

## EAPASA

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## Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa

*Advancing environmental assessment  
practice in South Africa*



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### **EAPASA INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING – VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL**

**Date:** Tuesday, **17 November 2020** from 08h30 AM – 12h00 PM

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**Members in attendance:** An attendance register is attached hereto for ease of reference.

**Program Director:** Prof. Peter Goss

#### **Guests and keynote speakers:**

Ms. Snowy Makhudu - Chairperson of EAPASA Board

Ms. Makhotso Sotyu - Deputy Minister of the Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries (DEFF)

Mr. Desmond Musetsho – Vice-Chairperson of EAPASA Board

Mr. Thato Mahapa - TM Mahapa Inc.

Mr. Zama Dlamini - Member of Professional Conduct Committee

Mr. Danie Neuman - Chairperson of Professional Development Committee

Ms. Jacqui Hex – Chairperson of Public Relations Committee

**Call to order:** Program Director called the meeting to order. He then introduced and welcomed the first speaker of the meeting.

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*Registrar: Dr Richard Hill*

*NPO Reg. No. 122-986*

## 1. Welcome and Chairperson's Report- Presented by Ms. Snowy Makhudu

Ms Makhudu opened the meeting with greetings and welcoming remarks to all attendees, all protocol observed. She expressed her emotions towards the progress of EAPASA since its establishment in 2012 and the effect of the current global Covid-19 pandemic on the industry. She announced the current Covid-19 statistics, paying more attention to the recovery rate. She further relayed condolences for the loss of colleagues who passed away during this period and sympathy to those that have been directly affected by these losses. She discussed findings of the International Association of Impact Assessors survey which was conducted in May 2020. She also added that according to a study conducted by the UNDP, South Africa's GDP is likely to take five years to recover from the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and stated that the government and the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries were working tirelessly in recovery mode. To reiterate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, she quoted Dan Rather: *"If all difficulties were known at the outset of the long journey, most of us would never start out at all."*

However, she added that commitment, tenacity and refusal to give up had gotten the organisation this far; quoting another writer, Craig Anderson: *"Focus on the journey, not the destination, joy is found not in finishing the activity but in doing it"*. She mentioned that EAPASA, as the only professional statutory body in the environmental assessment sector, had produced a Biennial Report which indicated the visible achievements of the organisation, which includes the seven consecutive clean audits.

The Chairperson added that EAPASA was established in 2012 and was registered as a non-profit organisation in 2013 and through submission of the Annual Report to the Department of Social Development; since then, it has met more than 85% of governance targets. She went on to add that, in February 2018 the then Minister of the Department of Environmental Affairs acknowledged and appointed EAPASA as the sole registration authority in the environmental assessment sector. She

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further indicated that as of 2019, SAQA had finally recognised EAPASA as a professional body for the environmental assessment (EA) practice.

She reflected on how far EAPASA had come to get to this current moment and how its' credibility had been proven by the seven consecutive clean audits mentioned earlier.

She expressed gratitude to the department (DEFF) for its support, acknowledged the role of both the previous and current Ministers, but most importantly deputy Minister 'M'e Rejoice Mabudafhahi who launched the EAPASA body on the 7th April 2011. She added that the registered EAPs still equated to 73% white and 27% black and this was something that the organisation intended to work hard on, so that the professional body did not only belong to the elites but to everyone including ordinary citizens.

The Chairperson also stated that on that particular day, five new Board members would be elected, she wished them luck and added that those positions would be filled by a diversified representative group in terms of the sector, gender, age, race and experience. She announced that, after posting an advert late 2019, to January 2020; forty-eight nominees were received, but the process was paused due to the national lockdown. In September 2020, the process was resuscitated, the same nominees were approached to recommit and submit the mandatory documents. Thirty-two nominees resubmitted and only twenty-four met the set criteria in line with the Constitution. EAPASA focuses on supporting historically disadvantaged practitioners and practitioners located outside the main economic centres.

