MACHAKOS COUNTY ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL REPORT

Tuesday, 11th November, 2014

The House met at 2.53 p.m.

[The Speaker (Mr. Mung'ata in the Chair]

PRAYERS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Speaker: Then the notice of motion is deferred. The mover is not present. Order! Hon. Ngunzi.

SUSPENSION OF BUYING TREE SEEDLINGS

Hon. Maitha: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir, and the hon. members present. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to give the following notice of motion that this hon. house discusses and approves the suspension of buying tree seedlings by the department of Environment, Land, Energy and Natural resources with immediate effect. Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Hon. Speaker: Thank you. Proceed. Proceed with the notice of motion hon Dominic. And I don't know, there is a report that you was saying you will favor me with, I want to look at that report.

MOTIONSUSPENSION OF BUYING TREE SEEDLINGS

Hon. Maitha: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. Aware that the department of Land, Energy, Environment and Natural resources has been purchasing tree seedlings for planting and distribution to all county wards and aware that the department purchased tree seedlings for

planting in the financial year 2013/14, valued at Ksh 13,490,000 and the status report indicate that the project is complete and benefits realized.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, aware that the trees planted are nowhere to be seen and the purported purchase of the said trees seedlings is contravening the Public Finance Management Act, section 197(1) that excludes a public officer from incurring wasteful expenditure on behalf of the county government or entity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, aware that the tree seedlings of such magnitude are not available within the county; the committee questioned the source of the tree seedling and the distribution mechanism which are suspicious. I wish to move the motion that this Hon. House discusses and approves the suspension of the purchase of the tree seedlings by the department until this house is furnished with clear details including beneficiaries of the same and trees planted in 2013 /14 identified. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I call upon hon. Chair for environment committee, hon. Ngunzi to second my motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ngunzi: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I want to firmly support this motion by hon. Dominic Maitha on grounds that the tree seedlings that were distributed in the last financial year 2013/14, was done in a manner that looked suspicious. Some wards never received the tree seedlings, others got tree seedlings that were dumped in chiefs camps, or in open market where the public just picked.

We can never account for the number of trees seedlings that were distributed last year and we did not want a repeat of the same this financial year, so we are asking to be allowed some time to negotiate with the department of Environment Energy and Natural Resources on the mode that is going to be used this year so that we have sanity in the way things are being done in this county. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: Thank you very much. I think the motion is on the floor but there is a report that I was asking that I have not yet seen, the report that supports the expenditure of Ksh. 13 million. Hon. Dominic, the mover of the motion, may I hear you.

Hon. Maitha: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. This house was furnished with information, the committee of environment, land and Natural resources, Mr. Speaker, today sat down and went through the report that I am just about to furnish you with and that even the Clerk is aware that we received that report, as per the ministry. The report that we got compiled, talks of purchase of crop seeds and tree seedlings all valued at Ksh. 174,961,817. That is a summed up

purchase of crop seeds and tree seedlings but the actual report that we got and that the clerk of that committee has is Ksh. 13, 490,000 that was bought last year, Mr. Speaker.

After the committee deliberations Mr. Speaker, we have realized that the tree seedlings that were meant to be planted last year were worth Ksh. 13,490,000. Most of the wards received less than 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Personally, my ward never received a single seedling for the said amount of money that was purchased here, notwithstanding that Mr.Speaker; even other wards never received the same seedlings, Mr. Speaker. And that is why we have said, we are not fully terminating the purchase of seedlings in the near future. What we are saying is, we want first to suspend the process, so that we can come up with the right mechanisms of establishing whether what was planted last year concurs with the amount of money that has been used and on top of that we get the progress report of whether those trees which were planted at a cost of almost Ksh. 14 million are in existence, have been taken care of instead of incurring another expenditure for another amount.

