

City rethinks by-law enforcement in Joe Slovo informal settlement

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Residents of Joe Slovo informal settlement successfully protested against the City removing shipping containers used to set up shops in the area.

The protest action by Joe Slovo informal settlement residents after the City removed an illegally-placed shipping container last week has led to the City relenting on its by-law crackdown in the area.

Enforcing by-laws on Thursday last week, City officials impounded a shipping container belonging to Nkayapi which was illegally placed on the pavement.

Nkayapi, who sold electricity and airtime vouchers from the container, ran the only electricity and airtime business in a five kilometre radius and the closure of her shop, sparked angry protest by about 500 residents.

Burning tyres in Freedom way, which is also a thoroughfare for Montague Gardens, residents said they were also upset that there were many business run by foreigners out of shipping containers illegally placed on the pavement, but the City ignored these.

The protesting residents were finally dispersed by Metro police and SAPS.

But the protest led the City to rethink its actions and Nkayapi's shipping container was returned on Friday.

Commenting on the City's swift turnabout, Mayoral Committee Member for Human Settlements, Ernest Sonnenberg, said the container was returned in "an effort to stabilise the area of Joe Slovo".

"The City has in the interim reinstalled the container. The City will review this matter and assess it based on its merits."

But Sonnenberg said the City would not be pressurised by violent protests.

An excited Nkayapi told West Cape News today that she is back in business.

She said she reopened her shop on Saturday on the same spot.

Yesterday Sanco Joe Slovo branch organisor Luthando Lekevana, who led the protest action, said the City took advantage of Joe Slovo residents because they rarely staged a protest and they were excited that their actions on Thursday had borne fruit.

"It (the City's reverse of decision) simply shows that it needs to be forced to do things for us," said Lekevana.

Nkayapi said she was ecstatic at the return of her container as she had been told she would have to pay R4200 to get it back.

“We managed to get the container back. Thanks to the community and (Cape Town Executive) Mayor (Patricia De Lille),” said Nkayapi.

Last week Sonnenberg had said prior to the City impounding the shipping container Nkayapi had been served two notices and she had refused to sign the first one.

Additionally, Sonnenberg said the City officials dealing with Nkayapi had reported that they were threatened. — **Peter Luhanga**