

More than 300 shacks erected in just over a month in Sea Vista

Land invasions in St Francis, sprawling daily out of control with more than 300 shacks erected in the suburbs of Sea Vista in just over a month, have brought widespread condemnation of Kouga Municipality for not solving the problem.

Kouga Municipality is custodian of the government land owned by the Public Works Department (PWD) and on a piece of this land, without sewerage or any other services, there has been a huge land invasion in just over a month. The DA municipality has come under fire for its failure to take any action or respond to requests for meetings.

Resurgent crime increases have led to a petition being circulated in Sea Vista, by

lawful, long time residents there, for the municipality to respond on its failure to supply security and improved hygiene services, plus a threat of court action.

Ratepayers countywide with homes in St Francis have voiced their displeasure and criticism of the municipality on social media. Critics claim the municipality has taken no action to prevent more shacks being erected despite the municipality being granted a court order allowing it to deal with the problem.

It has been claimed that the municipality also failed to respond to requests by community residents to attend meetings, including a request to attend a recent Community Police Forum (CPF) meeting and one from a

concerned Sea Vista group, so grievances and fears could be heard, discussed and problems resolved or alleviated. A letter from the St Francis Bay CPF elicited no response and so the group, which was an ardent supporter of the municipality, is now upset and drew up a petition.

Critics claim that instead of looking after the land under their jurisdiction, and by ignoring the lawful residents of Sea Vista suburb's pleas and concerns, the municipality's officials and assistants just washed its hands of the matter and laid the problem on the doorstep of the PWD.

When the land invasions first started a court order was issued for the eviction of around 30 shacks and papers were served on those shack dwellers and they were given 21 days to leave the site. The court order granted to the municipality included instructing the Council to find an alternate site and to move the squatters from the nature reserve. But following this court order there was no municipal law enforcement and the 21 days lapsed with the squatters remaining and the number of illegal dwellers having trebled.

It was assumed by several members of St Francis community that the municipality would provide alternative land for the squatters and it does have land set aside in various parts of Kouga and in Humansdorp. It was also assumed that armed with the court order the municipality would proceed to update and remove the illegal land invaders. But the municipality has not done so.

Commenting on the Sea Vista Ward Councillor Zolani Mayoyi related that the PWD wanted the people who settled on PWD land to evict them, but these people then took the department to court. The court order mandated the municipality to get alternative land and to allocate the land to those people. "The municipality requested a further 6 months to deal with the land allocation issue so they can find alternative land for those people."

As the councillor for the Sea Vista, he believes the people on the PWD land should stay until the unit of municipality has resolved the matter within the six months. "It will be totally selfish and unhuman of us to force those people to leave that land before their challenges are resolved."

John Hammond, the CPF says the lawful Sea Vista community raised concerns about this new development and importantly their safety and security and that of their children due to a range of factors including the illegal electric connections taking place. "Concerned residents have failed to receive feedback or any contact with Kouga for weeks on issues of safety and security and land invasion. Hammond says, adding that a community group has started a major drive to obtain signatures to a petition demanding action on certain issues.

Petition
In its petition the Sea Vista group acting on

behalf of some residents, demands that the municipality immediately develops and implements a strategy to deal with the informal infrastructure to enable ratepayers to live in safety and security as stipulated in the South African Constitution. It also demands that the municipality has failed to effect improvements for hygiene and health services for its people.

It also maintains illegal electrical connections are a safety hazard and not only a safety issue, but homeowners and residents are indirectly paying for this electricity theft through the municipality's failure to get out such payments. These illegal connections cost residents money or the non-delivery of services due to shortage of funds.

The municipality is failing in its duty to stop this criminal activity and is not supplying infrastructure to enable residents to live in safety. The municipal and Council leaders have failed to respond to requests to meet community leaders.

The petition moreover demands that Council leaders attend a community meeting to hear the complaints and advise resolutions and action plans. The petition says: "We hope this request receives a positive response as failure to do so will result in the community seeking legal advice as to how best the courts can assist in compelling negligent office bearers to meet their official duties."

Commenting Hammond says: "Failure to act upon the safety and security of our residents in Sea Vista and greater St Francis at risk and is unacceptable."

Hammond notes that the land invasion has in the interim grown to 300 plus shacks, with no jobs in sight and an already high level of unemployment in Sea Vista.

Hammond says a formal request has been sent from the St Francis CPF to the municipality to request the council to attend the scheduled monthly meetings, following the "no-show" of municipal representatives at the last CPF meeting. He says the municipality also seems to be avoiding meeting with the Sea Vista community on the above issues.

"Concerned residents have failed to receive feedback or any contact with Kouga for weeks on issues of safety and security and land invasion. The only conclusion is that we will unfortunately have increased pressure on our police force and resulting crime," says Hammond.

He expands by saying SAPS members are being blamed for a failure to remove squatters. "This affects community relations and the SAPS' image when in fact this issue is clearly a municipal law enforcement matter."

Meanwhile commentators on social media and in pubs are questioning how squatters with seemingly no jobs and no money find all the building materials required to construct solid structures such as a double-storey building with balcony. An LTB clearing machine was spotted clearing in Sea Vista.

According to Mayoyi, people bought their materials with their own money. "No one shipped or donated material to them. They hired LTBs on their own and paid for this with their own money."


He believed the subject of illegal electricity connections in the area is being addressed by the municipality.

As to why the people were there Mayoyi said the people who are staying there identified that it was because they had stayed in congested area, such as shacks behind houses. For their own safety they chose to move to that land to avoid flooding and prevent the houses from burning.

Mayoyi also said that as a ward councillor it is his responsibility to attend CPF meetings, adding that the fact that he did not attend a CPF meeting. He wishes to emphasize that he is not shirking his responsibilities. He says he holds regular meetings with Sea Vista people.

Meanwhile political observers have pointed out that no political party wishes to be seen as the bad guys' just before an election.

-By Bev Mortimer



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See how many words you can make from the letters. No words on less than four letters. Every word has to contain the middle, bold letter. The goal is to also find the nine letter word. No plural nouns, capital letters, slang, or foreign language words (unless accepted in the Oxford English dictionary). This month's goal: 79 words excellent, 40 words good, 30 words fair. Note: Words ending in 's' like 'jays' have been allowed. The correct solution is on p14.

Word Puzzle compiled by Bev Mortimer

Y	A	T
R	D	D
E	E	H

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