

■ STALEMATE

Fears of violent clashes over land invasions

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HOMEOWNERS grappling with land invasions in their suburbs have warned eThekweni Municipality to deal decisively with the problem before it leads to violent clashes.

On Wednesday night, homeowners of Cato Crest and Clare Estate separately met eThekweni deputy mayor Fawzia Peer to address the issue.

In an email sent to the city management yesterday morning, the Cato Crest Community Policing Forum chairperson, Janus Horn, warned of a looming crisis.

"Mrs Deputy Mayor, you have a good heart. You mean to do well, but I think you have too much on your plate and the city is losing control with land invasions. If nothing is done in Mary Thipe Road, I fear that residents of all areas might take the law into their own hands and we would hate to see what happens then," said Horn.

He said the meeting had shown

positive signs but worried about words not being followed by action.

The situation has been tense in Cato Crest after thousands of people invaded land on Mary Thipe Road.

Some voluntarily left the area earlier this week after the municipality secured a court order asking them to leave or explain to the court why they should not be evicted. They had built about 1000 structures.

"In Manor Gardens the residents have had to endure violent protests, frequent gunshots at night, crime and damage to street lights and water meters. A vast amount of smoke pollution engulfs the community.

"Land invasions are unlawful, and the land needs to be protected. We understand that residents of Cato Crest need land, but it needs to be done in a lawful and peaceful manner," said Horn.

Horn said the municipality needed to fulfil its promises and deliver houses.

"The meeting is not about land invasion. It is about desperate people

looking for land and accommodation.

"They are looking for a place to stay, a roof over their heads. If the city had provided housing, we would not be having this meeting today," he said.

Ward councillor Mzimuni Ngiba said the city was also concerned about the potential for violence.

"There are people still looking to invade land. I have seen a few people around the forest, carrying on digging," he said.

Human Settlements MEC Ravi Pillay warned against instigating land invasions. "There has to be a co-ordinated effort with the police to break the backs of the mercenaries instigating the illegal invasion and sale of land and the rent seekers."

Peer said there was no need to be confrontational and residents should leave the police and metro police to do their work – she said they met yesterday to draft plans on tackling land invaders in Cato Crest should a court judgment, expected today, order their eviction.