She further stated that the Board had devised a Transformation Plan to develop and implement a mentorship program and a bursary program that would actively pursue the transformation agenda. EAPASA was also focused on the transformation of the mind space and practice in society at large, to embrace diversity and empowerment of the previously disadvantaged. It further recognized the diversity, relating to race, socio-economic status, sex,

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gender, identity, sexual orientation, and disability. She concluded by announcing the launch of the new EAPASA website and extended gratitude to members of the department, EAPASA and their families for their contribution. In closing she also invited to the stage the Hon. Deputy Minister by sharing a brief history of previous experiences with her.

## **2. Keynote Address: Hon. Ms. Maggie Soty - Deputy Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries. (DEFF)**

Hon. Deputy Minister relayed her greetings and opening remarks for her presentation. All protocol observed. She reiterated that this year, 2020, marked two (2) years since the DEFF appointed EAPASA as a sole registration authority on 8 February 2018. She also explained the role of EAPASA's appointment, elaborated on the role of the EAPs and explained the department's mandate. Deputy Minister expressed how the establishment of the special needs and skills development programs would help transform the lives of the disadvantaged and attract a lot of talent. She further explained the benefits of the special needs and skills development program for young graduates. She emphasized that EAPASA had committed, for the five-year period, to the number of tasks that form part of its implementation plan that has been closely monitored by DEFF.

Deputy Minister Soty commended EAPASA for its success stating that since its establishment it had made numerous achievements, including:

- ❖ Being recognized by SAQA as statutory professional body.
- ❖ Creating a transformation charter and strategy which aims to promote transformation of environmental assessment practice in South Africa through the empowerment of black female and disabled professionals.
- ❖ Developing an online registration system aimed at making the registration process for all applicants easy and efficient.

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She further added that EAPASA had an important role to ensure that there are enough black Environmental Assessment Practitioners registered. She indicated that a CSIR study highlighted that EAPASA could not be financially sustainable as a stand-alone entity and the fees alone acquired from application for registration would not be enough to sustain the entity financially in the long term. The Deputy Minister elaborated that the department was currently investigating the possibility for the environmental practitioner profession to be governed as part of the functions of an existing registration body. All parties would be consulted once the plan had been finalized. She also explained why the department had had the mandatory registration period extended and the repercussions of the delay. She concluded by highlighting that, for this journey to be successful, the Department and EAPASA needed to work together and would realize their goals by drawing on the energies of their people, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout the society.

### **3. Presentation of the Audited Financial Statement and Appointment of Auditors: Mr. Desmond Musetsho - Vice Chairperson of EAPASA**

Mr Musetsho introduced the agenda item and explained that the financial statement had been compiled by ABS Chartered Accountants, led by Mr. Mzazi Ngubane. He then gave the reigns to Mr Ngubane to present the Financial Statement. Mr Ngubane provided a brief explanation of how they conducted the audit. He revealed that they did not find any faults or any material deficiencies from the audit. EAPASA had been given a clean bill of health.

### **4. Confirmation of Appointment of Auditors: Mr. Desmond Musetsho**

Mr Musetsho informed the members that Board appointed ABS Chartered Accountants to audit the EAPASA books. He stated that the appointment of auditors had not yet been confirmed by all members and therefore EAPASA

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was still awaiting such confirmation which would be done as part of the meeting proceedings.

#### **5. Presentation of the EAPASA constitution: Mr. Thato Mahapa- TM Mahapa Inc.**

Mr. Mahapa explained the importance of reviewing the constitution and provided detailed information with regards to changes of the Board:

- He provided clarity on how participation of Board members in GMs should be conducted, with focus on attendance and absenteeism.
- He further provided clarity on the proposed new Board composition which will have 9 Board members instead of 13 Board members followed by an explanation on the term of office.
- He explained that the Board which will be elected, will serve for the next 12 months under the old constitution.
- He then concluded by providing an overview of how the Board could revise their constitution.

#### **6. Questions and answers- Prof. Peter Goss- Peter Goss Crisis Management Corporate Governance Strategic Forensic Training & Facilitation**

**Question 1-** Tshegofatso Mosala (virtual) - asked to see the list of the 24 nominees for the Board as mentioned by the Chairperson.

