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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Tuesday, 05 December 2023**

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF WINDHOEK ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2023**

**1. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS BY THE MAYOR - COUNCILLOR J UAPINGENE**

The former mayor of Windhoek, Councilor Joseph Uapingene, gave his final speech as the Mayor of Windhoek, during the ordinary council meeting in which he invited all residents to join him on Friday, 8 December 2023 at 19H00 in the Zoo Park for the annual switching on of Christmas lights. This event marks the official start of the holiday season for Windhoek's residents. He also invited the residents to attend the Windhoek Christmas Market that takes place from 8-9 December 2023 at the Zoo Park, along Independence Avenue, and followed by the Carols by Candlelight on Sunday, 10 December 2023 at 20H00. Finally, the mayor urged all residents to continue to use water sparingly and save wherever possible, as Windhoek faces a water scarcity situation.

**2. DEBT WRITE OFF**

The City Council has announced a debt relief program for eligible residents and businesses, totaling N\$524 million. The program will offer 100% interest cancellation for pensioners, and 50% interest cancellation for businesses, residential debtors, and other debtors. The program will start in 2024, and the exact date and application details will be shared with the public later. The Council hopes that this program will help residents cope with their bills and encourage regular payments. The debt relief program comes after the City's Debt Book rose from N\$677 million in 2018 to N\$1.2 billion in 2023. In 2018, the Council had also granted a debt write-off of N\$191 million for pensioners and vulnerable residents. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the financial situation of many residents, leading to more unpaid bills.

**3. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WINDHOEK EDUCATION FUND (WEF) TO ASSIST NEEDY STUDENTS IN WINDHOEK**

The Windhoek municipal council has approved the establishment of the Windhoek Education Fund (WEF), a new initiative to support needy students in the city. The fund was proposed by Councillor Dr. Job Amupanda on 26 April 2022, and approved by the council in accordance with section 30(1)(p) of the Local Authorities Act, 1992 (Act 23 of 1992) (as amended). The fund aims to provide bursaries and loans for educational purposes to students from Windhoek who face challenges in accessing education opportunities. The fund also contributes to the social well-being of the local community.

The fund's seed capital was raised through voluntary contributions from Councillors and employees of the municipal council, as requested by the former Mayor, Councillor Dr. Job Amupanda, in a memorandum dated 20 September 2021. City employees can still donate to the WEF by signing up for

voluntary monthly payroll deductions. The deductions range from N\$100.00 to N\$500.00 per month. The Department of Finance and Customer Services has created a budget vote for the WEF, where the monthly donations are deposited.

#### **4. MOTION: ROYALTIES, LAND, AND HERITAGE SITES FOR LAND-DISPOSSESSED COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF WINDHOEK**

The Windhoek Municipal Council addressed a motion from Council Ivan Skrywer at the regular council meeting on 30 November 2023. The motion concerns the rights of the dispossessed communities of Ovaherero, /Khomani Damara, and Afrikaner Nama, who are the original inhabitants of the land where Windhoek is located. The motion notes that the /Khomani Damara community is losing its land and culture due to forced migration and urbanization. The motion also acknowledges that the German and South African colonial regimes were responsible for displacing these communities from their ancestral lands in and around Otjomuise / /Ae /Gams. The motion argues that the City of Windhoek should implement transitional justice measures to restore the dignity and rights of these communities, as reclaiming their ancestral lands is not feasible or realistic. The motion proposes that the City of Windhoek council should consult with these communities and purchase a suitable piece of land for them.

There are numerous locations of historical significance in Windhoek that relate to the history of these communities. For example, the area around the new Independence Museum and Alte Feste is the infamous concentration camp in Windhoek where Nama and OvaHerero prisoners of war were kept during the genocidal war and thereafter. The motion suggests that this site should be turned into a memorial that tells the story of what transpired.

Furthermore, the motion demands that the three communities receive royalties for their land that was taken by the City of Windhoek. A proposal was made that the royalties be calculated as a percentage of the rates and taxes paid by the businesses and residents within the city boundaries.

Council resolved that this matter is very important and should be referred to the Minister of Urban and Rural Development for further action by the Government. This should include finding a large piece of land in the Khomas Region where the /Khomani can live according to their culture as a traditional community. Matters related to heritage sites should be dealt with according to the existing policy procedure on street and place naming by the relevant Council Advisory Committee for heritage matters.

