suspended for failing to implement a council resolution late last year. The council decided that the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Itumeleng Tlatsi, be suspended due to missing financial documents, but Mpakane did not follow through their decision.

“The municipal manager as an 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 but 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, in consultation with Council we decided to suspend him as his conduct amounted to insubordination,” Mayor Steve Koalane told The Weekly.

Tlatsi has since been suspended.

Koalane also came under fire when it was revealed that he was to be reported to the Public Protector.

It was alleged that his company had benefitted from municipal tenders for the installation of ablution systems and that it was on the municipality’s list of service providers.

The Weekly

Koalane denied the allegations and said they were “malicious and defamatory”. He also stated that these “lies” were exposed by an independent law firm that conducted an investigation following an unfounded newspaper report.

“These untested and unfounded allegations raised in the media using the name of a Chapter 9 institution like the Public Protector to discredit and besmirch my name and that of the municipality are mischievous. I can tell you that this does not start now; it is a well-orchestrated political campaign to portray me as insane.

“I have declared my interests in line with council policy. This declaration included my security company, a building material supplier, shares at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, including all my properties.”

The municipal council has taken a resolution to investigate two of the municipal officials – Steve Makata and Tshepo Khobane for misconduct.

Khobane is a Samwu representative at the municipality.

Speaking on behalf of Samwu, Makata stated that they never spoke about the mayor as a private individual, but in his capacity as the mayor of Masilonyana.

“We will continue raising issues concerning our municipality because whatever they are doing wrong affects workers negatively. We will talk about a person as a mayor or councillor and we are not prepared to apologise for raising this issues.”

Makata said the Department of Cooperative Governance agreed with Samwu that there was “rampant corruption” at the municipality and that the KPMG report is outstanding.

“We also want to emphasise as Samwu that we do not say anything without documentation.”

Masilonyana falls under the Lejweleputswa District Municipality in the Free State. It was placed under Section 139 of the Constitution in 2009. The intervention was made because the municipality was unable to pay its staff and third parties.

The municipality was unable to collect revenue and the figure for debtors had escalated to R129-million by the end of 2009. Money owed by the municipality to creditors had escalated to R10-million.

There had been financial maladministration, mass vacancies, and ghost workers. The municipality had also been incapable of providing services and breached municipal management systems legislation. However, it was declared fit to handle its finances in September last year.

The municipality also received a disclaimer from the Auditor-General (AG) in his report of 2010/11. Another reason cited for this performance was the unavailability of relevant documents. Based on the AG’s report the council demanded answers from the CFO who in turn failed to provide relevant documents.