And Mr. Speaker, why am I saying this. With your permission, though away from the same motion Mr. Speaker, I happen to have received a call last week on Tuesday from the department of education saying that they have come up with an emergency food distribution programme for the primary school kids who are accomplishing their standard eight exams and the Chief Officer himself called me in the morning and requested to supply food to my office so that I can supply the same food to the primary standard eight kids who were doing exams.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I was sitting in the plenary session in the afternoon, the same day, I received a call from the lady who was taking food to my office, it reached my office.....Protect me, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: You are protected.

Hon. Maitha: I received a call and the food was delivered to my office on Tuesday at around 3 pm.

Hon. Speaker: What is the relationship between food and seeds?

Hon. Maitha: What I am saying is this, Mr. Speaker. The food was delivered to my ward and I incurred expenses to transport the food but some hon members have not received the same Mr. Speaker, so what I want to say is, the same project that we did last year for tree

planting and it never materialized and right now we want to give a go-ahead to incur another same expenditure to plant more trees, while the wards never received the seedlings, we are incurring expenditures, contravening the Public Finance Management Act without the resource of those expenditure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: Thank you. Allow me to hear from hon. Itumo.

Hon. Itumo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. I stand here to support the motion that has been tabled here. Mr. Speaker, last time when I was here, I said some issues do not even smell but they are stinking. Today, I cannot show you where the other seedlings were planted because if I go to those schools, wherever the trees were planted at my place, you cannot trace anything.

Mr. Speaker, this is the time this house should keep the ministries on toes if not running. Mr. Speaker, it is unheard of, these are government monies that are supposed to be spent in the right way. Mr. Speaker, we cannot have another planting of seedlings when the previous one has not even been managed in the right way.

Once bitten, twice shy, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want this house to take issues strictly and not as a matter of supporting what is not there. Today, I stand here to support this motion because I see the matter on the ground and if we continue, we are going to lose legacy. Mr. Speaker, this house should leave behind a legacy and we want first to scrutinize this issue of planting trees when previously we had such an exercise and it aborted.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this is a cartel and we do not want such a cartel. Mr. Speaker, I stand here to support this motion and I call whoever has a sound mind to continue and support the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Muinde: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. Although the previous speaker, has said whoever has a sound mind should support, I have a sound mind but I stand to differ and not support the motion. Mr. Speaker, let us not throw the baby and retain the birth water. Mr.Speaker, it is true that last year, tree planting was a scam. It is true that the trees that were planted, the report that came back is not in conformity with what happened on the ground. An example is in my ward, where 1500 seedlings were supplied but unknown to the officers,

who were taking their own data and filing back to the government, they used my office secretary and told her to sign that we planted 4000 seedlings.

This information reached my office and this is information that we have shared even with the Governor. But Mr. Speaker, the fact that the first tree planting was mismanaged should not be reason enough now to kill the next one, only that Mr. Speaker, we need to streamline the programme in such a way that, tax payers' money is not misused.

Simple arithmetic shows that we have 40 wards. If we were to plant at least 1000 seedlings per ward, even if we inflated this cost per seedling to be Ksh. 100, we cannot go beyond Ksh. 4 million. So to hear of Ksh. 13 million plus is to show that, for sure, something is wrong when it comes to management of cash in this county.

But Mr. Speaker, since we also factored money in the budget for this exercise and it is now the rainy season, I wish this committee had brought to our attention, long before the rains were here with us. We would have taken remedial measures. If we suspend the programme now and the rain is not stopping to wait for us, we could be losing it. Mr. Speaker, if this house directs that we be furnished with proper details on the procurement, the cost, we could discuss and see how the programme can continue in such a manner that, money is not lost. But if we find that the money is getting lost, then the house can stop it or action be taken to the officers who are mismanaging this programme.

So, Mr. Speaker, time is of essence. Those of us, who come from the arid of this County, usually wait for this season so that we can add two or three seedlings because the vegetation cover down there is really wanting. So Mr. Speaker, I stand here not to support the motion, but would wish this house directs that a proper report be given to us, long enough before the purchase is done so that we can take any action just in case there is a scam in the office. Thank you, Mr.Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: Let me hear from hon. Muinde. Are you amending the motion? You need to define your position hon. Muinde.

