



Bela Bela Local Municipality

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Office of the Mayor

Question and Answer with the new Mayor of Bela Bela, Cllr Lucas Nhlapo

In what many residents and consider it a long overdue ascendance of Lucas Nhlapo to Bela Bela Mayoral office, the new Mayor has hit the ground running.

His ascendancy follows the restructuring of the Political Management Team of the Bela Bela Council, last week resulting in the recalling of the Mayor and Speaker.

We sat down with the new Mayor Lucas Nhlapo, to understand where matters are and where he intend turning around the governance and political fortunes of the municipality.

1. Congratulations on your new position as the Mayor of Bela Bela. Tell us, what would you consider to be the immediate task for you, as the New Mayor.

The first immediate task is to build stability and cohesion within Council and Administration of the municipality.

We are currently engaged in the process of restoring confidence of both the public and ratepayers, and employees, in the collective leadership of the municipality.

Secondly, is to ensure that the municipality is running effectively and efficiently and conducting its business, without municipal employees, ratepayers and other interested stakeholders worrying about the political change of guard at Council level.

It is important that our stakeholders have a renewed sense of belonging, wherein they could easily predict and participate in the

political direction of the institution. And that sense of regain confidence in Council and administration of our municipality is finding resonance with our residents, taxpayers and other stakeholders such as business, the youth and the unemployed.

Thirdly, as the new Mayor, working together with other Members of Council, we are shifting focus to the performance of the municipality and service delivery imperatives. This is even more urgent, given that we have just started our financial year.

Our target is that we want to oversee an accelerated service delivery, and that the entirety of the system here delivers on all our KPI, particularly ensuring that we complete our Capital Projects (Capex) by December 2014, latest been January 2015.

2. Are you not worried that your election to the position and the recalling of the previous Mayor will have an adverse impact on the morale and performance of the municipality

Not at all. Everybody within the municipality understands that no elected office bearer, be it the Mayor, ward councillor or executive member, holds a permanent position within the municipality.

For instance, I am assuming this position knowing very well that, we only have 18 months or so, before the next local government elections in 2016.

So, it does not bother me or any of the employees, ratepayers and residents I have met, that one councillor has left the office or one is coming into office, because as councillors, we are all deployed in Council, not as friends and relatives, but public representatives with a clear renewed mandate to work for the residents and vulnerable communities of this municipality, the province and nation.

In essence, what I am saying is that I have not sensed any despondency from within the municipality. In fact, the staff and

Council are happy that we now have a sense of stability, cohesion and renewed focus on work and more work.

Residents and municipal employees in Bela Bela acknowledges and appreciates the timely intervention by the African National Congress in our municipality, to refocus the municipality on accelerated service delivery, good governance and unity of common purpose.

If we were going to worry about who comes in or out at a particular time, I am certain nothing will ever be done.

Since my election and arrival of the restructured PMT in our municipality, there is a greater urgency, sense of positivity and renewal of municipal systems in line with the aspirations of our people here in Bela Bela.

3. You are occupying both offices as the Mayor of Bela Bela and Vice President of South African Football Association, how is this going to work? And don't you think this will have a negative impact on the role you should be playing?

No. Not at all. Infact, I feel very honoured that both the ANC and the SAFA, has bestowed this unique burden of responsibility on me because it illustrates the confidence that people have in me as a leader, of both local and national constituencies.

But to answer specifically on your question, I must indicate to you that I have served in Bela Bela, as a full-time member of the Executive Committee of Council and chairperson of finance, whilst holding the position of Vice President, and that has not been an issue because my Vice Presidency is not a permanent job as that of the Mayor.

It is worth noting that I was asked to be a Mayor by my political party – the ANC – with everybody knowing at the time, that I was both VP and Exco member of Council.

So, there was no problem in letting the two positions benefit the community and people of Bela Bela, and the broader society in Limpopo. I see it more as an advantage than a hindrance to service delivery.

4. Does politics and sport mix

Yes. The two are interrelated

5. What will be your focal areas in “moving the municipality forward”?

There are a number of grounds that needs to be covered. As I have indicated to you, service delivery (uninterrupted provision of basic services in the like of electricity, water, sanitation, construction and maintenance of roads, sport and recreational facilities) remains my focal priority.

But central to that, is the reality that our town is the doorway to Limpopo. And as a tourist destination, there are certain non-negotiable like the beautification of our town, and rearranging how we look to the outside world. We want to start the process of transforming the informal settlement, amongst others, into formal settlements.

