



INTERNET ARTICLE

Emalahleni stakeholders urged to help improve water supply

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The Emalahleni Local Municipality held a two-day water summit on 04 and 05 September 2019 to engage key stakeholders so as to address water supply challenges and improve water delivery services to the different sectors in the community.

In her opening address, the Executive Mayor of Emalahleni Local Municipality, Cllr Linah Malatjie outlined the expected outcomes of the summit and stated that the key focus areas include customer unhappiness in relation to the unreliable supply of water and the deterioration of raw water quality due to acid mine drainage as another elephant in the room.

She also alluded to the fact that water, which is a scarce resource is wasted by all sectors, vandalism and theft of infrastructure as another problem and the need to look at the impact of climate change. “This Summit therefore must also be open and robust in discussing effective methods of educating and creating an awareness in respect of water conservation, preservation and security”, she stated.

“We therefore count on all our social partners in finding innovative and sustainable solutions. The intergovernmental relations and alignment of strategic roles of all role-players should and must be the nerve of the drafting of our turn-around strategy. We are aware that this is the time to move beyond policies and strategies and this summit is about optimizing efficiency and implementation ngokukhawuleza. Key game changers in our view include increasing the water abstraction permit from Witbank Dam to at least above 120 megalitres per day, beef up the capacity of our water treatment plants, optimize the support of our water reclamation schemes with particular attention on affordability”, stated Executive Mayor, Cllr Malatjie.

The Technical Director of the municipality, Mr Mike Lelaka kicked off the presentations by outlining the status of water services provision in the municipality.

Mr Silo Kheva, Director: Planning and Information in the Department of Water and Sanitation outlined the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan, gave an update on the status of water in the Witbank Dam and the Olifants catchment, water conservation and demand management, water services backlogs and also on bulk water supply interventions. He further





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stated that there is therefore an urgent need to explore re-use of effluent for sewer collection system. In addition to re-use, the water reconciliation strategy recommends mine water reclamation and water conservation.

The Development Bank of Southern Africa presented on available models of Public Private Partnership projects funding, NuWater outlined the benefits of mine water reclamation for water provision and Dr Lee-Ann Modley from the University of Johannesburg presented on the impact of climate change on water security.

The recommendations from the commissions include exploring Public Private Partnerships, addressing water losses as a priority, accelerating projects implementation, upgrading systems, DWS to effectively enforce compliance and the municipality to strengthen public education and awareness programmes.

In paving the way forward, the Executive Mayor emphasized to the Municipal Manager and his able team that they cannot afford to allow the summit to be another talkshow. “I will direct that a quarterly progress report on the state of water security within the municipality to come as an item to Council for noting and consider any recommendations that require Council resolution in pursuit of our core mandate to provide reliable supply of safe potable water to all the citizens Emalahleni Local Municipality”, stated Executive Mayor Malatjie.

The Executive Mayor committed that the municipality:

- Will set-up a multi-disciplinary water task team which includes DWS, COGTA, Nkangala District Municipality, representatives from the mining industry, representatives from the private sector and representatives from civil society.
- Shall as a matter of urgency prioritise the reduction of high non-revenue water losses
- Shall create an enabling environment to position the municipality as an investment destination of choice
- Shall develop a comprehensive infrastructure plan to be adopted by Council before March 2020
- Will up their game on water conservation when it comes to public education and awareness, especially in schools
- Will enforce the user must pay principle and
- Will review policies and by-laws to enforce water conservation strategies and restrictions on new developments

Themba Khoza