Hon. Muinde: I am not supporting the motion.

Hon. Speaker: And are you amending the motion, because you are not supporting the motion, you are neither opposing it?

Hon. Muinde: Mr. Speaker, your office can guide on this matter. I would want to have a position where we do not lose money and at the same time we do not lose the programme because we also need the trees. Mr. Speaker, if the committee had given us a report long enough before the rains, this would have done enough service to this county. Mr. Speaker, I need your protection---

Hon. Speaker: There is a point of order, just a minute. And let it be a point of order.

Hon. Maitha: Mr. Speaker, is this hon. member in order, being the chairman of the budget committee that appropriates for functions in this assembly to mislead this house by telling us that he is aware that his ward office was forced to sign for 4000 tree seedlings, yet he received 1500 seedlings. Is it in order, Mr. Speaker? And he is also directing that this house does not support this motion, Mr. Speaker. He is out of order.

Hon. Speaker: I think that point of order is sustained, hon. chair you owe the house an explanation why you condoned that variation.

Hon. Muinde: Mr. Speaker I have candidly said that unaware the officers who are conducting the exercise did not know they were using my staff, she passed on this information to me and I have said I talked to the Governor about it and even as late as yesterday, I also told the Governor that the tree planting exercise last year was a scam.

So I have passed the information to the right offices because an audit report must be prepared and action taken. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I have said the fact that the first exercise did not succeed or that it was mismanaged, should not be an excuse to kill future exercise. We still need to cover our land with trees.

Hon. Speaker: Maybe Hon. Chairperson, on the matter for your secretary, perhaps can you promise the house you are doing something more than just telling the Governor.

Hon Muinde: Mr. Speaker, there is a committee. I have said that all is not lost. I have said even yesterday, I told the Governor. This committee can still go down to the wards, I mean, where there is corruption. No one is ready to condone corruption. Whoever was involved and I

also want to fault the committee. This action should have been taken yesterday not today.

Hon. Speaker: I would rather we proceed. I think the chairman has refused to own up that...... Just proceed.

Hon. Muli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand here not to support the motion because of certain points which are within the motion. If this motion was to discuss how the previous budget and how the activity of planting of trees was undertaken, I think the house would in totality support the motion.

But the issue of this motion that we suspend the planting of the trees, Mr. Speaker, sure enough, the action of planting of trees is being done during the rainy season. And right now, I think the chairman of Environment should give this house the report. If he met the minister or the CO and was given the information, we should carry forward on this year's budget on how trees will be planted.

Mr. Speaker, being the previous chairman of Environment, before the current one took over, I met the minister and he gave me the procedures on how this year's budget will be implemented. Out of the process, we agreed the previous process of 2013/14 budget, there was a lot of corruption. But now, we cannot carry or sabotage that project right now due to---

Hon. Speaker: Let us hear the point of information.

Hon. Maitha: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that the former chairman of environment had meeting, in the floor of this house that the last year's financial budget had a lot of corruption while he was the chair. Mr. Speaker, it is contradictory. On top of that, on a point of information on the same Mr. Speaker, the chair budget was here last week and he brought a motion to suspend the purchase of water tanks because the previous project was not implemented and now he is saying we continue with a flawed process while he supported another one, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: I think the point is gotten. Let us hear from the chair. Tell us, I think that is a valid point there.

Hon. Muli: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind the hon Dominic Maitha, during that exercise, I was not the chairman for agriculture. What I meant is that during this

budget which is now in the process of before the current chairman took over, I personally as the chairman was given the process which will take place on this year's budget on the planting of the trees. And the only reason is this, Mr. Speaker. This is why this issue of suspension has come while everything had been in place.

