

'Nothing is constant except change itself'

THE street and building renaming process has created an unpleasant wave of personal insults, racism, bigotry and ignorance, culminating this week in the chaos and destruction of the march in the city centre.

The street renaming process was simple and transparent. In February, all parties in Council agreed on a process to review and finalise names for streets and facilities in our city. It was advertised in the media and on posters at municipal venues.

The committee charged with managing this process invited submissions from all the people. We then submitted the proposed names (every one of them) to the public for further consultation.

We welcome constructive input. Despite what our critics say, we don't only work with people who agree with us. We, the eThekweni council, work in partnership with all people, black and white who have the same agenda as we do – to create eThekweni as a home for all.

Over the centuries thousands of geographical names were imposed on the people by the colonial powers who governed South Africa. They did this, mainly because they couldn't pronounce the original names (ironically one of the many objections we are receiving);



Obed Mlaba
eThekweni Mayor

without regard to the existing names and the sensibilities of the indigenous people, who continued to use the original names anyway.

The Truth and Reconciliation

Commission recommended that the renaming of geographic features be a form of 'symbolic reparation' to address an unjust past.

Now, 13 years into our democracy, there is hardly a single street of significance that reflects our heroes, our indigenous history or the architects of our freedom and democracy.

Everyday I drive down roads and avenues and along highways; past buildings named after those who gave us slavery, colonialism, religious bigotry and apartheid.

When President Thabo Mbeki renamed OR Tambo airport in October last year he said: "We cannot create the new without negating the old. We cannot create a truly democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa without eradicating the legacy of centuries-old colonialism and apartheid. As we do this, it is inevitable that our panoply of heroes and heroines will change, our memory of ourselves will alter, our view of what we have been, and therefore the history we teach to the young, will change. Nothing will be constant and permanent except change itself."

Opposition is just confusing the public

OF the more than 30 000 street names in our city, most were named during the colonial or apartheid era.

Council put out adverts, posters and radio interviews in March inviting input on the street renaming process (a process we are legally obliged to do). A total of 245 proposals were received. We recommended to the relevant committee that before they consider the proposals, that they publish the names received to ensure members of the public have an opportunity to comment.

Unfortunately, some elements in the media and opposition political parties confused the public by launching an attack on the names as if committee had made a recommendation on each and every name. There is nothing wrong with disagreeing about the choice of names or streets but the respondents need to be specific about what name is not agreed to and for what reasons.

Instead we find elements in the media claiming that some persons have manipulated this process, that only ANC names are considered and that the names are a *fait accompli*. Some councillors even encouraged sabotage. For example, even though he had supported the renaming process, DA Cllr Rory MacPherson got people to keep sending e-mails so that our server would crash. Other councillors claimed the renaming process was an outrage, never telling the public that they had agreed on the process. A judge did the unthinkable and



Michael Sutcliffe
eThekweni Manager

suggested how the public could use the courts, calling into question the impartiality of members of the bench in KZN. If this matter gets to court we would expect the bench to recuse

themselves unless they expose those in their midst who act in support of those who resist change.

Then some resorted to thuggery and looting during a march (ostensibly an organised march against name changes) on Workers Day. Attempts were made to blockade roads, road signs were broken, traders' stalls broken and goods stolen, shops broken into and goods taken, litter bins upturned and members of the public assaulted. Ominously, a high powered assault rifle with telescopic lenses and one round in the chamber was confiscated. The owner remains at large.

The organisers of the march will pay for wrecking the city. March organiser Councillor Mdu Nkosi from the Inkatha Freedom Party is held personally liable for making good on all these matters. Both the IFP and the Democratic Alliance will have to explain to the city and our democratic country why they allowed such lawlessness to occur during what was supposed to be a peaceful march.

May I conclude by again inviting members of the public to provide us with comments in support of or against specific names being proposed (of streets and persons). I have no doubt these specific responses will be considered by the multi-party committee.

RIDING HIGH



A COUPLE of lads enjoy the great weather during the recent school holidays. PETER BENDHEIM took this picture at the Wavehouse in Gateway. Send your Durban photographs to eZasegasini Metro, PO Box 5588, Durban,

4001; or e-mail spincity@durban.gov.za or naidoothrusha@durban.gov.za and we will publish the best high-resolution photos. Please provide your details and the names of the people in your picture

LETTERS

Name changes: pros and cons

ONE name that must not be changed by the municipality is Edwin Swales Drive.

Because of its haste to change names, apparently without much thought, the authorities should be reminded that this road was named in honour of a Durban son who gave his life so that his colleagues could live.

Swales was born in Durban and attended Durban High School. After the outbreak of World War 2, he joined the Natal Mounted Rifles (NMR) and later transferred to the South African Air Force, where he became a pilot.

In February 1945, Swales was at the controls of his plane when it was badly damaged during a mission over enemy territory in Europe. On the trip back to England and when over friendly territory, he realised the plane was losing height and would not make it. He ordered the rest of the crew of seven to bale out, and they survived.

Swales's body was found at the crash site, still at the controls and still strapped in, because of his heroic action, King George VI posthumously awarded Edwin Swales the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for bravery.

Swales was not a politician. He was a young man who answered a call of duty and paid the ultimate price. To therefore change the name of Edwin Swales Drive would be mindless, shameful and downright spiteful.

FRANK HARTRY
Kingsburgh

I HAVE no objection to changing street names if the existing name is offensive to some members of

our community, but to change every name in sight seems like a vendetta against other members of the community.

Surely the ratepayers and residents of these suburbs and streets should also have some say in the matter?

It also seems that no homework has been done on the origin of the existing names. Why change names that have no political connotation and, to make it worse, replace them with political names?

This does very little for reconciliation. In fact, it will divide different sectors of our communities. For example, I fail to see the reasoning behind changing Broadway to Swapo. If there is money to be spent, rather fix all the broken traffic lights and sort out the traffic chaos that we experience. Appoint more Metro Police to make traffic flow at busy and dangerous intersections.

There are surely more pertinent issues in Durban that need attention.

EMILE STREICHER
Durban

THOSE people who are enraged by the name change proposals should understand a process is being followed which will give the public an opportunity to engage.

The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 devotes a whole chapter to community participation.

For this to work properly, the community has to engage with the issues so that there is meaningful participation.

All too often, people tend to express their concerns or consent in conversation with the people

they meet or at a meeting, but fail to make comments through the right channels.

There is an opportunity to make comments and to address those to the city manager by letter, fax or e-mail.

I urge all who are concerned to make their comments and thereby exercise their right to participate in the democratic process envisaged in the Act.

John Mayer, on his album *Continuum*, has a song called *Waiting for the World to Change*, in which he says: "It is hard to beat the system when we are standing at a distance, so we keep waiting for the world to change."

What is needed is for residents, businesses and political parties to engage vigorously. They have until 11 May to make comments.

GLORIA BORMAN
Ward Councillor (ANC)

IN RESPONSE to the 21 April advertisement in the *Independent on Saturday* inviting proposals and objections to the proposed renaming of streets and buildings, we the *undersigned, as a collective group of residents, ratepayers and investors in the municipality, wish to raise our objection to the scheme.

It is a blatant misuse of ratepayers' money that could be put to better use in the upliftment of communities in our area and towards other purposes such as the fight against crime.

*This letter included a petition signed by 48 residents, ratepayers, and investors.

ZANDILE MZILA
Durban