

## **An Open Letter to Our Community: Why MPOA & MGEV Are Standing with Garden Route First**

Dear Fellow Property Owner, Neighbour, and Concerned Citizen,

We are writing to you today not as officials, not as politicians, and not as lobbyists. We are writing to you as people who live in this community, who own property here, who raise our families here, and who love this corner of South Africa with everything we have.

This letter is long overdue. It is honest. And it may be the most important thing you read this year.

### **What MPOA and MGEV Are — And What We Are Not**

The Mossel Bay Property Owners Association (MPOA) and the Mosselbaai Grondeienaars Vereniging (MGEV) were never formed to be political organisations. We were formed because ordinary property owners, ratepayers, and residents in and around Mossel Bay could see something going wrong — and nobody in authority seemed to care.

We are not affiliated with any political party. We do not take instructions from Pretoria, Cape Town, or any party head office. We answer only to our members and to our community.

For years, that independence was our strength. We believed that by staying out of politics and working through proper civic channels, we could hold our municipality accountable and protect the rights of our community. We wrote letters. We attended meetings. We submitted formal objections. We asked the right questions and demanded proper answers.

But here is the hard truth: it did not work.

### **What We Have Witnessed Since 2021**

Since 2021, we have watched the situation in our local government deteriorate in ways that can no longer be ignored or explained away.

Municipal rates have increased by over 100% in five years — that is 80% above the rate of inflation. In plain language: your rates bill has more than doubled, while the roads, water, and services you receive have not improved to match. That is not governance. That is exploitation.

We have seen property owners threatened with compulsory levies and forced membership in homeowners associations they never agreed to join, through schemes like the Biodiversity Offset Framework Plan in areas like Aalwyndal and Hartenbos. Private landowners are being stripped of their rights without adequate public consultation or any meaningful right to say no.

We have seen municipal councils that do not comply with the laws of South Africa when it comes to budget procedures and rate increases. The law is clear. The municipality ignores it. And nobody in authority holds them accountable.

We have seen the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) used not as a genuine community development tool, but as a bureaucratic rubber stamp for decisions already made behind closed doors.

And underneath all of this, we have seen the steady hand of Agenda 2030 — the United Nations' global action plan — being implemented at the local level in ways that shift power away from individual property owners and communities, and hand it to centralised systems, unelected bodies, and global frameworks that have no accountability to the people of Mossel Bay.

### **We Tried to Work Within the System**

Let us be absolutely clear: we did not give up easily.

Since 2021, MPOA and MGEV have written formal letters to every sphere of government — local, provincial, and national. We have submitted PAIA (Promotion of Access to Information Act) requests to access information that ratepayers have a legal right to see. We have attended budget meetings, IDP consultations, and council sessions. We have raised objections, filed complaints, and engaged with every legal and civic tool available to us.

The response? Silence. Delays. Bureaucratic runarounds. Token acknowledgements with no follow-through.

We have come to a painful but unavoidable conclusion: the system is not broken by accident. It is working exactly as it was designed to work — for those in power, not for the people.

The political parties that control our councils are not independent servants of the community. They answer to party structures, party funders, and party ideologies. The interests of the ordinary ratepayer in Mossel Bay, Hartenbos, or Groot Brakrivier are simply not their priority.

### **Why We Are Now Involved with Garden Route First**

This brings us to the reason for this letter.

After years of working through civic channels with limited results, we have reached what we believe is a crossroads. The only remaining avenue for real, lasting change at the local government level is through direct community representation in the council chambers themselves.

That is why MPOA and MGEV are now actively involved with and supporting Garden Route First (GR First) — a new, community-driven political movement operating across the Garden Route District, including Mossel Bay, George, Knysna, Hessequa, Kannaland, Oudtshoorn, and Bitou.

We want to be honest with you about something: we know the word "political party" makes many of you uncomfortable. It makes us uncomfortable too. We have spent years staying out of party politics for good reason. But Garden Route First is not a political party in the traditional sense.

It is a people-driven civic and political movement — built on the principle that communities should govern themselves, not be governed by distant party bosses. GR First has no ideology to sell you. It has no national agenda to push. Its entire mandate is summarised in three words: put people first.

Their three core commitments are:

- Revitalised Municipalities — Clean governance, reliable services, and restored public trust.
- Reimagined Participation — Citizens as active co-governors, not passive spectators.
- Regenerated Communities — Responsible stewardship of resources for this generation and the next.

Their values — integrity, accountability, transparency, non-partisanship, human dignity, and servant leadership — are not political slogans. They are the exact values that our communities have been crying out for, and that the current system has consistently failed to deliver.

You can read their full constitution and register as a member at [www.grfirst.org.za](http://www.grfirst.org.za).

### **This Is Our Last Stand**

We are not writing this letter to be dramatic. We are writing it because we believe it is the truth.

If community-driven movements like Garden Route First cannot gain a foothold in our local councils, then the alternative is more of the same: more rate increases, more rights erosions, more unaccountable governance, and the continued implementation of global agendas that have no place in our local communities.

South Africa's local government system has been failing its people for thirty years. The soul of local government — the idea that your municipality exists to serve you, the ratepayer and resident — has been sold out. We have seen it happen in real time, right here in Mossel Bay.

But we have not given up on South Africa. We have not given up on the Garden Route. And we are asking you not to give up either.

Join us. Support Garden Route First. Become a member. Attend a meeting. Tell your neighbours.

This is not about left or right, English or Afrikaans, old party or new party. This is about whether the people of the Garden Route will take back control of their own communities — or whether they will hand that control over, permanently, to a system that has already shown it does not care about them.

The choice is ours to make. But we must make it together, and we must make it now.

With respect and determination,

The MPOA — Mossel Bay Property Owners Association

[www.mpoa.co.za](http://www.mpoa.co.za)

The MGEV — Mosselbaai Grondeienaars Vereniging

[www.mgev.co.za](http://www.mgev.co.za)

*To learn more about Garden Route First, visit [www.grfirst.org.za](http://www.grfirst.org.za). To register as a member, report a governance concern, or download the GR First Constitution, visit the website directly.*