Hon. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think we need to take direction here. It is against Standing Orders to debate on a matter that is pending before a committee for deliberation. And before me, I have just been given a notice of a communication dated 17th October, 2014, by the hon. minister Joshua Musili, with a copy to the County Secretary, Machakos County and addressed to the Clerk of the county assembly and it is forwarding the annual status report of all devolvement projects for the financial year 2013/14 and the quarterly report for the period ending 31st September, 2014, for the department of Lands, Energy Environment and Natural resources.

Now, I have the attached report and it states that on page one item number 2, is tree planting -which talks about purchase of tree seedlings and distribution, column two is that the distribution was to be done to all wards, again in all sub counties. Phase one was done, budget allocation Ksh. 10 million, amount actually spent as at 30th June, 2013 is Ksh. 13,490,000 and the status of the project is complete and the impact was increased tree cover.

This report is before the relevant committee for deliberation and I wonder, the chairman of committee on Lands, Energy and Environment, is he here? Is this report before you?

Hon. Ngunzi: The report is before the committee but we felt Mr. Speaker, before anything is done for this financial year, we needed to suspend it for sometime, a week or two so that we go through the report.

Hon. Speaker: That is okay. We can suspend it for a week and then you call your committee down and give a detailed report for debate, with resolutions.

Hon. Ngunzi: That is in order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: Let us consult the mover of the motion.

Hon. Maitha: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I am totally opposing the suspension for one week with good reasons. Because if we say that we are going to suspend this process for one week Mr. Speaker, the process of purchasing the seedlings will start or maybe it might be on course. What I want to suspend is the process of purchasing and implementation until this house is furnished with full information.

Mr. Speaker, I wish you could have given hon. members time to express their concerns over the same because if we never implemented last year's project of the same nature, up to almost 50 per cent Mr. Speaker and again we are moving forward to implement the same at almost the same cost and members are saying that they never received tree seedlings at their own wards.

We are committing suicide Mr. Speaker, so I propose and I request you to allow the motion to proceed and the members will decide on the fate of the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Hon. Speaker: What I was telling the chairman is, you can have all processes suspended, purchase, implementation, everything suspended until we get a detailed report. And having taken that position, do we still proceed and debate? Let us hear a valuable point from Manyolo.

Hon. Manyolo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. It is good to suspend. What if the officers on the ground have purchased the trees? For example at my ward, we already have planted. I am talking the truth. The primary schools that have been identified---

Hon. Speaker: Hon Manyolo, kindly address the Chair.

Hon. Manyolo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. Already, at my ward we have purchased the seedlings and we have already planted. How can we halt the process while some have implemented it? I see it is very hard Mr. Speaker, because I have the information and this is from my ward.

Hon. Speaker: Order, order. I will hear everybody. Don't worry, let us hear him.

Hon. Manyolo: It is from my ward now. And the other thing Mr. Speaker---

Hon. Speaker: So from your ward, you are saying that your trees are ready for planting.

Hon. Manyolo: Yes. And I have already purchased. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is from my ward. Mr.Speaker, the other thing we are failing, the chairpersons are not working, because if it was true we were to discuss about this thing, the committee could have come with a report. They could have gone down and come up with a report on how the last process was done and then they come up with another report of this budget, the process how it is going.

Hon. Speaker: Order, order, order. Let us follow some order now. I will hear everybody. We are in consensus we need a detailed report on this matter, but let us hear members' views in case of any variation.

Hon. Manyolo: Mr. Speaker, Sir, let the committee of implementation and the committee of environment, come up with a report of last financial year, how the process was done and for this year, how it will be done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Hon. Speaker: Let us follow the initial order we had.

Majority Leader (Hon. Mwonga): Thank you Mr. Speaker, although I am in a state of confusion whether to contribute on the suspension of the whole exercise for a week or whether to contribute on the motion. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that, environment is much unforgiving and what you do to environment, it will one day do it back to you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pity for a hon. member who was elected in his or her ward to come here and say that we stop this noble exercise.