#### **5. DONATION FROM INNOVATE GROUP (PTY) LTD TO UPGRADE THE ZOO PARK**

The Windhoek Municipal Council has resolved to enter into a memorandum of agreement with Innovate Group (Pty) Ltd to work with the private sector (collaborators) to provide financial or technical support for the renovation of the Zoo Park and to take charge of the project coordination. The Zoo Park was founded in 1897 as a memorial garden 'Truppengarten' for German soldiers who died in the war with Hendrik Witbooi. Since the 1920s until now, Zoo Park has been a popular social and public open space for various events and concerts. However, Zoo Park has undergone many changes or transformations over time due to environmental, socio-political, and economic factors. Economic difficulties made it hard to maintain the park, while drought worsened the condition of the park due to water shortage.

One of the challenges that the Council faces regularly is the lack of a regular budget to maintain public open parks. Moreover, the income generated by the Zoo Park is not financially viable. The average revenue collected is less than N\$15 000.00 per year, while the current expenses related to security companies (N\$12 000.00 per month), and horticultural maintenance (N\$25 700.00 per month) amount

to NS452 400.00 yearly. The donation of the renovation of the Zoo Park would ease the pressure on the Council to find funds for this project as the Council faces budget constraints and limited funding. The proposal will also relieve the Council from the financial implications of the costs associated with limited maintenance and security cost for 10 years as per the agreement.

With an upgrade of this scale and the proposed improvements, the Zoo Park would not only draw more visitors but also improve the visitor's experience while contributing to socio-economic vibrancy in the central business district.

#### **6. The PILOT WASTE BUY-BACK CENTRE UNDER THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) FUNDED PROJECT 'IMPROVING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN WINDHOEK'**

The City of Windhoek's Solid Waste Management Division has launched a pilot project to build and operate Waste Buy-Back Centres (BBCs) in two locations in Katutura: Erf 10713, at the corner of Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Bondel Streets, and Erf 3451, Frankfurt Street opposite Mamadu Kindergarten. Waste Buy-Back Centres are facilities that purchase, sort, and resell different kinds of recyclable materials such as paper, cans, bottles, and plastic. This project aims to reduce waste and promote recycling in the city for the next five years.

Waste Buy-Back Centres will create opportunities for local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to grow in the recycling industry and provide formal and informal jobs for the unemployed. The project has received positive feedback from the residents and other stakeholders in waste management. Waste Buy-Back Centres will only accept recyclables that are clean, dry, pre-sorted, and odor-free from various sources such as individuals, institutions, and businesses. The collectors will be paid per kilogram of waste according to the type and quantity of recyclable material they sell and a pricing structure. The Waste Buy-Back Centres will use two payment methods: Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT), for amounts above N\$500.00; and Coupon System, for amounts below N\$500.00.

The department is currently engaging retail businesses and supermarkets such as Pick n Pay, Woermann Brock, Spar, and Checkers for contractual agreements to issue coupons to recyclers. The recyclers will be able to use the coupons to purchase food items only, not drinks, at any of the participating stores after they sell their recyclable materials.

#### **7. APPLICATION TO RENAME JOHANN ALBRECHT STREET IN HONOUR OF GAOB JUSTUS //GAROEK**

The Windhoek municipal council has approved the renaming of Johann Albrecht Street to Dr Justus //Garoeb Street in honor of Gaob Justus //Urehe //Garoeb. A public participation process will be undertaken to inform the public and particularly the property owners along the affected street about the decision taken by the Municipal Council of Windhoek.

#### **8. COUNCIL RECESS**

The Windhoek Municipal Council will be on recess from Saturday, 2 December 2023 until Sunday, 14 January 2024. The first meeting of the Management Committee in 2024 will be held on Tuesday, 16 January, while the first meeting of the Council in 2024 will be held on Thursday, 25 January.

**Please take note that the above are only highlights of the council meeting. More details about all the items discussed are available on our website through this link:**

[https://www.windhoekcc.org.na/coun\\_agenda.php](https://www.windhoekcc.org.na/coun_agenda.php)

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**ISSUED BY:**

**City of Windhoek  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Corporate Communications, Marketing and Public Participation**

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