

MATJHABENG FARMERS TO FORK OUT

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Expanding municipal income ... The Matjhabeng Local Municipality mayor Sebenzile Ngangelizwe has announced new tariffs for agriculture in the region

Matjhabeng Local Municipality executive mayor Sebenzile Ngangelizwe has announced the implementation of a new valuation roll that will see the agricultural community paying rates for the first time.

Delivering his budget speech last Tuesday, Ngangelizwe said agriculture would now pay 25 percent assessment rates. The move is expected to provide the municipality with an additional income of R4.5-million on an annual basis.

Ngangelizwe explained that even though Sedibeng Water has increased its tariffs by 8.5 percent, they have proposed that there should not be an increase in the water tariffs for the 2012-2013 financial year due to the present high unit price of water in Matjhabeng.

He added that the municipality has tried to accommodate residents who are facing economic difficulties by proposing a modest electricity price hike of 11.03 percent, which is aligned with the NERSA guidelines, but is 4.97 percent below the proposed Eskom electricity tariff increase.

Refuse tariff will increase by 5.50 percent. The money will be used for the repairs and maintenance of refuse removal trucks. The sewage tariff will increase by 5.50 percent.

The proposed increase of rates for 2012-2013 is 5.5 percent and the expected collection rate is 90 percent.

Major infrastructure projects to be completed by the municipality in the 2011-2012 financial year include the opening of Road 200 in Thabong, the repair of 7 391 square metres of potholes at a cost of R781 000, and the completion of the new taxi rank in Kutlwanong in collaboration with Harmony Gold Mining Limited.

Ngangelizwe praised the municipal officials who have worked hard to ensure that the Matjhabeng Local Municipality achieves exceptional results in the Department of Water Affairs' Blue Drop Drinking Water Quality Assessment Programme.

"The municipality received the award as Top Provincial Performer with a score of 94, 72 percent, with support from Sedibeng Water as its service provider," said Ngangelizwe.

Matjhabeng also participated in the recent Tour de Free State, which saw the MEC for the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mamiki Qabathe, hand over bicycles to learners in different schools in the area in an effort to promote cycling.

"As a municipality, we annually host the OR Tambo Games because we wholeheartedly embrace the vision on a nation at play. Sport promotes the health of our youth and unlocks many developmental opportunities. The bicycles are therefore more than a gift, but an investment in the development of our province and nation. A nation at play is a healthy and united nation," said Ngangelizwe.

In the previous financial year, Matjhabeng managed to complete the electrification of 155 stands in Extension 15. Some 80 of those stands were funded by the Department of Energy. The building of the Urania substation is in progress and the electrical upgrade of the Central Business District is currently 80 percent complete.

The municipality has also launched a massive waste removal and greening project. Ngangelizwe urged residents to assist the municipality in keeping its towns and townships clean.

"In the 2011-2012 financial year, we removed 865 tons of illegally dumped refuse. The cost implication for the continuous removal of illegally dumped refuse is enormous. The protection of the environment and the image of our municipality as the largest local municipality in the Free State begins with each and every citizen.

"Waste management is necessary if we want to live in an environment that is able to sustain us. We need to change the way we view the contents of our refuse bags and illegal littering. Instead of looking at refuse as 'waste', we need to start looking at it as 'resource', and devise ways to recover those resources before they go to landfill."