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Press statement for Immediate Release

MARRC responds to the Msunduzi Mayor's remarks in the media

1. MARRC IS NOT A POLITICAL ORGANISATION

The Msunduzi Association of Residents, Ratepayers and Civics (MARRC) would like to acknowledge and respond to the comment made by the Msunduzi Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla in The Mercury, 2 February 2020, wherein he stated, "...the organisation (MARRC) (is) using the issues for political games" and "(that) the city was continuing to engage extensively with the ratepayers via these organisations".

MARRC is disconcerted by the Mayor's remarks, especially after representatives of MARRC met with the Mayor at the City Hall on the 10th of December 2020, where representatives of the various Residents and Ratepayers Associations who are members of MARRC, pledged their assistance to the Mayor and the much-needed work in the city. Additionally, MARRC emphasised that the focus of the association is to educate citizens so that they can be proactive, understand Municipal processes, and take part in processes such as the IDP and decision-making and so that they can guide the municipality and help to address the different challenges in their respective communities by identifying the measures needed to be taken for the betterment of our city.

As an organisation, MARRC would like to categorically state to the people of the Msunduzi municipality that MARRC is an **independent, non-political and legally constituted civic movement**. MARRC consists of concerned citizens that care about their city and are solution driven in order to address the many challenges faced by our City. Our focus is to develop a strong and accountable citizenry who are proactive in addressing the different challenges in their respective communities for the betterment of the city as a whole.

The steady deterioration in services and infrastructure, poor management, lack accountability and increasing corruption, exposed yearly over the past 10 years, led to the formation of MARRC. Concerned residents identified the need for residents to unite to engage with the Municipality to hold officials and other employees to account.

This is NOT a political game for MARRC. As an apolitical movement, MARRC was formed to ensure both the law, human rights and the legal obligations of the Municipality towards its citizens are upheld, and that the duties and obligations of each office are carried out as described in the Municipal Systems Act of 2000.

MARRC has never and will never 'play political games', as suggested by the Mayor, our mission and goals are ONLY to improve our City and restore it to the expectations of its residents, ratepayers and investors.

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In conclusion, MARRC would like to reiterate that MARRC serves no political party but exists to hold all political parties, ward councillors or any officials found not to be serving the best interests of all our communities to account. We also will not miss an opportunity to call out any political party that may not be serving the best interests of our City.

MARRC, since its establishment, has been guided by the South African constitution and maintains its values and objectives through its own constitution. MARRC will at all-time uphold these principles and will not be swayed whatsoever in our resolve to unite all residents in Msunduzi.

2. THE MUNICIPALITY IS UNRESPONSIVE

MARRC has been attempting to engaging with the Mayor, senior management and various municipal officials on various levels, in order to provide support, solutions and to drive unity in the City, all the while maintaining our goal of tackling the many challenges faced by our City. We are most saddened by the negative attitude of our City leaders, the apathy, secrecy and negativity.

From February 2020 to date, MARRC has submitted ten letters to the Mayor, municipal manager and senior management, all challenging a number of issues faced by residents of the Msunduzi municipality. During the face to face meeting with the Mayor on the 10th of December last year, MARRC hand delivered a memorandum, which the mayor signed. MARRC requested a 30-day period for a response. To date, all letters, including the memorandum, remain unacknowledged and unanswered.

MARRC would like it to be placed on record that it is not our organisation that is 'playing games', but rather the current members of City Hall who prefer these tactics as a matter of course. The residents of this city are no longer willing to accept what is being served and MARRC will not back down in doing right for these residents.

As for MARRC and its members, we will continue to put the interests of residents and ratepayers first and push the Msunduzi Management to stop violating their duty to our frustrated and distressed residents. As servants of the people, Msunduzi Management needs to start performing according to their legal mandate laid down in the Municipal Systems Act of 2000

We encourage the Mayor to put aside differences and defensiveness, to work with us, so that we might save Pietermaritzburg before it is too late.

ENDS

Issued by:

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