

Municipal bills: the buck stops with landlords

THEMBA NYATHIKAZI

THE municipality has reminded landlords that they are ultimately responsible for payment of all municipal accounts due on the properties they own.

Krish Kumar, Deputy City Manager: Treasury, said this included municipal service fees, surcharge on fees, property rates and other municipal taxes, levies and duties.

All of these were considered by law as a charge on the property and took preference over any mortgage bond registered against the property and were the responsibility of the registered owner of such property.

"When electricity and water consumption is recorded on a property during a period for which there is no registered

customer against whom a bill can be raised, the charges shall be raised against the registered owner," Kumar said.

When a customer terminated an account and no new customer registered, a property was deemed vacant and accounts would be forwarded to the owner until he or she advised the municipality to the contrary.

He said the owner was liable for any debt not recovered from the tenant and the council could recover this from rent payable by the tenant to the extent of the tenant's liability to the landlord, whether or not the rent was paid directly to the owner or a managing agent.

Owners could request copies of the tenant's account. But failure to receive or

accept accounts did not relieve a customer of the obligation to pay any amount owed.

Any interest or penalties raised under these circumstances would also remain due.

Kumar also warned residents that relocating meters without proper authority was "punishable by law".

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Taxi lane will work: officials

METRO REPORTER

DURBAN'S new public transport lane due to open early next year, will be a success.

That's the assurance from national and local transport officials, who have promised to learn from the successes and shortcomings of similar projects in Cape Town and abroad.

The plan is to give taxis, buses and metered taxis an express lane on the Western Freeway to ease congestion on the busy stretch between the Candella Road and Botanic Gardens Road bridges.

The announcement last month prompted heated public debate, with much of it questioning the viability and rationale of the lane. But the authorities are confident they have done their homework.

South African Road Federation Executive Director Malcolm Mitchell was positive the globally tested concept would work if used by those it was meant for and if monitored and enforced properly.

"It is an effective system that is highly beneficial with the correct processes in place."

Logan Moodley, Deputy Head of the eThekweni Transport Authority, agreed that enforcement would be the key to the lane's success. "We have had meetings with Metro Police and they have reassured us they are ready to handle this new project."

"We have also been in contact with our counterparts in Cape Town who implemented the public transport lane two years ago and I believe we can learn from their mistakes."

A dedicated CCTV camera with number plate recognition software will monitor motorists and help with enforcement.

Metro Police spokesman Supt John-Thomas Tyala welcomed the development. "We will take our role to prosecute seriously." He said his department would use the automated enforcement system and traffic police on the ground to monitor the lane and encourage the free flow of traffic.

The transport authority has also trained 10 000 taxi owners and drivers on general road courtesy, public transport lane usage and compliance on the roads.

There appears to be early acceptance from the minibus and metered taxi industries.

Yusuf Khaliva, secretary of the Durban Five Region Taxi Association, said: "Initially we were sceptical of the benefits, but since speaking to officials we understand this will encourage more people to use public transport."

South African Metered Taxi Association chairman, Baboo Bux, was keen to see the concept extended to the Nkosi Albert Luthuli (Southern) Freeway, providing a quicker passage for their clients to and from Durban International Airport.

"We will wait to see if this works and if so, we will definitely support it."

Although it was initially announced that the lane would open by Christmas, rain has delayed the project, with the lane now expected to open in January.

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JIVE MASTERS: Old folk get into the festive spirit at a Christmas party hosted by the municipality at the Michael Gwala Hall in Inchanga recently

Picture: THEMBA KHUMALO

Elderly asked to lend a hand

THEMBA KHUMALO, JOE MAJOLA and PHUMLA BHODOZA

COUNCIL Speaker James Nxumalo has called on senior citizens to share their wisdom with the young and help combat the abuse of women, children and the elderly.

Nxumalo was speaking at the recent launch of the Senior Citizens Forum at the Durban Exhibition Centre.

The forum's elected members are drawn from across eThekweni and their job is to communicate with the government and other bodies on matters affecting the aged. Nxumalo said: "The elderly have a lot of wisdom and skills that they can pass on to the youth."

"I want to encourage senior citizens to participate in the campaign against the abuse of older people, women and

children," said Nxumalo

Forum member Maggie Mbuyisa, of Umlazi, expressed her appreciation to the municipality for the support it had given older people.