Mr. Speaker, one role of the hon. members who are here is representation and for a member to say the exercise of 2013/14 was a nullity and no single seedling was received in his/her ward, it is a pity to the people who elected that member, Mr. Speaker. I am wondering how many speakers we have in this house, because I am hearing that I am out of order and I am contributing Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: Order, order, order hon. Majority Leader. What is the point that you are making?

Majority Leader (**Hon. Mwonga**): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering why in a whole year, a member has not complained about seedlings which were not delivered in his/her ward. Mr. Speaker, I was laying the foundation of my contribution of this motion. Back to the motion. I think to discuss this motion which has come from the committee on environment, we should be having documentary evidence on how much money was spent on the so-called scam, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we should be having documentary evidence on how many seedlings, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: Order, order, order hon. Majority Leader. Let us take that point of information.

Hon. Kitheka: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I tend to wonder why this member is misleading this house by giving information and trying to elaborate on information which was read to these members and they have heard exactly the expenditure which was made by that Executive member to that department. Mr. Speaker, I still wonder how the Hon. Member can demean the existence of such a member who has talked about this issue within the assembly and say he has pity of the people who elected that member.

That is total demeaning of that member and that is something we cannot condone Mr. Speaker. You have made a very wise decision by sending the motion to be decided within the committee and give us a verdict of the same within one week. We are not disputing that. We have agreed on that, so I don't see any much debate on the same because it is just opening other issues which should not be within the motion right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: I think hon. members, we all got the point, but let there be a report that is detailed, that will have recommendations on the way forward. And this matter can be best handled by the committee which is relevant, the committee on land, energy, environment and natural resources. Unless now, any member has an extra point outside that.

Hon. Muthuka: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I think we need some clarification.

Hon. Speaker: I think I am urging the Majority Leader to cool off and just stop there.

Hon. Muthuka: Mr. Speaker, we need some guidance and clarification because we may say whatever we are saying. That is our verdict but already there is an issue which has been brought to our attention, that the exercise is underway. At the same time, we do not know the guys who are doing the exercise.

Last year, the same thing. It cost me my seat as the vice chairperson of Agriculture, while trying to get where the seedlings went. It cost my seat.

So we are saying that Mr. Speaker, I think we need some communication to the department urgently if possible before the end of the day that whatever has been done let it be put on hold until we deliberate and then we give the directions forward. Thank you.

Hon. Speaker: I think hon members, we have an able chairman for agriculture, and we have a CO for Agriculture. Can we finish today's business and then the chairman will convene a meeting with his committee and call the CO agriculture and Environment and that everything will be suspended? The Clerk will assist in having those gentlemen here before tomorrow and am I able to get a report that this is suspended by tomorrow morning, hon. Chairman?

Hon. Ngunzi: That can be done, Mr. Speaker, but as a point of information, I have a list of the suppliers who are supposed to supply various wards within the county and maybe with your permission Mr. Speaker, I could take the house through. A Ms. Muuki Enterprises is going to supply---

Hon. Speaker: Hon. Ngunzi, you are out of order.

Hon. Ngunzi: I thought I wanted to table the report now, so that maybe, there could be---

Hon. Speaker: Hon. Chairman you are out of order.

Hon. Ngunzi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Speaker: I think you can use that energy within the committee meeting. Let us hear hon. Ndeto at the back.

Hon. Ndeto: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I would wish to clarify is what was raised by Hon. Manyolo. In fact, the fact that a given ward has planted cannot be a barrier to this house suspending business. We know the national government suspended the purchase of laptop project when it had already given the award to the winning company. So this one, I think the direction you have given is the best for the county and this does not mean cancellation. The motion is very clear, it is suspension and when things are ok, the exercise goes on. Thank you.

