



Huge public outcry over cost of Mbombela street name changes

Buks Viljoen

MBOMBELA - A flood of disappointment and frustration has flared up since the plans of the City of Mbombela (CoM) to change street names in the city became known. "Change street name for what?" Thandazile Mgwenya said on Facebook.

"Our clinics do not have enough staff and medical equipment. There are no ambulances. Build schools and clinics in the rural areas. You can't be foolish and stupid at the same time. Street names do not affect anyone," she said.

Last week Lowvelder revealed that the council's local geographical names committee initiated a process to change street names in the city, White River, Hazyview and Barberton.

Most of the comments against the planned name changes did not so much address the emotional side of the plans, but rather the budgetary impact the process will have on taxpayers.

"Change the names if you want, but not with our money," Linda Grimbeck, chief operating officer of the Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism said last week.

The proposed name changes could cost the residents and taxpayers millions of rands. The council published two official notices last week.

One notification was for the submission of proposals for renaming streets in the four towns and the other was for the submission of objections/appeals regarding the naming and renaming of geographical features in the area of responsibility of the municipality.

The geographical features referred to were the renaming of streets in suburbs as well as the

changing the name of Pienaar.

Confusion reigned over the deadlines for responses to these two notices.

The submission of objections or appeals regarding the renaming of geographical features is 21 days, thus June 15, as opposed to submission of proposals for renaming streets which is 30 days, thus June 24.

The submission for naming/renaming of geographical features should include background information about the proposed name.

These two notifications are two different processes and therefore have two different deadlines. Joseph Ngala, spokesman for the municipality explained.

TJ Maré, well-known businessman and driving force behind the WeCare4 Nelspruit project, launched the "Stop Mbombela Street Names (There is no money)," campaign.

Within a few hours the launch more than 1 400 signatures had been received on the petition.

"There is no money to maintain basic infrastructures, the electricity grid is on meltdown, the Eskom account is in arrears and there are freshwater issues. The road infrastructure is 'holy'," Maré said in the petition.

"Public services for basic needs according to the integrated development plan are far behind. The dam, bulk water supply is just not happening.

"Schools, clinics and public facilities need maintenance. Mbombela has no public toilets. And yet, the proposal to change names is taking precedence," said Maré.

"If you are offended by a street name, we as taxpayers (minority in SA), are offended by the way you wastefully spend our money. We say no, no, no!"

Grimbeck said people need to be encouraged to follow the process as indicated on the notices.

"Email the objections/suggestions to

that address before the deadline. We must not vent opinions just on social media, but follow the process.

"This is how we lost the Nelspruit name change case. Objectors did not turn up at the public hearings. White River's people did, and the name did not change. Follow the process!" Grimbeck said.

The email address is cebisile.khoza@mbombela.gov.za.

Proposals can also be hand-delivered to 7 Jones Street, where the community services department of CoM is situated (for attention Cebisile Khoza).



Brendon Longfield

On condition that the municipality repairs and maintains all the streets for a period of at least 24 months. Only then can they change them to whatever new names. Printing new names and putting up new sign posts, that is not development.



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The public reacts

The citizens were foolishly made to think that the government works for them. It has its own evil agendas and needs the citizens to buy in to them. So the government lies to us in order to get its way - which

doesn't depend on us agreeing or not. The democracy rhetoric is just a surface thing - a tool to make us comfortable in our captivity.

Prinziilah Massa Miggs Miggos

Pleks gebruik hulle die geld om die paaie reg te maak, die reservoirs reg maak, die waterpype wat so bars te vervang, of die krag op standaard te bring.

Yolandre Bester Raath



Take that budget and fix the streets in Mbombela. No shame at all, potholes right inside town and you guys are worried about stupid street names. What good will come with this name

changing thing except for politicians looting all those millions without anyone noticing until the funds are all gone.

Prudence Ndlovukanyawezimhlophe



We don't have clean water and our streets and roads are not in a good condition, now they are telling us about changing names. For what? How much will it cost?

Dorah Aliyah



Ruan Radmore

What a complete waste of taxpayers' money. Why not instead fix potholes, upgrade infrastructure, pay Eskom the outstanding money due to them. Changing names will not help anything or anyone nor will it feed the hungry, repair what's damaged and broken. Be the municipality that stands out and not the one that just fits in.



Just something else to waste money on. Why not first fix the roads, pay Eskom, uplifting the poor with proper infrastructure and then look into something like name changes?

Marie-louise Scheepers