

# Rural people win JSB recognition



Rural people in the midlands and Thukela are determined to have a real say in the new local government structures being set up.

**A** BODY representing rural communities in the midlands and Thukela region of KwaZulu/Natal has been recognised as a non-statutory body by the Thukela Joint Services Board (JSB). This was at a meeting held between the Thukela JSB and community representatives on June 29.

Their recognition marks an important step forward in rural communities' struggle to ensure there is democratic, effective and responsive local government in rural areas.

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## Negotiations to continue

It means that the Thukela JSB will be holding further meetings with the task group to discuss community proposals for restructuring of the JSBs. The task group believes their recognition also means that their agreement is required on how the JSB should be restructured.

While the Thukela JSB recognised the community task group, the Midlands JSB was unable to do so since, it said, it was part of a process

which was considering the metropolitan option for local government. The metropolitan option involves forming a local government negotiating forum which includes Pietermaritzburg and surrounding rural area, up to Howick.

The community task group told the Midlands JSB they would support it being used as the basis for local

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government, but that this involves its restructuring, by changing its composition, policy and practices.

The task group, as a non-statutory group, proposed to negotiate this process with the Midlands JSB.

## **Community meeting calls for JSB transformation**

The meetings with the two JSBs follows an earlier community meeting in June when about 130 representatives from 69 rural communities in the midlands and Thukela subregions came together to discuss local government developments.

At that meeting, community representatives present elected a task group to meet with the Thukela and Midlands Joint Services Boards (JSBs) to actively engage and participate in transforming the JSBs into accountable local government structures.

Communities said they believed the JSBs should be transformed, as a matter of urgency, to make them consistent with the current local government transition process. In particular, representation of non-statutory and statutory bodies had to be dealt with.

## **Communities voice their problems with the JSBs**

Their problems with the Midlands JSB were that it failed to follow through on promises, there were long delays in service provision, certain areas were favoured, white farmers had

disproportionate influence and structures and practices were insufficiently democratic.

The Thukela JSB, they said, lacked transparency and did not consult. It also did not promote community empowerment, there was inadequate representation and space for community participation and there was no service delivery to black freehold areas.

Community representatives mandated the task group to:

- win recognition from the Thukela and Midlands JSBs to represent non-statutory bodies in the two JSB operational areas
- negotiate with the two JSBs to make policy, institutional and operational reforms to the JSBs
- get the JSBs to fund the process of broad consultation to achieve suitable reforms to bring the JSBs in line with local government proposals

The task group was also mandated to meet the provincial minister of local government, the provincial local government committee and the provincial demarcation board to monitor and make input on rural local government issues in the province.

The group has until the end of November to carry out its mandate and negotiate the necessary changes to the JSBs.

Communities represented at the meeting included: Alcockspruit, AmaHlubi, AmaQadi, Amatungwa Development Trust, AmaZizi Tribal Authority, Baldskraal, Baynesfield, Bergville, Brington, Bulwer, Camden Farm, Charlestown, Colenso, Cornfields, Cramond, Ekukhanyeni, Emangwaneni, Emhlungwini, Estcourt, Ezilanjini, Gannhoek, Impendle, Khanyisani, Ladysmith, Maberg Farm, Matiwane's Kop, Mcitsheni, Mooibank, Muden, Ncunjane, Ndwedwe, Ngotshe, Nhlazatshe, Nkelabantwana, Nkezela, Opathe Mission, Phangweni, Roosboom, Sobabile, St Chad's, Steadville, Steincoalspruit, Stoffelton, Swart Umfolozi, Swayimane, Tugela Ferry, Ubambo Tribal Authority, Underberg.

- In AFRA News number 27 we said that local government elections would be held late this year. Since then, the government has taken a decision to postpone local government elections until April 1995. These elections will still all be held on one day throughout the country.