Hon. Speaker: Yes but the point that hon. Manyolo was bringing was rather simple. He said in his case, the seedlings have been bought are they going to plant.

Hon. Ndeto: Mr. Speaker, allow me to clarify, this exercise the other time I followed it very closely and I know in my ward, the number of seedlings that were planted, where they were purchased, the cost of each and whoever was buying. I have all the details. And the issue these guys are just rushing, there is something, like hon. Itumo said, it is something we need to take care of and this is the time to do so.

Hon. Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Nduva: Mr. Speaker, I want to put correction on the issue which was brought to the attention of this house by hon. Kiviu Manyolo, my neighbor of Matuu ward, Mr. Speaker. We are not against purchasing of seedlings but aware that questions have been put to this department and no one has come to clear the way before this untimely decision. Mr. Speaker want to correct that, if in a certain ward, seedlings where planted or were supplied, it means this is not an issue of this county because we understand if an exercise starts, then it is disbursed all over the county.

Number two, Mr. Speaker, it is yesterday when it rained in Yatta. I wonder how in Matuu, Mr. Speaker, a week ago, Hon Manyolo had planted seedlings,

(Laughter)

So Mr. Speaker, we are not opposing this motion, but the direction you have given, we want to see matters and issues of this county government done in the right manner. Mr. Speaker,

I wonder if somebody would say, the environment is so vital and they threw the motion of water tanks through the window. Water is life. Mr. Speaker, I stand to say 'let this issue be suspended until the matters are expressed in the right manner.' Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Hon. Speaker: I think the hon. chair was straight forward. I think the only point perhaps of controversy is that rain began yesterday in your place and the Chair is aware of that. That is the true position. Proceed.

(Laughter)

Hon. Nzoka: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. I stand to support the motion and I appreciate the direction you have given and to my surprise, and in fact it is bad that the chairman of budget committee has gone out. He is accepting that it was not done well and the money was misused. I suspect there are some of us here who are sharing the loot.

Hon. Speaker: You are out of order, you cannot impute improper motive.

Hon. Matheka: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir and the house at large. I was also wondering the same way with the chairman for planning committee, how come hon. Manyolo is purporting to have planted trees last week and I have some interest in Yatta and I know it rained yesterday. What was he using to water the trees with?

Were the county bowsers all there watering trees with hospitals lacking water? I am wondering.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that was not the issue. My issue is very simple. I like working with figures and figures will take us far in this county. Ksh. 10-13 million was used to purchase seedlings and if I give a figure of Ksh. 50 for each, in our place we buy them for Ksh. 10, we are talking of between 200,000 to 260,000 seedlings. I wonder where they were planted.

You go round checking, you will not even get 10 per cent of that. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think you have given the right direction. We need to suspend this thing and we have a proper audit done, then we get what was planted and what was not planted. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I feel one week is not adequate because the committee might be required to go down there and see what happened. They come to my ward, I will take them round.

So Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think we are taking the right direction but we should give them more time. Thank you.

Hon. Speaker: I think hon members, it is right we put the question.

(Question put and agreed to)

The matter raised in the motion will be referred to that committee and we give the committee 10 days to report. If 10 days is not sufficient, then the chair will come for extension of time. Hon. Kitheka, we apologize, we may not accommodate you but you will be given the earliest opportunity to present your motion. Sorry about that.

That is all about the day. Any other matter? So Hon. Kitheka, we will hear you tomorrow in the morning.

Hon. Kitheka: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to apologize for coming late. I was held up in the gate by somebody who had a problem which I could solve. Mr. Speaker, moving the motion to tomorrow will not be appropriate for me but because we have shared it with my fellow hon. Muthuka, hon. Collins and hon. Dominic, I can hand over the documents to them. They represent me and move on with the motion.

Hon. Speaker: Then we can have the motion tomorrow morning.

Hon. Kitheka: Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Speaker: Hon members, there is no other business for the day, and then you can have a good afternoon.

The House rose at 3.39 p.m.