**ANSWER-** The candidates would be announced later in the meeting on agenda item #9(a).

**Question 2-** Abulele Adams (virtual) - does EAPASA have a procurement policy and is it available to members, what procedure was followed in sourcing the auditing company?

**ANSWER:** There is a Supply Chain Management policy at EAPASA and the auditors were appointed in a fair transparent process, in line with the Supply Chain Management Policy.

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**Question 3-** Sabelo B Nkosi (virtual) – could you elaborate on clause 8.1 and the rationale of this clause since it appears unusual.

**ANSWER:** Mr. Mahapa responded by explaining that, simply because one has a qualification that is required, it does not mean they are entitled to the title of the Environmental Assessment Practitioner, however that title is obtained after officially registering for membership of the EAPASA and being a Registered EAP and registered Candidate EAP.

**Question 4-** Bongumusa Zuma (physical) – needs clarity on the going concern of the organization, another one on the voting discrepancies of the Board members.

**ANSWER:** The Vice Chairperson of EAPASA responded by stating that DEFF is funding all EAPASA's activities. He added that part of the governance agreement that has been signed between EAPASA and the department is looking into how EAPASA will operate post the 5 years. He further added that EAPASA is a going concern. The Chairperson of the Board also added that they are working on a fundraising plan to help the organization's sustainability.

The Deputy Minister raised concerns regarding the ten-year experience required for Board members as stipulated in the new constitution and the term of office; in response Mr. Mahapa, explained that this requirement was only applicable to the three members of the Board, to guarantee great leadership skills gained through the experience. Mr. Mahapa went on to explain in response to the issues pertaining to the allocation and termination of terms of office for the Board members. Every member was going to have a four-year term.

**Voting on items 3,4 and 5:** Prof Goss explained how the voting would be executed in relation with the old constitution and thirty minutes was granted for the voting process.

Results - Presented by Prof Goss

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He announced that by rule of majority, all three items of the agenda have been approved.

**7. SAQA Handover Certificate of Recognition of the Statutory Professional Body: Mr. Zama Dlamini - Professional Conduct committee member, receiving the Professional Body Certificate from Mr. Jacob Nel, SAQA**

Mr Dlamini reiterated what the Chairperson and the Deputy Minister had said regarding the SAQA recognition to EAPASA. He continued by introducing and providing a short background on who Mr. Jacob Nel was welcomed and invited him on stage.

**❖ Mr. Jacob Nel – SAQA**

Mr Jacob Nel provided an overview of the role of SAQA and that of Statutory Professional Body. He further explained the role that EAPASA has played and was recognized as an achievement by SAQA. He presented the certificate to the EAPASA Chairperson of the Board.

**8. EAP Forum Contribution: Mr. Danie Neuman - Professional Development Committee Chairperson, introducing Gauteng EAP Forum Chairperson, Ms. Zanele Phoku**

Mr Danie Neuman introduced Ms. Zanele Phoku and gave a brief profile of her background.

**Ms. Zanele Phoku- Gauteng EAP Forum Chairperson**

Ms Phoku made welcoming remarks to EAPASA. She advised that EAPASA eases the registration process to be able to achieve its transformation goal and concluded by commending EAPASA for their success thus far and wished the organisation well.

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## **9. Board Elections: Prof. Peter Goss**

### a) Presentation of Candidates

He provided an overview of the Board nomination process and provided the candidates' list/names

### b) Voting of New Board members

Prof. Goss explained the voting procedure and the voting commenced. He stated that the election results will be announced 10 working days after the elections.

## **10. Vote of thanks and closure: Ms. Jacqui Hex - Chairperson of Public Relations Committee**

Ms Jacqui Hex continued to highlight the role and importance of Environmental Assessment. She emphasized EAPASA's commitment and focus, and further provided clarity on what the future of Impact Assessment looked like. She thanked everyone who played a role in the establishment and shaping of EAPASA and to those who contributed to the success of the General Meeting. She concluded by recognizing the newly registered EAPs and closed the meeting by encouraging everyone to continue to observe the Covid-19 regulations and to stay safe.

\*\*\*\*\*Adjournment\*\*\*\*\*

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