"This is the beginning of good things for the city. We want to play our part as senior citizens," said Mbuyisa.

Meanwhile, senior citizens across eThekweni are being treated to Christmas parties, courtesy of the city council.

The parties, in each of the city's 100 wards, are to honour and thank the elderly for the contribution they have made, said Nxumalo.

The Speaker's Office has been holding these events for the past five years. This year, they have already thrown bashes in KwaXimba, Inchanga, Phoenix, Pine-town, Inanda, Chesterville, and Ntuzuma. Five parties are being held each weekday in the different wards until 7

December. Senior citizens are treated to tea and cake in the morning followed by lunch. They are also given gift hampers.

At one of the parties last week, Nxumalo told senior citizens: "This is to acknowledge the role you play in teaching the young."

"Today youngsters show no respect for adults and our culture," Nxumalo said, noting that some blamed multiracial schools for young people abandoning their culture. "But we need to understand these school are helping our children get a better education," he said.

Nxumalo said the elderly played a vital role. "You are important and we would love for you to continue to share and teach us about our culture," he said.

For details about the party in your ward, contact your ward councillor.

IN BRIEF

City seeks hostel funding

THE City's housing department has made a resubmission to the provincial housing department for further funding to upgrade the KwaMakhutha and Klaarwater Hostels.

This comes after the City received R100-million towards the continued upgrade of KwaMashu hostel, Jacobs, SJ Smith, Glebelands and Kranskloof.

The provincial housing department also recently granted the City R140-million for the administration, over three years, of the former R293 hostels – Umlazi T, KwaMashu, KwaMakhutha, and Kranskloof (KK).

Included in this funding is R12.5-million for water and electrical infrastructure in Glebelands Hostel.

These hostels were previously administered by the province as the City only administered and continues to administer Glebelands, SJ Smith, Jacobs, Klaarwater, Thokoza and Dalton.

Durbs eyes Vuna hat-trick

THE Department of Local Government, Housing and Traditional Affairs is today (Friday) hosting its annual Vuna awards. The awards recognise excellence in service delivery by KwaZulu-Natal's 61 municipalities.

As one of the contending municipalities, eThekweni will be looking to score a hat-trick this year, having already scooped the awards for the best run municipality for two consecutive years.

Vuna is a Nguni word meaning to reap.

The awards will be held at Pietermaritzburg's Royal Showgrounds.

Chance to win 2010 tickets

ABOUT 16 000 First National Bank customers stand to win 2010 tickets for the tournament's 64 games. The first of at least 1 000 tickets would be awarded in February 2008.

The bank's KZN Chairman, Gareth Davies, said FNB customers would be entered automatically into each of the 12 draws if they hold active qualifying products.

See www.fnb.co.za

Imbizo for street traders

INFORMAL traders are invited to attend an imbizo hosted by the City and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Finance and Economic Development at Albert Park on Tuesday, 20 November.

The 9.30am meeting is part of efforts to resolve misunderstandings between traders and the authorities that resulted in mass protest action by traders earlier this year.

Big prizes in small business competition

HLOBISILE MBOKAZI

ARE you ready to roar? That's the challenge to owners of small and medium-sized businesses in Durban, with an estimated R50 000 up for grabs in this year's Lions' Den competition.

The competition, a partnership between the municipality and the city council of Leeds, in the UK, aims to

encourage sustainable entrepreneurship, innovation and competitiveness among small businesses.

Philip Sithole, Acting Head of the City's Business Support Unit, said the response to last year's inaugural contest was tremendous. "We received many entries and all the competitors were highly deserving. This year we hope to receive even more entries."

But time is running out for would-be winners, who have just under a month to submit their applications. All applicants will be invited to attend a morning seminar at the City Hall early in January 2008 to be briefed on the procedure and what will be expected from those fortunate enough to be short-listed.

Last year's overall winner Thoko Moyana urged her

fellow entrepreneurs to enter. "The benefits of participating are enormous. As a winner I received an equity investment from a global business person."

"But it was not just the prize money; a lifetime relationship has developed with the people involved in the programme and there's ongoing mentorship."

"There has also been a fair

amount of exposure from the programme. The media coverage was also good. They are still interested in the progress and development of my business."

All entries should be posted in a sealed envelope in the Lions' Den box at Rennie's house, Margaret Mncadi Avenue (Victoria Embankment) on the ground floor by 11am on the 14 December.