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Overseeing merger talks ... MEC for COGTA Oily Mlamleli

The proposed merger between Ngwathe and Metsimaholo local municipalities is expected to attract huge investments

The MEC for cooperative governance and traditional affairs (COGTA), Oily Mlamleli, has confirmed the existence of a proposed merger between Metsimaholo Local Municipality and the Ngwathe Local Municipality, with the intention of forming the second metropolitan municipality in the Free State.

The first municipality that was declared a metro was the Mangaung Local Municipality and Mlamleli told The Weekly, last week Thursday, that the process to merge the two municipalities will soon get underway

“I know about the issue and both municipalities’ councils are supposed to debate it, so that they can hold public hearings to hear what residents think about the proposed merger,” said Mlamleli.

She said only the municipal demarcation board has the power to demarcate the merged municipalities to form a metro.

“Only the demarcation board can recommend that it become a metropolitan. I cannot say it’s likely or unlikely to happen. It’s true that it will become a big municipality and that will however, influence those responsible to decide whether it becomes a metropolitan municipality or not.”

The municipal demarcation board wrote to both Ngwathe and Metsimaholo local municipalities’ executive mayors, proposing that they initiate discussions about the merger of the two entities. Both the municipalities’ councils are expected to have held discussions on the matter by Monday, December 10, and allow the board to hold the public hearings.

The Metsimaholo Local Municipality mayor, Brutus Mahlaku, told The Weekly that the matter is still at a very sensitive stage.

“The issue is serious and our council is dealing with it and we know how sensitive it is. We are making sure that we do it the way it supposed to be.”

The Weekly

Mahlaku said it was still premature to decide on where the headquarters of the new municipality will be situated.

“We can’t confirm yet whether Parys or Sasolburg will be the headquarters, but that will also be the decision of those responsible to do so. It will be made and one of the two towns will be the headquarters.

Metsimaholo Local Municipality speaker, Thabo Matena, is upbeat about the proposed merger.

“We are supposed to answer on the matter before next week Monday and we are aware that time has run out, but we still have to tell our people through billboards so they can send their objections before January 26. We are confident that our people will like this proposal.”

“We are not the only ones who must call for the public hearings. The demarcation board will do the same. And it has recommended that we put notices at every public place so people can participate by sending letters to it,” said Matena.

ANC councillors have also supported the merger and said it will help attract more investment to the area.

“This is not about us, but it is in the interest of the two municipalities to agree to it. I support the move,” said Mnyamezeli Khonto, who is one of the ANC councillors in the region.

The proposal was first discussed at the ANC Fezile Dabi provincial general council (PGC), in Kroonstad, and the ruling party’s members gave it the nod.

The changes will supposedly leave Edenville out of the new municipality and will reincorporate it into the Moqhaka Local Municipality, which is made up of towns such as Kroonstad, Viljoenskroon and Steynsrus.

[Source: www.theweekly.co.za]