



***Progress report from 2019 – 2023***

***Compiled by: Anthony Waldhausen, Chairperson***

***9 October 2023***

*By Residents, For Residents*

## 1. Introduction

The Msunduzi Municipality (Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal) has been under administration for the past 10 years. The municipality is severely financially constrained and poorly managed, and many residents and ratepayers have been left feeling hopeless about the potential for change.

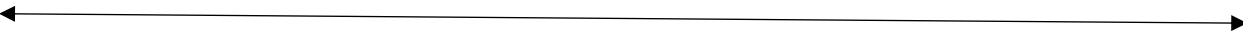
In response, concerned residents came together to establish resident and ratepayer associations in many areas of the city. Together these formed themselves into a united and solution-driven resident and ratepayer umbrella body: Msunduzi Association of Residents, Ratepayers and Civics (MARRC).

MARRC was initiated in a public meeting on 29 August 2019. The meeting was attended by numerous organisations and concerned residents who decided to establish an interim committee to establish a broad-based resident and ratepayer umbrella body which could address the many challenges facing the city and its citizens.

MARRC is a constituted and registered non-profit voluntary organisation representing a non-partisan, progressive and inclusive civil society movement. We aim to be solution-driven, to promote active citizenship, and to hold the Msunduzi Municipality accountable to its stakeholder base.

## 2. Timeline

The following is a timeline of the establishment of MARRC and shows the various stages of the establishment of MARRC.

<b>1. Public Meeting</b> 28 August 2019	<b>2. MARRC constituted</b> 19 May 2020	<b>3. NPC registered</b> 18 February 2021	<b>4. MARRC Website developed</b> February 2021
			
<b>5. MARRC strategy document</b> May 2022	<b>6. VAT registered</b> 30 May 2022	<b>7. Income Tax registered</b> 30 May 2022	<b>8. PBO registered</b> 3 March 2023

## 3. MARRC activities

### 3.1 Development of local government and RRA manuals

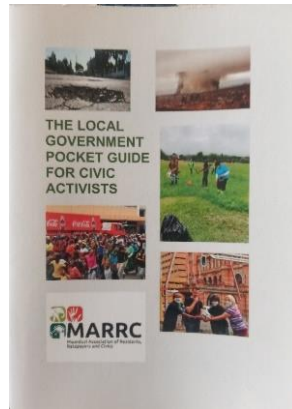
MARRC has developed a comprehensive Leadership Development Programme that aims to capacitate the leadership of Residents, Ratepayers and Civic Organisations within Msunduzi Municipality through a programme of organisational development and training in local governance.

The programme has two distinct areas of training for emerging civic organisations that focuses on: Organisational and Knowledge development.

Each section will have practical exercises for applying the learning as it helps the programme to be relevant to a wide range of civics with different abilities.

The manual on RRAs aims to assist newly established RRAs and civic organisations to under their roles and responsibilities. This will assist RRAs to become sustainable and strong organisations.

The lack of funding has stalled the rollout of the training to the RRA leadership and communities.



**Pocket guide on local government – a resource for active citizens**

### **3.2 Establishment of RRAs**

The 9 November 2019 was the first attempt to establish a resident and ratepayer association (RRA) at Lincoln Meade. Thereafter we established further RRAs before the advent of COVID-19 and where all MARRC activities came to a complete halt. The COVID-19 pandemic relegated us to work virtually mostly for meetings.

Before MARRC was established there were a few RRAs in existence which included Woodlands, Clarendon, Clelland and Meadows RRAs, Greater Edendale Residents Association and Imbali Resident and Civic Association.

After Lincoln Meade was established, we managed to establish the RRAs in the following suburbs: Ashburton, Athlone, Blackridge and Boughton, Chasedeane and Chase Valley, Hayfields, Montrose, Napierville, Pelham, Scottsville Extension and Sobantu. Eastwood RRA later joined MARRC in 2022.

We engaged residents in the northern areas and tried a number of times to assist them which was a challenge. An interim committee was formed the third time, and the Northern Areas Residents and Ratepayers Association was formed during 2022 but it is still informal and not constituted. We had Eastwood RRA join MARRC in 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic had caused major disruptions worldwide and also included impacting on the newly formed RRAs. Since then, we had witnessed the demise of nine RRAs and who are no longer functioning. These include Ashburton, Athlone, Blackridge and Boughton, Chasedeane and Chase Valley, Hayfields, Napierville, Pelham and Scottsville Extension.

