

COJ RESPONSE: NEW TOWN COOPS

As per your email and our telephonic discussion please find attached the reports that were provided in terms of the Newtown matter. Both were I believe discussed at previous portfolio committee sessions.

Additionally I need to provide you with the extent to which the CoJ Housing thereby engage with the matter:

1. The CoJ housing (I was personally delegated the matter and to thus address) engaged with the JHC in terms of finding a workable solution to the matter at hand.
2. Prior to the execution of the eviction, I, on behalf of the CoJ and the office of the ED Housing and the MMC, Cllr Dan Bovu engaged with the community representatives regarding the impending eviction and the need to resolve the matter. I conducted 2 sessions with the representatives including the late Pastor Wally, to explain the legal context, the situation at hand and the possible avenues that can be explored to provide alternatives to the community. Unfortunately none were well received nor accepted and the passing of Pastor Wally saw the process end. It was always made clear that the CoJ provides Temporary Emergency Accommodation which is in the form of dormitory style accommodation, that is gender separated and managed by external service provider and that the rental levels evident in the Newtown matter, ranging between R2000 and R4000 per month is at the upper end of social housing and the lower end of the private sector rental market. This is outside the ambit of what the CoJ is able to provide for evictees or during relocation.
3. Post the execution of the eviction order, I again engaged with a CDW and a community representative, who presented documentation from a ward councilor indicating that the CoJ must provide alternatives. I again explained the situation at hand, the legal complexities and the fact that the CoJ cannot go against a court judgment and be seen to be in contempt of a court order. I provided a detailed explanation and further provided avenues that could be explored that would ensure a smooth transition with alternative accommodation. The representatives made it clear that the alternatives and their locations did not suit them and that any alternative accommodation in the Inner City of Johannesburg would be unacceptable.
4. In lieu of Ms Mdluli and her disabled son, the CoJ, the Johannesburg Housing Company and the Gauteng Department of Local Government and Housing made several attempts to remedy the situation. In so doing the JHC allowed Ms Mdluli to continue her residence at the Newtown facility after the eviction order was executed. The CoJ then engaged the Gauteng Department of Social Welfare and the CoJ Social Development department to have social workers engage with Ms Mdluli and determine the extent of her situation and the needs required to provide care for her disabled son. The department of social welfare also made available a facility that could assist with the care of her son and that the son could be placed in such an get better care, but it would involve Ms Mdluli and the son vacating the Newtown complex and relocating to the facility. The facility was however located in Ekurhuleni. Ms Mdluli refused such a facility or relocation.
5. Additionally the CoJ attempted to find suitable facilities within the CoJ that would be able to do the same but several indicated that they could only accept the son and thus not Ms Mdluli. These were therefore not considered.

6. The CoJ then attempted to have Ms Mdluli register as a Special Needs Housing Case and thus be expedited to receive a special allocation of housing. The Special Needs Housing Policy framework was used to do so. Ms Mdluli was contacted by the CoJ allocations team and requested to get all her documentation in order. Ms Mdluli was visited 3 times to ensure that her Identity Document could be provided. Ms Mdluli had indicated that she had lost her identity document and the CoJ offered to assist her to get it renewed. She stated she would so but eventually hadn't done so and thereby did not register and complete the application for the Special Needs Housing. Ms Mdluli indicated that she was fine at Newtown and did not want to leave but required that the previous occupiers and those coming to the Newtown facility were a hindrance and nuisance to her, and if the city could please stop them from doing disturbing her.
7. Subsequent to this the JHC offered Ms Mdluli an apartment at one of their alternative properties in the CoJ at no cost to her while a final solution was to be reached in terms of the CoJ's Special Needs Housing process. according to the JHC Ms Mdluli agreed but failed to present herself at the new apartment. Current status to be verified
8. The CoJ further engaged with the ward councilors and the Ed Housing and I visited the site in question to determine the extent of how many tenants were still located there. Upon investigating such it was determined that 5 individuals were rendered homeless were living on the street. The CoJ Housing therefore relocated these 5 individuals to its Temporary Emergency Accommodation facility

I hope this helps to provide some clarity as to what was done. If you need anything else please do not hesitate to contact me.

thanks

Zunaid Khan

Deputy Director: Policy & Research|

CoJ: Department of Housing

T +27 (0)11 018 6761/62 | C:+27 (0) 82 333 8340 |

F:+27 (0) 867192980 | Zunaidk@joburg.org.za | coj@urbanstrat.co.za