

## PROUDLY MANENBERG AND ZION PULSE COMMUNITY PROJECT SPEAK OUT

## 'There has been no wrong-doing on our part'

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Spokesperson for the group, Roegsanda Pascoe, said the group represented former workers from Zion Pulse and Proudly Manenberg.

"We have been battling since 2010 to have the allegations of financial mismanagement investigated. At the portfolio committee meeting, the IDT confirmed that in June last year they extended their internal audit service mandate to include the review of the Proudly Manenberg project.

"The chairperson questioned whether fraud was detected, and the chief financial officer replied 'yes'. The internal audit report unearthed a number of irregularities including duplicating and invalid identity numbers for beneficiaries, differences between monthly beneficiary reports and site attendance registers, and the reported numbers for job opportunities created, did not reconcile with the maintained portfolio of evidence.

"The report was forwarded with recommendations to the Department of Public Works' internal audit department.

"The community is questioning why, when discrepancies were first detected by IDT in the audit, charges were not laid with SAPS as

per the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). We are now awaiting the outcome of the presentation," Ms Pascoe said.

Both organisations have denied the allegations.

The Athlone News sent a list of questions to Mario Wanza, chairperson of Proudly Manenberg, but instead of responding to the individual questions, he replied: "We have read the allegations and the response submitted by the IDT. The outcome of the portfolio committee hearings is that "the parties involved would get together to resolve the matter, as further discussion would only lead to more confusion".

"Proudly Manenberg has consistently maintained that there has been no wrong-doing on our part and have submitted all documents requested by the IDT when it conducted its investigation.

"We will await the meeting as stated by the portfolio committee and will answer all questions needing clarity.

"In the meantime, we have a responsibility towards the people of Manenberg and will continue our work of building a new Manenberg."

There were also accusations that beneficiaries were being used for door-to-door campaigning for Mr Wanza, who was running as an

independent candidate for ward councillor in Manenberg, using funds that the organisations received from its current funder, Teba Development, a Section 21 Company contracted by the Department of Co-operative Governance to implement community work programmes.

Teba Development sub-contracts non-profit organisations to implement it at municipal level.

Caroline O'Reilly, community development manager at Teba Development, said that the allegations that the funding they were issuing Proudly Manenberg, was being used for the campaign of an electoral candidate is not possible.

"They could not have done this. We issue money for their administration expenses for their projects. We pay for everything that is needed for the site and we pay the beneficiaries directly into the bank accounts," Ms O'Reilly said.

Albert Brown, chairperson of Zion Pulse Community Project, said he did not see the report presented to the portfolio committee, but he had heard about the allegations for some time now.

"The same group who is making these allegations, had a meeting with IDT previously, in which I was also present.

"Some of their concerns were clarified at that meeting. These

include that our organisation was exempt from deducting unemployment benefits.

"It was also explained to them that the beneficiaries could not claim money for public holidays, as they were paid R50 for each day they worked," Mr Brown said.

Responding to allegations that he bought new furniture, a plasma television set and a new car from funds meant for the beneficiaries, Mr Brown said: "What these people don't understand, is that I am renting a property from a church, and our agreement is that I don't have to pay rent, but I have to take care of the maintenance of the house myself.

"As far as my car is concerned - I drive a 20-year-old vehicle. It is very unfortunate that people make these allegations, which are only dividing the community.

"Our government funding stopped in January this year, but we will keep on working with the community. I think all these allegations are just personal issues people want to pursue.

"At the moment Zion Pulse has 20 people doing voluntary work."

Marana Catherine Mabuza, chairperson of the Parliamentary Public Works Portfolio Committee, confirmed that an investigation is under way.

She explained that IDT needed

to give their financial audit report to the Department of Public Works, which will conduct an investigation and then present their findings to her committee.

She said that the main allegations raised at the meeting were the mismanagement of funds and that Proudly Manenberg funded Mario Wanza's campaign as an independent candidate before the local government elections.

Dr Nompumelelo Gumede, acting regional manager for IDT in the Western Cape, said that they only funded Proudly Manenberg for the financial year 2009/2010 and Zion Pulse for the financial year 2010/2011.

"We only had one-year contracts with them and we only fund the wage components of the projects which they propose," Dr Gumede said.

Based on what Ms Mabuza told the Athlone News about IDT's possession of an audit report, Dr Gumede explained that the audit was merely an internal one and not a forensic audit.

Ms Mabuza said that she had issued the report to the Department of Public Works and they need to decide whether or not there is a need for a forensic audit to be conducted, which will determine whether the allegations carry any weight.