

**Press Release**

**Theewaterskloof Municipality**

**Housing Protests**

**10 February 2017**

**English Version**



**Ward 2 Forum**  
SERVING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

## **Recent Protest Action in Greyton and the Housing Crisis within the Greyton and Genadendal Area**

To understand the housing crisis in Greyton and Genadendal it is important to understand the background of the housing crisis in Theewaterskloof.

The illegal invasion of land of the national department of public works in Grabouw had a devastating impact on the municipality and social order in the town. At a strategic session and other planning interventions the recently elected Theewaterskloof municipal council subsequently identified illegal land grabs and human settlement areas on such land as the biggest threat to stability in the municipal area.

The illegal invasions and settlement areas poses huge threats to municipal institutional capacities; whilst illegal electrical and water connections can result in a loss of revenue and the loss of limited water resources. Conditions in these illegal settlements pose severe health and safety risks to people.

As the land belongs to national government it is difficult for the municipality to deal with and manage the threats.

The municipality warned national government about the land grab before it occurred but, due to a lack of political will and a shocking underestimation of outcome of the situation, the matter was not dealt with appropriately.

After the invasion the municipality urged the department of public works to stop the influx of people based on a court order they obtained. The lack of actions by the department resulted in a situation that is currently out of control. The unfortunate reality is that the situation is now a municipal problem.

When a similar situation developed on Farm 39, the municipality removed illegal structures under construction in an attempt to prevent a Grabouw-scenario. The Department of Rural Development and the Human Rights Commission however advised that that the municipality actions on the land were inappropriate and that that an interdict must be obtained before actions, to stop the illegal invasion, can be taken. The municipality subsequently abandoned the operation.

The illegal invaders protested against the municipal actions and to defuse the situation Executive Mayor, Christelle Vosloo, met with a committee of the protestors on 8 February 2017. At the meeting the mayor confirmed the extended housing need in the Genadendal and Heuwelkroon (Greyton) areas. She said that the municipality will address the need without delay.

In terms of the promise and to find a solution for the illegal land invasion and protests the municipality requested a meeting with the Transformation Committee and the Department of Rural Development. Both declined the invitation and the Department of Rural Development refused to meet with the invaders. The Department of Rural Affairs issued a legal notice to the illegal occupiers to vacate the land by 15 February 2017.

Finding a solution for the housing need in Genadendal, Voorstekraal and Bereaville is not a simple matter. Whilst the municipality can legally intervene on Farm 39 without the permission of the Minister of Rural Development, the committee, acting on behalf of the occupiers, holds the municipality responsible to solve the housing crisis of the invaders. The Human Rights Commission agrees that it is a municipal obligation. The Municipality is subsequently willing to take the responsibility but can only do so if the Minister makes land available for a housing solution.

At a follow-up meeting with the committee on 9 February 2017 the municipality, in an attempt to solve the deadlock, agreed to request a meeting with the Department of Rural Affairs. The Human Rights Commission in the Western Cape was requested to support the arrangement of a meeting which will attempt to convince the Department of Rural Development to join the municipality and the MEC for Human Settlements to meet with the illegal occupiers and to consider solutions to the back yarder and housing crisis in Genadendal.

The matter can be resolved if the Minister makes available three hectares of land adjacent to the current low cost housing project in Genadendal. The Municipality is willing to work with the MEC of Human Settlements to obtain funding for the housing solution.

Three solutions are available: the establishment of a formal informal settlement with basic interim services; serviced plots; or a low cost housing project. Funding will however dictate the option. Although the municipality will submit a formal application to the Minister of Rural Development to make the land available there is no guarantee that the housing crisis of the community will be solved. The support of the Department of Rural Development and of the Transformation Committee is required.

A similar problem exists in the Greyton and Heuvelkroon housing crisis which is less intense but still has its own challenges such as land availability, infrastructure and bulk services capacities.

Two portions of land have been identified for low cost housing purposes. One, a public space area adjacent to the school in Heuvelkroon, is however not suitable for an informal settlement or serviced plots. A single unit solution will not address the magnitude of the need. The best option appears to be a high density one; i.e. 4 blocks of 6 duplex units that can house 24 families.

The other portion of land, west from the sport field, and can accommodate 26 households. The best option is a formal informal settlement area with intermediary services; serviced plots; and or formal low cost houses. The availability of funds will determine the likely solution. The option of a high density area can be considered in which case double the amount of households can be accommodated.

When the parties agree on the land it might be necessary to take the matter back to Council. A funding model must be discussed with the MEC of Housing; whilst MIG funding may be required to upgrade infrastructure and bulk services capacities.

Progress were made in developing an understanding for the housing needs in the communities of Greyton and Genadendal; the identification of solutions for the need; to resolve the conflict between the Municipality and the Community; and in creating a constructive working relationship with the affected members of the communities. This probably prevented further illegal land grabs and protest action and instability in the communities.

A lot still needs to be done to overcome obstacles and challenges posed by the housing crisis. It is necessary to obtain the cooperation and support off the Department of Rural Affairs and the Transformation Committee to overcome the housing crisis, to obtain funding for the best solution and to upgrade infrastructure and bulk services capacities.

Executive Mayor  
Councillor Christelle Vosloo  
Theewaterskloof municipality  
10 February 2017