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## City failing fire victims

AFTER another Masi fire crisis meeting at the Masi Primary School last night, we were taken to see the structures the City finally erected for a few of the fire victims. Truly, no one should ever be treated like this.

On mounds of rubble, corrugated iron, 3x3m structures – some without windows and at best 1m apart – are a boiling pot, in more than one sense.

The City says this is temporary, but in the same breath says it has nowhere else to place the victims.

Hundreds of other fire victims still have no place to go other than the hall or to friends in overcrowded conditions.

One man invited me into his new structure. He said I should stand on the two foam mattresses that virtually covered the entire floor.

He said his wife and two children were getting ready to go to sleep, but it was unbearably hot with the last sun shining in through the door. He was bringing buckets of soil into the structure to even the ground in a corner where the gap was so large a child could roll or fall out during the night.

He simply stated: "They treat us



New temporary homes have been constructed for Masiphumelele fire victims, while they await permanent space in sites D and E.

PHOTO: NICOLE MCCAIN

## MASIPHUMELELE

# New homes for fire victims

NICOLE MCCAIN

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The Masiphumelele fire victims housed in the community hall are being moved into new temporary homes. The City of Cape Town has provided about 35 homes for 80 residents.

Community representatives estimated about 250 victims were housed in the hall, despite an assessment by the City that claimed that up to 82 residents were accommodated in the hall where they were receiving humanitarian relief, including food ("Many still living in hall", *People's Post*, 26 January).

An extra 350 to 400 people sought accommodation with relatives or on land close by, community members estimate.

At a recent subcouncil meeting, chairperson Felicity Purchase confirmed the residents had been housed in the hall following the illegal construction of homes on land cleared after the fire.

Some residents built informal homes larger than the space allocated or moved in during a land grab, leaving others without space to build their homes.

The temporary homes have been erected on land cleared for the next phase in the City's housing development, explains Purchase. It is estimated that the tender will be advertised in the middle of the year and that construction will take two years.

In the meantime, non-compliant structures built on sites D and E will be reduced in size to make space permanently for the displaced fire victims, she says.

area, applicants with special needs, and applicants who were registered earliest on the database across the city.

At this stage, it is expected that approximately 324 Breaking New Ground houses will be constructed in two phases over approximately two years. The details must still be finalised.

The City and South African National Parks have interdicts in place and are working jointly to prevent any illegal occupation of the areas in question.

"While we acknowledge that the housing need is acute, especially in light of the rapid and continuing high rate of urbanisation in Cape Town, we must do everything in our power to ensure that we have a fair and systematic approach to housing delivery," Ms Van Minnen said.

## City demolishes 24 shacks in Masiphumelele

STAFF REPORTER

On Thursday February 2, the City of Cape Town's Anti-Land Invasion Unit removed 24 unoccupied structures in Masiphumelele.

This was done in accordance with an interdict that was obtained on December 18 last year, which prohibits anyone from entering, extending or erecting any structures on erf 5131 and the area known as the wetlands, which is uninhabitable and flood-prone.

The City of Cape Town released a statement on Monday, February 8, saying it will continue to remove illegally erected structures in parts of Masiphumelele, which are protected by court interdicts.

Benedicta van Minnen, the City's mayoral committee member for human settlements, said: "It is vital to safeguard the piece of land which has been earmarked for the Masiphumelele housing project – and also the uninhabitable area known as the wetlands."

Ms Van Minnen said: "We urge the community to work with us as the continual attempted invasions are threatening the housing development plans for erf 5131."

She explained that the beneficiaries of this housing development have been identified – in line with the City's beneficiary selection process – and through a public participation process that has taken place over many years.

"It would not be fair, at this late stage of the development and beneficiary selection process, if the land were to be lost due to illegal occupation," she said.

The City plans to develop part of erf 5131 for the Masiphumelele Phase 4 housing project. The property was acquired in 2003.

The Masiphumelele Phase 4 housing project will be developed between the existing formal area and the sports fields.

The City is in the process of applying for technical approval and preparing tender documents for advertising.

It is estimated that the tender will be advertised mid-2016, with an estimated construction period of two years.

The project has an established Project Steering Committee.

Generally, a Project Steering Committee comprises representatives of the beneficiaries and community organisations as well as City officials.

This allocation split accommodates categories prescribed by the Allocation Policy, notably: applicants on the database within the targeted area, households from

# Masi fire leaves 1 000 homeless

## Blaze 'started with faulty electricity meter'

ASAMBA SHAWAYILE

ANOTHER fire blazed through evacuated Masi-phumalele yesterday, razing around 300 shacks and leaving about 1 000 people homeless.

The latest fire came just months after two people died, about 800 shacks were razed and more than 4 000 people were left homeless in November. Many are still living in a community hall in the area.

Fourteen firefighting vehicles, two helicopters and about 30 firefighters rushed to Masi-phumalele at 1.20pm yesterday and city fire and rescue service spokesperson Lindi Moodie.

One resident, Bongile Kwa-dine, said she arrived home to find the suburb's engulfed in smoke.

"When I arrived there were a number of firefighters and thick black smoke. They refused to let us go through as we couldn't see our things."

"My aunt was at work at the time so when she came back her house was already totally destroyed. We don't know what started the fire. This is a night

mare for all of us," she said.

Community leader Tshepo Molwane said they believed the fire was the result of a faulty electricity meter.

