

Name change hearings slammed

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Bloemfontein - The current series of public hearings on name changes by the SA Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) is a farce, the Afrikanerbond said on Thursday.

Chief secretary of the Afrikanerbond, Jan Bosman, said the processes of "consultation" by the SAGNC was a farce as it appeared the outcomes were predetermined.

The Afrikanerbond was informed, after an enquiry to the SAGNC, that the process was almost complete.

This was after the Free State geographical names committee announced on Wednesday that proposals were received for the renaming of 12 towns in the province.

Bloemfontein may change

Bosman said it appeared that the committee had already been informed about the outcome of the public hearings as they wanted to change the names of these towns within three months.

"It makes a mockery and farce of public participation and reconciliation," he said in a statement.

The Free State names under consideration were Bloemfontein to Mangaung, Phillipolis to Adam Kok, Clocolan to Hlohlolwane, Winburg to Makeleketla and Brandfort to Majwemasweu.

Bosman said public hearings had apparently already been held in each province with the final hearing in Boksburg, Gauteng on Friday.

"Very few people are aware of the hearings that have already occurred. The notice for the Gauteng hearings was advertised today (Thursday) and this will undoubtedly have very limited public participation, something the SAGNC in all likelihood wanted."

Bosman said a public participation process to achieve "national consensus" was announced in 2007, but was now suddenly pushed through with undue haste.

Towns, rivers, airports

He said national consensus was of utmost importance as 916 geographic and place names in South Africa had changed since 2000.

These included the names of 38 towns, 72 rivers, 13 mountains, 16 dams and two airports.

"The list does not include the hundreds of street names that have changed in towns and cities across South Africa."

Bosman said it seemed the outcome of the so-called "public hearings" had been predetermined and that the "struggle" history of the ANC was the only real history in South Africa.

He said the current process was denying the history or heritage of any minority and that the names with an Afrikaans context were specifically targeted for change.

The Afrikanerbond said it had objected to the Minister of Arts and Culture, **Lulu Xingwana**, and SAGNC on the tactics used in order to force through name changes based on the semblance of "public participation".

- SAPA