

New rates by-law and you!

Public inspections open as July deadline looms

By EMILY VISSER

Residents of Mogale City have one month in which to inspect the Property Rates by-law which will give effect to the municipality's Property Rates Policy. The policy comes into effect on July 1 2009.

The policy by-law is open for public inspection from 18 May to 18 June during normal office hours, and residents have until 11 June to comment on the by-laws. This should be done in writing and directed to the municipal chief financial officer.

According to the valuations department it is important that residents take note of the different categories of properties and owners stipulated in the by-laws as this will guide the municipality in the granting of exemptions, reductions and rebates.

The City would like to encourage residents to make suggestions and give relevant feedback on the proposed policy so that the necessary changes can be made, the department said.

To create certainty and consistency the by-laws stipulate that "properties shall first of all be categorised in accordance with their formal zoning." Town planning schemes, town establishment schemes and town planning regulations may be used to

determine the formal zoning.

In the event that a property's zoning classification can not be determined, the actual use of the property will determine the category.

"All relevant information, including circumstantial evidence, may be taken into consideration in an attempt to determine for what purpose the property is being used. A physical inspection may be done to acquire the necessary information," the by-law stipulates.

As a last resort the geographical area in which the property is situated will also be considered, but the by-law notes that "this criterion should not be used in isolation".

Property owners which will be considered for reduced tariffs and rebates include pensioners, the physically and mentally handicapped, disaster-hit homes, and residential properties owners with a market value below the amount as determined annually by the municipality in its budget.

The amount proposed is set at R40 000 for this financial year. All residential properties will qualify for this property value reduction. Therefore, if a residential property is valued at R240 000, the first R40 000 is not rateable and the owner will only pay taxes on the remaining portion, the R200 000.

Residential properties also qualify for a further rebate of 40%.



TIME TO ACT NOW: Residents have one month in which to inspect the Property Rates by-law.

The 40% rebate will also be applicable to farm properties used for residential purposes. No rebate will be applicable to farm properties used for commercial purposes.

This rebate is automatically applied.

The City may also award a 100% Grant-In Aid on the assessment rates

of welfare organisations, charitable institutions, sporting bodies, cultural organisations, museums, libraries, art galleries, botanical gardens, youth development organisations and animal welfare bodies, as per certain stipulations.

And in the case of retired and disabled persons, a special rebate of

40% will apply based on the monthly household income.

Independent schools will be granted a standard rebate of 25%. Applications must be made to the chief financial officer and is subject to certain conditions.

The by-law suggests that certain properties be exempt from taxes.

Play the ball, not the man, for SA's sake

It's now that time in the democratic society when some of us keep our eyes peeled to yet another new dawn of the South African Politics.

The general elections passed by and new president Jacob Zuma has been inaugurated – and of course with others glumly suffering the plunge of the political sledge hammer that bashed them down to the lower levels of the political hierarchy.

It happened in the past and I beg not to become a stranger to the truth about it. And, as watchdogs we know that whenever a leader is sworn in, a new political flavour is added to the political menu.

Truthfully, South Africa took another vital step towards a promised land, a land of milk and honey or rather a land of more and more service delivery.

We've heard during the inescapable electioneering period how different politicians promised people better lives and better service delivery.

It is a strange thought if there are still those who utter nonsense that there has never been any sign of service delivery by the government. At least service delivery has been palpable in our home soil, Mogale City and many parts of Mzansi.

It is hogwash to think that there are those who still feel the apartheid government was better than the current government.

I mean those who are blindly dragged back to the life of slavery and racial hatred, should be ashamed of themselves.

Still on the issue of service delivery, please allow me a stand to applaud the majority of political

parties, be it oppositions, for positively promising all our people a better life. However, the presidential seat accommodates only one trusted individual.

Even so, the recent elections demonstrated that

there is hope for all South Africans to work together as one nation.

South Africans of all races joined long queues to cast their votes for a much better country. Just like a cent is counted in a R1m cheque, your vote has been counted and you have set a new dawn in the South African political arena.

The silver lining in this context is that public involvement in government activities, whether challenging certain leaders by voting against them or through the media or other public domains, confront all our people with the challenge to get accustomed to open public debate of all issues.

It is an open secret that some of our people, be it locally, provincially and nationally have at some point publicly perceived some political leaders as unthinking, uncritical, kowtowing party line-toeing individuals who want to pull rank and to demand a sycophantic, obsequious conformity. Isn't that democracy? You be the judge.

Our democracy has proven that there was a need for more debate on the previous president's views on HIV/Aids.

For me, that's what I call



democracy.

Without any attempts to distort this column, we openly need to discuss whether the Basic Income Grant, for children, senior citizens and disable is really the only viable way forward.

We need not forget to repudiate those who, on full stomachs, speak about handouts when people can become very rich at the stroke of a pen.

I am very impressed that the new administration promised to deal with such issues and strip off the powers of those who endorse corruption.

I pen down to beseech the almighty to assist our newly improved government to change our society into one that is characterised by vigorous debate and dissent, where to disagree would be part and parcel of a vibrant community.

Wouldn't it be pleasant if we play the ball not the person and not think those who disagree, who express dissent, are disloyal or unpatriotic? Think about it.

Necessarily, our people should continue to provoke an intense political and ideology conflict – a healthy contest of ideas.

It would therefore be an extremely idle and dangerous delusion to pretend that on the political and ideological train, the continuing transition from apartheid to a non racial and non sexist democracy

will be characterised by comfortable and congenial beer or braaivleis exchange – taking place during easy and polite conversations in the wealthy suburbs of our cities.

People have spoken, Jacob Zuma is the president of the country, who in my view will use his "Umshini" to kill the demoralising idea that the future of this country remains demanding and bruising.

He is the man who promised to fight barbaric crime, improve life in the rural areas, education, improve health sector, and improve the economy of our country.

He is the man who constantly said no to favours for pals in government offices – who openly prompted his intension of sweeping up dirt in government departments.

Let's face it, Zuma's Umshini has never depicted a struggle fought with guns and bans as happened during the years of apartheid, but only to uphold the vision and practice that we must confront contending ideas with our own ideas, not repression.

In my view, Zuma is working continuously to ensure that, except for legitimate constitutional and legal restrictions, unlimited space

for freedom of thought and expression exists, consistent with the universal right to freedom of expression, and so on, as entrenched in our bill of rights.

Yet, we know there are lessons that we need to learn, one of them is that there are some people in our country, whose opinions must be accepted as being virtually equivalent to the word of God.

I mean corrupt people who steal from the wealth of a country and think they will get away with it.

Realistically, there are currently people who work to strengthen their position as the perceived defenders of silencing the voices of those who might have the credibility.

We have seen such sick acts in the past with the national political gymnastics played by the NPA and others. I mean there are those people who try everything in their power to ensure that the challengers find themselves compelled to keep quiet.

This goes without saying that the government needs to put an end to the myopic structured inequality, a culture of treating people according to their tribal or racial groups or whether privileged and underprivileged.

In support of our government we need to fight against all sorts of social illness and support our government in ensuring that the mandate of service delivery is met.

Sooner than we think, local elections would be right under our nose and that is one other chance for all us to once again add another pleasant flavour to the political pot. Let's all work together with the government in support to our hard fought democracy.