Other reasons for the demise of the RRAs include non-functional RRA committees, committee members moving out of the areas, lack of interest, busy schedules, and work-related commitments. Chasedeane and Chase Valley changed to Chase Valley Corridor Civic Association and operating in an informal way.





### 3.3 Challenges of RRAs

Since the establishment of the RRAs we have identified many challenges faced by RRAs and would need further attention or intervention in order to address them.

We have identified the following challenges that are hampering the success of the RRAs. These are our experiences that we have come across.

- The COVID-19 pandemic impacted negatively on the RRAs as they weren't able to function for a year. It was a challenge for some RRAs to take off post COVID-19 which resulted in many closings down;
- Having a chairperson who is unable to share responsibilities or takes on all the work of the RRA;
- Having a domineering chairperson who is not democratic;
- Divisions within the RRA committee and causing frictions;
- No clear vision or strategy of the purpose of the RRA;
- Not legitimate, nor constituted, no membership and have no support from the residents/community;
- Fatigue in engaging the municipality, no wins;
- Individual egos and agendas and not concerned about community but its about them;
- Lack of funding for MARRC to provide support and training to RRAs.

We have also witnessed individual/s who want to destroy MARRC, to start alternative umbrella body. This gives reasons to reposition MARRC as a professional NPO with a board and that works as an affiliate organisation and not membership-based organisation.

### 3.4 Legal challenge against Msunduzi municipality on billing issues

The Msunduzi municipality imposed a multiple billing cycle where there was no due process and was illegal and irregular. Since the municipality has introduced an SAP system the residents have experienced endless billing problems.

MARRC has tried everything to address the billing problems and even MARRC conducted a [case study](#) on the billing problems and developed a report but still to date residents continue to experience many billing problems.

It is for this reason that MARRC has embarked on a fundraising drive to raise R250,000 for legal costs to take legal action against the municipality. To date we have raised R26,000 and the campaign still continues to raise funds. We have also lodged a complaint to the Public Protector on the multiple billing cycle and is still under investigation.

We have also embarked on a [petition](#) to protest on the billing problems and to collect as much signatures as possible that will be added to the court application.

We have also managed to secure great sponsorship of prizes that would encourage people to donate and will be hosting a live raffle draw shortly.

It must be noted that MARRC has and will continue to assist many residents with their billing queries or disputes. It is for this reason that we urgently need to take legal action against the municipality and have the court compel the municipality to develop a program to once and for all sort out the billing issues and problems to that we can have a reliable billing system.

### **3.5 MARRC strategy and repositioning**

MARRC has developed a strategy document for 2022-2026 and input and crafting of the document took place over a year from 2021-2022 from all MARRC members.

MARRC would need to reposition itself to become a professional NPO which is a service provider to RRAs and an opinion leader on local government. MARRC will have a board and staff to implement programmatic work.

It would mean changing the direction and strategy of MARRC and not being a membership-based organisation but an affiliate organisation. MARRC has developed a strong brand and is well known and is a force to be reckoned with.

MARRC can play a facilitative and catalytic role in bringing about change at the community and local government levels.

### **3.6 Engagement with Msunduzi municipal leadership and officials**

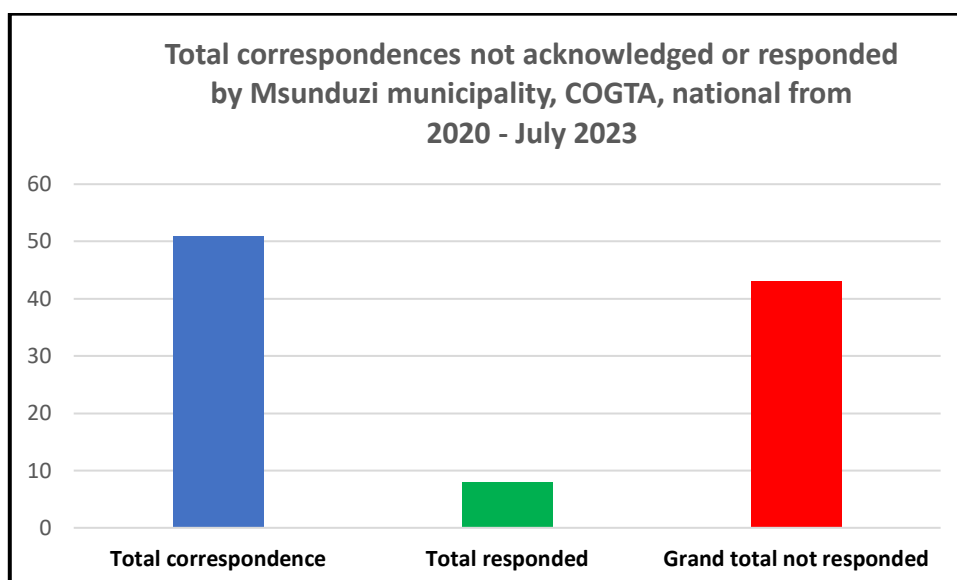
Since the establishment of MARRC we were able to engage with the political leadership of council and included the mayor, deputy mayor, speaker, and municipal committees like Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) and full council meetings. We were able to also engage with the municipal manager and senior managers within the municipality to address issues like water, electricity, sanitation, landfill site etc.

