

Sardinia demolition war

Municipality stands accused of ignoring environmental rules in sensitive area, writes Est

WITH the controversial demolition of the Sardinia Bay Lifesaving Club set to go ahead on Monday, the Public Servant Accountability Monitor (PSAM) has accused the municipality of violating the conditions under which permission was granted for it to work in the environmentally sensitive area.

Nicolas Scarr of PSAM said the organisation had sent letters to the municipality pointing this out, but had received no replies. He said that, to create new public facilities at Sardinia Bay, the metro was required to invest public money in an environmental impact assessment process.

"The outcome of this process will be an environmental authorisation which goes to extensive lengths to mitigate project impacts," he said. He said they had proof that the metro had proceeded without due regard for the scope of the authorisation.

"This is unacceptable from both environmental and governance perspectives."

"The harsh penalties prescribed in the National Environmental Management Act on conviction for non-adherence to conditions attached to an environmental authorisation [a fine not exceeding R10-million or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 10 years, or both] place this matter in a proper context," he said.

PSAM has accused the metro of violating the conditions under which they were supposed to do work at Sardinia Bay when they demolished the skiboat club last year.

In letters sent to the municipality the following concerns were raised:

- The parking lot was demolished even though this was not authorised. This has raised concerns of the beach being polluted in the case of a flood or extreme sea conditions;
- Dune sand was excavated from the site without permission;
- More natural material was ex-

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cavated from the dunes to make way for the municipality's construction digger to access the beach.

Asked about the allegations, municipal spokesman Mthubanzi Mniki said he had been advised that the matter had "taken a legal route".

"The municipality can then give no further comment on the matter until the legal processes have been completed."

The municipality indicated last year that the two structures at Sardinia Bay, the lifesaving club's clubhouse and the derelict skiboat club building, would have to be demolished to make space for new public facilities at the popular beach. The skiboat club and the park-

ing lot were demolished last year and, at the time of going to press, the lifesaving clubhouse was due for demolition on Monday.

Club secretary Sue Hoffmann, however, said they were advised that the correct notice to allow for the demolition had never been issued by the correct authorities.

She said the way in which the municipality had cancelled their lease for the clubhouse was also problematic.

She said they had received further advice that the environmental legislation used by the municipality to justify the demolition did not apply to buildings that existed at the time.

One of the founding members of the Sardinia Bay club, Grant Breetzke, said they were saddened and frustrated by the municipality's failure to respond to any of their letters.

"They haven't even responded to our lawyers' letters. They are just ignoring us."

He said a drowning which occurred two weeks ago was something he had been expecting.

ERA ENDS: As bulldozers move in, quest the legality of moves to demolish the lifesaving

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ERA ENDS: As bulldozers move in, questions are being asked about the legality of moves to demolish the lifesaving club in Sardinia Bay

"We have been telling them for months that there will be a problem. We ran this club for 44 years without a single drowning. The municipal lifeguards were here for three months and there already is one. And I can tell you there will be more. We warned them that it would happen and they did nothing about it."