Second, we will be undertaking a major tourist attraction event, that we hope, with all the stakeholders within the tourism industry on board, will unlock economic potential of this area. Tourism, as a global foreign currency earner, has a home in Bela Bela.

We want to untap that, whilst working with our private sector in the tourism sector here, to integrate and mainstream blacks into the formal economy, as we jointly enter a radical phase of economic empowerment of our people.

All these are practical things, we will be doing. It will help us even to eradicate social ills such as substance abuse, etc.

6. Finally, how do you see Bela Bela in the next 5-10 years?

I think from an economic point of view, I foresee massive growth and a vibrant economy, especially when considering our strategic positioning and proximity to Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga, and the economic development around these provinces, and in particular our Waterberg District and its growth areas such as Lephalale where you have Medupi Power Station. The corridor, that we are sitting on, given the volume of aggressive economic development, regular flow of cargo traffic and people movement, passing through our municipality, can only create massive economic spin-offs if exploited correctly.

As is, there is pressure on our road infrastructure, social amenities and networks, as recently witness with recent floods.

The Real Estate market is starting to pick-up aggressively, as more people move away from Gauteng and big cities to the relative comfort of small towns like ourselves.

Our annual tourism inflow in Bela Bela has just gone beyond 400 000 tourists.

We are also overseeing the construction of a new Bela Bela Mall, along the R101 next to Waterfront complex. A number of shopping areas, such as Bushveld Square, are undergoing urgent upgrading in anticipation of this economic growth, I am talking about.

Along the N1 route, we have a massive environmental friendly project in the development of Aruba Waterland. Its a Water Fantasy recreation park in the mold of Sun City in North West.

Once completed, all the traffic flow on the N1, and domestic tourists from Gauteng, North West and Mpumalanga will find recreational, business and residential facilities unmatched in Limpopo.

In addition to that, we are also working the private sector, the High Commission of Trinidad and Tobacco, the National and Provincial

departments of Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Environment and Tourism in hosting Caribbean-style Carnival (with street parade, arts and culture activities in Bela Bela).

This is a big project, and if we invest properly in it both as private and public sector, it will turn the economic prospects of Bela Bela, our Waterberg District and Province. It will even be bigger than social event like Durban July, Joy of Jazz or any Carnival you have seen in the country.

On the sporting front, as it is, we are hosting annually, an international 5150 Triathlon race (swimming, cycling and running) here, which is growing each year. We are about to sign a three-year extension contract on it.

We have closer to 40 small-to-medium scale tourism events taking place in Bela Bela throughout the year, from numerous competitive cycling in Sondela Game, Spar Cycling competition in town and 2020 Cycling at Waterfront, to SAA-Zebula Airshow in the Bush.

This is apart from our flagship Forever Resort offerings, and the Kyknet bush festival, that on its own pulls about 15 000 people from as far as Plettenberg Bay in Western Cape.

So, there is massive economic potential here in Bela Bela and that's what we will be harnessing.

7. How are your political heroes or role models
 - Peter Mokaba and Chris Hani, Nelson Mandela

10 things you didn't know about the new Mayor Lucas Nhlapo:

1. How do you spend your time.

I enjoy swimming, when I have free time to myself.

2. Favorite music genre

Jazz and Afropop

3. Chicken or Beef

Chicken

4. Married or Single?

Married with two kids (Kopano & Neo)

5. What type of animal are you in the Animal Kingdom

Elephant.

Elephants have imposing presence, decisive, gentle and spiritual demeanour and move easily through life, where few barriers can hold them back. When they set their minds to something, they don't waver in their commitment until the task is complete.

6. Other positions you currently holding or held in the past

*I am currently SAFA Vice President.

I have also served in the Executive of SALGA and its working groups, served as Executive Committee member and chairperson of finance committees of Bela Bela Municipality.

I have also held different positions in different structures of the ANC, ANCYL, SACP, SAMWU, SAFA, including been a treasurer, secretary, chief whip.

6. What was the turning point in your life

It was when I was part of the Bela Bela Youth Leadership Club, which produced helped me and others become leaders. It was there that I was prepared and learnt how to be a leader. Without been part of that Leadership Club, I wouldn't have take interest and part in politics. It was a foundational basis for orientation into leadership. I learnt a lot from been part of the club.

7. My three favourite quotations are by Nelson Mandela, Marianne Williamson and Amilcar Cabral

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,"

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. – Marriane Williamson

"Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories" – Amilcar Cabral

8. Which is the Book you currently reading

1. *Good Morning Mr Mandela, by Zelda la Grange*
2. *Unity & Struggle by Amilcar Cabral*

End