We had engaged with all with the intention of providing solutions to the many challenges facing our city. Although there was some form of working relationship over the years, we have experienced many challenges with the political leadership as they have been made accountable before MARRC was established.

This is evident by the numerous correspondence we have submitted to all spheres of government with a large of correspondence to the political leadership that are bluntly ignored. This goes against the spirit of the SA Constitution and Municipal Systems Act.

MARRC did an [analysis](#) of all correspondence and found that 84% of correspondence were not responded to. This is sad reality of poor municipal governance.

**Total letters submitted = 51 with only 8 responses and the total letters not responded is 43 = 84%**



We continue to make submissions on the annual budget, IDP, rates and tariff increases, comments on policy and by-laws changes. We also serve on the IDP Forum which comprises all stakeholders to address IDP issues.

We also held protest pickets outside the city hall in May 2022 to protest against the R27million sponsorship for Maritzburg United and May 2023 to protest against the multiple billing cycle.



**May 2023 to protest against the multiple billing cycle**



**Protest against landfill site in 2021**

### **3.7 Submission to SA Human Rights Commission on water crisis in KZN**

MARRC attended a hearing on the water crisis in KZN by the SA Human Rights Commission on 2 August 2022. We made a [submission](#) that highlighted the challenges of poor infrastructure, political interference and cadre deployment. This inquiry released a [damning report](#) on all municipalities including Msunduzi municipality. <https://www.citizen.co.za/witness/news/commission-releases-damning-report-on-kzn-water-crisis/>

### **3.8 Case studies and research**

MARRC has been active in the field of research and conducted a [case study](#) on the billing problems and [analysis](#) of correspondence submitted to various government departments and the bulk was to the municipality.

In programme 2 of our strategy, it focuses on a research component to research/review municipal policies and by-laws for submissions for changes etc. Do our own research/collect data/trends to improve local government and municipality.

To become a facilitator of relevant research, knowledge acquisition and connecting community knowledge with donors, government, academics etc. This may lead to targeted community campaigns.

The funding required would be needed to fund a research project of MARRC.

### **3.9 Affiliation or representation on committees**

MARRC has become an [affiliate member](#) of Defend our Democracy which is a collective of a number of civil society organisations that are united to defend and uphold our democracy.

MARRC also serves on the Msunduzi River Crisis Committee that comprises a number of Pietermaritzburg stakeholders to address pollution and waste in the Duzi river.

### **3.10 MARRC website and newsletter**

We have updated our [website](#) recently and through our participation in the communication course our website was audited, and a number of suggestions were made to improve it. Through the course we were provided with a donation of R2500 from DG Murray Trust to update the website.

We have produced two newsletters "On The MARRC" which is sponsored by a local businessperson but due to their busy schedule is unable to continue doing the newsletter. We would need to fundraise to cover the cost of producing our newsletter.

We need RRAs to submit articles and photos to be added to the website and newsletter.

## **4. Finance and Fundraising**

**Finance** – the MARRC finance capturing and reporting has been managed by Xeclerate company headed by Kevin Beekrum. This is an interim arrangement until such time that MARRC is fully operational with an office and staff.

Currently MARRC is run on a voluntary basis and with pro bono support from various individuals including legal advice through the MARRC legal sub-committee.