"Isolated settlements are dense and if a fire is kept hot in one house it will spread to other shacks. We believe that a electricity meter in one of the shacks must have exploded, causing the fire. The situation here is very bad and there are people injured while they were trying to save their belongings," he said.

Molwane was also concerned the fire would see more people having to move into the community hall, where about 40 people were still living after last year's fire.

"Those who have lost their homes can seek shelter with friends or relatives because it is going to be a crisis at the hall now. There is no privacy as it was not meant for permanent residents."

He said the community would meet the City of Cape Town on Monday to discuss the number of shacks vacated after identified in the area.



CAPTION: About 250 shacks in Masi-phumalele were destroyed in a fire yesterday leaving about 1 000 people homeless. The city has plans to move the Fish Hook fire station closer to Masi-phumalele by the end of next year.

PICTURE: MICHAEL WALKER

"They have to get together with other spheres of government and start working on a formal housing plan for this community because it is the only way we can escape fires."

"We have to leave Monday's meeting with a resolution because we cannot continue to watch the people of Masi-

phumalele suffer like this," Molwane said.

After last year's fire it was reported that a fire station would be built for the site in a bid to create more speedy response times to fires.

Ward councillor Piliarity Purchase confirmed yesterday the Fish Hook fire station

would be moved closer to Masi-phumalele to help "reduce the response time to between a minute and a minute and a half, depending on the availability of the resources".

This would, however, only be done by the end of next year, Charlotte Powell, spokeswoman for the city's Disaster

Management Centre, said and the Human Settlements department were busy with assessments.

NGO Historical Dwellings tagged individuals who distributed hot meal blankets, clothing and so on on Tuesday night, she said.

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Mama Taxi

Shack list: Owen Brown. Pictures: Jodi Quinn-Thompson

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Malema and EFF indicted over Gupta 'threats'

# Masi students rise up

MICHELLE SAFFER

Masiphumelele High pupils put their threats into action on Tuesday when they threatened teachers, burnt tyres at the entrance to the school, then took to the streets of Masiphumelele, throwing rocks and bottles.

This follows their march on Tuesday January 26 when about 400 pupils marched to Fish Hoek, handing over a list of grievances to the Fish Hoek offices of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) before catching the train to Cape Town and handing over another list, ending the one with: "If this letter doesn't matter to you, the high school of Masiphumelele will be burnt" and the other with, "We will not stop marching until our voices and cries are heard."

Marti Weddepohl of MercyNet said the pupils had burnt a barricade of tyres at the front gate of the school. SAPS' Public Order Policing unit responded and, once the teachers were ushered to safety, the pupils left through the back gate, spilling into Masiphumelele.

"A lot became hostile, causing trouble along the way," said Ms Weddepohl. Barrages of stones, rubble and rocks were thrown where the media



PICTURE: KAREN KOTZE

■ SAPS' Public Order Policing members stand at the Kommetjie Road end of Pokela Road as pupils from Masiphumelele High crowded into the street, throwing stones and bottles after having set tyres alight outside their school.

and bystanders were standing. Public Order Policing with their plastic shields now and then moved to the

locus of where stones were coming from and kept the rioting pupils, in their school uniforms, from leaving Pokela Road and reaching Kommetjie Road. The day before, principal

## Principal removed

WCED were setting up another meeting with the SGB and parents.

"Every single day of teaching and learning that is lost will have a negative effect on the education of the pupils of Masiphumelele High School," she said.

"We caution anyone, be it pupils or members of the community, that destroying public property is a criminal offence and that those responsible will be charged in accordance with the law."

The Echo contacted Mr Mafrika for comment regarding the allegations and unrest at the school last week, however, no response was forthcoming by the time of going to print.

Mncedi Mafrika's car tyres were slashed.

"We note with serious concern that a group of pupils from Masiphumelele High School are intent on disrupting schooling for the entire school," said Jessica Shelver, spokeswoman for Education MEC Debbie Schafer.

"We have been informed that there was unrest and unruly behaviour today at Masiphumelele High School. This behaviour is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated."

Last week, she said, a district official had met with pupil representatives, the school governing body (SGB) and community representatives and discussed all the grievances listed in the memorandum handed to the WCED on January 26, which included closing the school gates to latecomers, corporal punishment, an upper age restriction on admissions, a lack of textbooks, subject choices and extramural activities and a textbook levy. The pupils have also called for the removal of the principal.

## Pupils want principal removed

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"The deputy principal has confirmed that the majority of the pupils' grievances have been resolved and some are currently being investigated," said Ms Shelver.

Mr Mafrika was not at school last week, reporting instead to the WCED offices, to ease the tensions, while pupils' grievances were discussed.

On returning to school on Monday, Mr Mafrika announced at the morning assembly that he was pleased most grievances had been addressed and assured pupils that the creation of a pupils' representative body would improve communication between pupils, the principal and the staff.

Pupils had been asked to return to their classes to elect their representatives but Grades 8 to 10 refused, said Ms Shelver. At some point Mr Mafrika's car tyres were slashed.

"Parents were called in to assist with addressing the pupils, without success," Ms Shelver said.

The pupils then requested a meeting with Mr Mafrika, and he and WCED officials agreed to meet each grade separately the next day, on Tuesday. However, on Tuesday, the situation rapidly deteriorated and the school was closed after pupils set tyres alight outside the school gate, with the police being called to protect the school while teachers were escorted to safety.

Ms Shelver said the

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