



- *Safety, Sustainability & Security* -

- Q1 2018 Newsletter -

Dear Makana Citizens,

It has been a hectic 3-months. We have learnt about road maintenance, fixing machinery and even providing spare parts. We have also experienced why our municipality is technically bankrupt, despite having the financial and statutory resources to manage Makana reasonably and effectively.

By far, the most positive experience has been the spirit of many community members, schools and businesses who have assisted Makana Revive spontaneously. Their support and unending encouragement is an inspiration and example. Echoing a heritage of *action in the face of adversity*, many people have undertaken street clean-ups, upgrading of suburbs, grass cutting, weeding, road repairs and repainting signage.

Potholes..

Where is the Jetpatcher?

After several weeks of work, (initially part financed through donations received), the Jetpatcher returned to East London. With remaining funds, we are awaiting expert advice on how best to allocate further road repairs. (more details below)

Following the amazing show of community support, Makana Revive's trust account received over R150 000- donations towards road repairs - allowing for a volume of about 30 cubic metres of pothole patching.

Costs and benefits..

We were selective in choosing which roads to repair. Due to deterioration, the majority of roads have to be cleared of vegetation and sealed with bitumen before patching. Some will need complete resurfacing – costing hundreds of thousands of Rands per kilometre.

Filling potholes on badly deteriorated roads is wasteful and temporary. The cost of a workable asphalt mix varies between R2000- and R5100- per cubic metre (1000 litres), depending on bulk or 'ready-mix' bag delivery. Pothole sizes can vary from under 10 litres to a few hundred litres in volume.

Even though pothole repair donations received were less than 0.25% of Makana's yearly rates and taxes collection*, we managed to fill and patch a volume of some 30 000 litres with asphalt for pothole *and* peripheral road repairs. [*2016/2017 Makana annual financial statements]

Some technical stuff..

Rain – nature's blessing and a pothole curse. We estimate that every 10mm of rain creates a further R1million of road infrastructure damage.

Due to years of negligence and lack of maintenance on our roads and water reticulation, rain, water pooling and erosion contributes to the degradation of our roads. Neglecting road sealing results in water seeping through the asphalt cracks. On unmaintained gravel roads, water runoff washes away the surface layer and intensifies pitting and pooling of water. On paved roads, seeping fissures leads to erosion of the substrate. Furthermore, lack of stormwater drainage maintenance creates damming with similar destructive effects. Leaking sewage and pressurised water pipes create comparable problems, but from the bottom upwards. Lastly, Makana's road design has also not kept up with heavier trucks and traffic volume. Intersections and traffic circles have to cope with greater tyre abrasion and pressure from turning vehicles.

The good

- 1) Some R6 million of funding has been allocated by Sarah Baartman District Municipality to deal with the most urgent of infrastructure maintenance needs. Ongoing pressure has resulted in SANRAL scheduling the resurfacing of the Grey St /Beaufort St to N2. Quotations for municipal road repairs from private road repair contractors are imminent.
- 2) Between the end of January and March, Makana Revive! collected over R175 000- for road repairs, waste collection and security cameras. We had sufficient funds to hire the semi-automated Jetpatcher system for several days, with additional funding to provide labourers to the municipality thereafter.
- 3) In response to the lack of municipal refuse control and removal, refuse bins (which have had mostly positive feedback) were placed in key areas. Bins are serviced three times per week by a private contractor. They have proven effective against the plague of livestock incursion and human vandalism.
- 4) The implementation of security cameras, lighting and signage has drawn positive responses. Many residents and businesses report feeling more secure in parts of the CBD. It is difficult to obtain statistics from the authorities, but the view is that CCTV cameras together with rapid armed response have effects on lowering crime levels.
- 5) Our fiduciary (Trust) account is in good hands and a local auditing firm looks after this aspect
- 6) At the 11th hour, (and several years late), The Provincial government appointed Mr. Ted Pillay as the Municipal Specialist Turnaround Manager (MSTM) effective 1st February. Mr Pillay's appointment has finally allowed the community a rational assessment of Makana's dire situation

But...

The really bad...

- a) Mr. Pillay was only appointed for *three months*, instead of the minimum 2-year tenure demanded by Makana's civil society organisations. As at March 2018, we understand no extension to Mr. Pillay's tenure has been confirmed nor has any progress been made in the appointment of a permanent MSTM. A 'fill-in' temporary MSTM is like taking one or two weeks of TB antibiotics instead of the usual 6-month treatment.
- b) In two decades, Grahamstown's municipal finances have been plundered. From a long-term debt-free municipality with R259 million in cash resources (inflation adjusted to 2018), Makana is now has debt exceeding R200 million and is cash-strapped.
- c) The latest Makana medium term budget shows income of some R466 million per annum, but only allocates R25 million to total repairs and maintenance. The depreciation value of Makana's road infrastructure (alone) is some R500 million, with an estimated R23 million required immediately just for road maintenance.
- d) **A perfect storm has formed..**
Much of Makana's Infrastructure is deteriorating faster than it can be repaired. There is little or no preventative maintenance or financial provision for future repairs and renewals.
No effective leadership - A temporary Municipal Manager who is capable, but hamstrung by limited tenure and unable to implement disciplinary action and the *radical municipal economic restructuring* urgently required.
A lack of rule of law not only limited to by-laws, littering, vandalism and pilfering, but also unceasing land invasions which authorities are not addressing correctly. Monthly, numbers of economic policy refugees settle on proclaimed land and create direct and indirect additional burdens on allocated municipal revenue, infrastructure and a financially stressed community resource base.

Despite pockets of excellence, Makana has a high percentage of incapable and /or unskilled municipal operational staff and management who have little ability to implement solutions. A bloated workforce having lost the habit of efficient work compounds this.

The most vulnerable in our community continue to suffer the most and lack a voice and resources to begin to address critical problems relating to water supply, sanitation and infrastructure failures.

And the glimmers of hope...

- 1) Our plight has made national news. Makana Revive has been featured on local and national media.
- 2) Many ratepayers and citizens are questioning the need for a bloated and inefficient municipality and see the merit and efficiencies of community members managing resources.
- 3) We have shown that a privately supported road repair initiative can deliver 40% greater efficiencies with half the labour component.
- 4) We have tremendous human capital in Makana; talented and highly experienced citizens who can do amazing things like designing livestock-proof refuse bins, consult on road repairs, manage contractors and oversee the implementation of sustainable solutions.
- 5) Civil society organisations such as the Grahamstown Residents Association, Concerned Citizens Committee and Makana Unity League continue to engage and pressurise government at local, provincial and national level.
- 6) We have shown that private refuse collection and removal can be done efficiently at competitive rates.
- 7) Compared to SAPS, private security arrangements and publicity are far more effective at preventing crime and assisting in apprehending and conviction of perpetrators.
- 8) Although many of Makana's key political and management appointees have consistently (and even offensively) ignored our attempts to foster cooperation and friendly relations, many Makana operational staff support their fellow community members. The temporary appointment of Mr. Pillay has at least given us the depth of the malaise inherent in most municipal structures.
- 9) We have re-doubled our fund raising efforts. We know that tens of millions of Rands are required to address just the immediate infrastructural problems.
- 10) We have applied for PBO (public benefit organisation status) to allow future donations to be fully tax deductible, and have applied for insurance to cover any potential liabilities from work we do or contract out.

With your help, contributions, advice and wisdom we must succeed and ensure this beautiful part of South Africa achieves the potential and abundance it deserves.

Your ongoing support is appreciated and highly valued!

Warmest wishes and looking ahead!

Ron Weissenberg

Chairperson