**Fundraising** - MARRC has received funding of R165, 660 from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation who funded the development of a manual and pocket guide on local government. The manual and pocket guide were developed by Cameron Brisbane, and he also hosted a workshop to test the manual for training and one workshop with some representatives from RRAs. MARRC paid Cameron Brisbane R91,000 for this work.

The funding also contributed towards hosting a public event during the 2021 local government election, purchase of banners, white screen, and data projector.

We started a fundraising campaign to raise funds for legal cost for class action against the Msunduzi municipality on all billing issues. To date we have raised R26,000 of the target of R250,000.

We have also received the generous support from various local companies who donated various items and we would like to acknowledge their valuable support. The following sponsorship includes:

- Development of the MARRC website sponsored by Capital Curtains and Oxygen Debt Solutions
- Printer sponsored by Asmall's
- Flip chart stand sponsored by Capital Curtains

We have managed to be registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) by SARS but our application for Section 18 (a) was declined.

The reason why we were declined is that we do not have activities that align with their 9<sup>th</sup> Schedule. Once we have activities that align with their 9<sup>th</sup> Schedule then we may reapply for Section 18 (a) status.

**MARRC assets** – The following are MARRC assets banners, white screen, data projector, printer, flip chart stand.



**Financial report** – a detailed financial report is attached hereto.

The lack of funding is hampering the implementation of MARRC activities that will have a positive impact on local communities in Pietermaritzburg. This includes providing administrative and training support to RRAs, community projects, research work, broader participation at all levels of local government, legal and social justice issues, education awareness campaigns, advocacy.

## 5. Media

In its short space of time of its existence MARRC has managed to increase its media coverage on print media, radio, and television. The media houses contact MARRC as its first port of call to get feedback, comments, and reports on the many issues in Msunduzi.

We have also prepared scrapbooks of all media articles for archiving purposes.

### Selected media coverage

2023 The Public Protector to investigate multiple billing cycle and SA Human Rights Commission releases report on water crises in KwaZulu-Natal.

<https://www.citizen.co.za/witness/news/public-protector-investigates-msunduzis-multiple-billing-system/>

<https://www.citizen.co.za/witness/news/msunduzi-concerned-that-civic-associations-using-billing-issue-to-get-donations/>

<https://www.citizen.co.za/witness/news/commission-releases-damning-report-on-kzn-water-crisis/>

<https://www.citizen.co.za/witness/news/pietermaritzburg/car-washers-using-water-from-illegal-connections/>

In 2020 MARRC partnered with the Witness newspaper to host a **public competition** for residents to design a **logo** for MARRC and managed to secure R3 000 of prizes for the winner

- <https://www.facebook.com/135011786539762/posts/5477131772327710/?sfnsn=scwspmo>.

In 2020 we conducted a **case study on the billing crisis**, which still remains a major problem

- [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=5453280604712827&id=135011786539762&sfnsn=scwspmo](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=5453280604712827&id=135011786539762&sfnsn=scwspmo)
- <https://www.news24.com/witness/news/cogta-mec-hears-residents-complaints-about-msunduzi-municipalitys-billing-mess-vows-to-step-in-20201113>
- <https://youtu.be/WMD7IkIlyNQ>
- <https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/ratepayers-body-offers-hope-to-pietermaritzburg-residents-billed-incorrectly-by-msunduzi-municipality-12a194b9-d27c-401c-9c98-e86ecaf31633>

During 2020 and 2021 we **opposed the tariff increases** imposed on residents by the council

- <https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/ratepayers-opposition-parties-unhappy-with-msunduzi-tariff-increases-0cf35844-f732-42dd-a75c-971f6eb88975>
- <https://m.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/ratepayers-oppose-water-power-hikes-20200511>
- <https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/msunduzi-municipality-residents-upset-as-objections-to-tariff-increases-ignored-244e434a-e667-43c5-9fd3-b862897db830>
- The landfill protest 50/50 interview
- We submitted a [Memorandum](#) to the mayor on the Northdale in electricity outage and assistance with feeding on Christmas day for those who has no electricity to cook.

During the **local government elections** in 2021 we hosted a public meeting with all political parties contesting the local government elections; we also participated in the national debate on the 2021 local government as well. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWJzfHLr1k0>



During 2021 we explored **legal action** that we could take against the municipality to force them to **provide basic services**

- <https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/msunduzi-ratepayers-threaten-legal-action-over-poor-service-delivery-84abb798-3523-4797-9910-bae058c547a4>
- <https://www.ecr.co.za/news/news/msunduzi-ratepayers-fume-over-poor-service-delivery-threaten-legal-action/>
- <https://capitalnewspapers.co.za/116569/marrc-explores-legal-options-against-municipality/>

On 1 October 2021 we picketed outside city hall on the council's **decision to sponsor Maritzburg United Football Club**

- <https://www.iol.co.za/sunday-tribune/news/msunduzi-residents-protest-over-r27-million-given-to-maritzburg-united-48d86353-dc3a-46a1-84a3-df43150617fe>
- <https://www.news24.com/witness/news/pietermaritzburg/stop-maritzburg-united-sponsorship-say-residents-20210901>

In April 2022 we were interviewed on the appalling state of **cemeteries** in Pietermaritzburg

- <https://ewn.co.za/2022/04/11/haunting-the-dead-how-our-loved-ones-are-resting-in-pieces>
- <https://youtu.be/jtuGpLovAl>



We have also prepared scrapbooks of all media articles for archiving purposes.

## 6. Partnership and collaboration

MARRC had managed to engage and work with various NPOs in different fields that aligned to the work MARRC was doing. These include the following:

- My Vote Counts – focusing on electoral change. <https://myvotecounts.org.za/>
- The Ethical Institute – consultation on their draft code for Ethical Leadership in local government. [The Ethical Institute - The Ethics Institute](https://theethicsinstitute.org/)
- Civics Academy – an online portal education platform on democracy, constitutional rights, elections, and governance. [Civics Academy – Home – Civics Academy | cultivating democracy through civic education](https://civicsacademy.org/)
- Defend our Democracy – a collective of civil society organisations to defending our democracy through various means. MARRC is an affiliate member of Defend our Democracy. <http://defendourdemocracy.co.za/>
- KZN RRAs – MARRC has started an initiative to bring various RRAs and civic organisation in KwaZulu-Natal together with the aim of possible formalising of a provincial umbrella body of RRAs and civic organisations.

- SA Institute of Government Auditors (SAIGA) – MARRC partnered with the SAIGA to host a webinar on irregular expenditure and governance on 17 November 2022.  
<http://www.publicsectoracademy.co.za/>



The partnership and collaboration aim to share best practices and ideas around local government and how as a collective bring about the much-needed change at a local government level. It provides an opportunity to learn from one another and share resources. This could also provide for joint funding opportunities too.

## 7. Training and Development

The chairperson Anthony Waldhausen was selected to attend a six-month Amplify Mobilise Change communication course that started in April 2023 and funded by DG Murray Trust. This course was to assist mark to develop a communication campaign.

Anthony Waldhausen and Froggie Partab (deputy chairperson of Lincoln Meade RRA) were selected to attend a seven-month virtual leadership course that was offered by Democracy Action Group (DAG) who are based in Cape Town. Both successfully completed the course in 2021.

MARRC in association with the SA Institute of Government Auditors (SAIGA) hosted a webinar on irregular expenditure and governance on the 17 November 2023

## 8. Conclusion

MARRC has accomplished much since 2019 where some residents came to meet out of concern of their city and where the city is heading to.

The establishment of MARRC has invigorated residents to become active citizens and to start taking initiatives to address many community problems and come up with solutions as we cannot wait for the government to solve them.

Government has become an impediment to progress, and we have witnessed it here within the Msunduzi municipality who has been under administrative for three times already. The main problem besetting our municipality is political interference, cadre deployment and corruption. We do not see the urgency of KZN COGTA to rescue the city as currently it has been five years under administration with no change going to happen soon.

In order to save this city, the MEC of national Minister of COGTA needs to **invoke Section 139 (c) of the SA Constitution** that would dissolve our council and have an administrator come in and working with all stakeholders to work together to save our city.

By having MARRC to reposition itself to become a professional NPO and focusing on community projects and moving it to become an affiliated led organisation can take it to the next level of its development.

We therefore need funding to operationalise MARRC and to implement the programmes activities in order to make an impact for citizens.

MARRC is solution driven and through its affiliate members and other stakeholders are able to mobilise residents to become active citizens who address the many challenges through creative and innovative solutions that would bring back much needed development and opportunities.

**MARRC IS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH!**

