



The Embu County

Bunge Letu

Bulletin

An insight into the activities of the County Assembly of Embu

Assembly Censures Chief Officer

Speaker Josiah Thiriku presiding over an Assembly sitting



Embu Ward Representatives have censured a County Chief Officer for allegedly embezzling Ksh 30 Million women empowerment funds and being unable to account for the same, two years later.

Former Gender, Culture, Children and Social Services Chief Officer Jayne Ndegı is said to have solicited for Ksh 15 Million from women groups across the county, with a promise to use it as a counter-fund for the inexistent Embu Women Sacco and did not officially declare receipt of the funds. MCAs revealed that the women were promised access to subsidised loans which never materialised.

Further, Ndegı is accused of squandering another Ksh 15 Million meant for the Women Empowerment Programme in the 2017/2018 Financial Year, monies that she has not accounted for to date. Ward Reps charge that the Chief Officer as well failed to submit performance reports to the Assembly, contrary to Section 164 and 166 of the Public Finance Management Act.

Majority Leader Hon. Michael Njeru successfully moved a Motion at the County Assembly requiring the Chief Officer to step aside from her position pending further

investigations by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) on the allegations levelled against her.

In his Motion, the Kithimu MCA also urged the Director for the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) and the Controller of Budget to deny county funds access and transaction rights to the Chief Officer until she is exonerated or convicted of charges of embezzlement.

Minority Leader Hon. Lenny Masters, while seconding the Motion, observed that the Chief Officer had secured a Court Order to stop the Assembly from questioning her misappropriation of public monies. The Kiambere MCA urged his counterparts to join hands in holding Ms Ndegı to account, saying this was a key responsibility of the Assembly.

On his part, Muminji MCA Hon. Newton Kariuki narrated how the Chief Officer kicked MCAs out of a bus at Machakos after tussling over an art and craft benchmarking tour of Mombasa County. Kariuki said even the then County Executive Committee Member for Gender Joan Mwende was left stranded as Ms Ndegı proceeded to Mombasa with a group of strangers.

MCAs Reject C.O Reshuffle List

**Deputy Speaker
Steve Simba in
the Chair**



Embu Ward Representative have rejected an a decision by Governor Martin Wambora to reshuffle senior officers in the County Government whom they termed as corrupt and incompetent.

The leaders also threatened to paralyse revenue collection in the county, effectively crippling County Government operations if the Governor would ignore the resolutions of the legislature would insist on maintaining the 'condemned' officers in their respective portfolios.

The MCAs, in a Special Sitting, invited the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), the Directorate of Criminal Investigations and the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to launch investigations and charge Chief Officers Ruth Ndirangu and Jane Ndegi over documented cases of misappropriation of public funds amounting to Ksh 300 million.

The Ward Reps charged that Ms Ndirangu, acting as the Chief Officer for Finance, irregularly made payment of Ksh 60 million for the acquisition of parcels of land in Mwea Settlement scheme, namely, Parcel No. 4531 in which kshs. 23 million was paid to Njeru Ithiga and Co. Advocates and Parcel no. 4045 in which Kshs. 37 million was paid to Njue and Co. advocates.

The Chief Officer is also said to have irregularly paid Ksh 22 million in cash to three officers for land demarcation in Mwea Settlement scheme contrary to Section 121 and 156 (4) (d) of the Public Finance Management Act and Article 227 (1) of the Constitution and operated an undisclosed bank account for Runyenje s Level 4 hospital contrary to Section 153 of the Public Finance Management Act where she was a signatory as the accountant, a matter that was disclosed by the County Assembly Public Accounts and Investment Committee;

MCAs hold that the Chief Officer failed to pay pending bills for the County Assembly amounting to Ksh 22 million contrary to Section 156 (4) (cl) of the Public Finance Management Act and accumulated pending bills worth Ksh 1.4 billion contrary to Section 162 of the Public Finance Management Act.

In addition, the Assembly heard that the officer failed to implement an approved budget on E-Revenue system despite hav-

ing paid over Ksh 143 million to three firms and then failed to submit reports to the County Treasury and Assembly contrary to Section 164 and 166 of the Public Finance Management Act.

While Serving as Chief Officer in the Gender, Culture, Children and Social Services docket, Ndegi is accused of failing to account for Ksh 15 million meant for Women Empowerment programme in the 2017/2018 Financial Year. She is also said to have failed to submit performance reports contrary to Section 164 and 166 of the Public Finance Management Act and solicited for funds from members of the public meant for Embu Women Sacco which she failed to declare and account for.

The MCAs rejected the re-assigning of Mr Michael Ngoroi from the Infrastructure and Public Works to Lands, Physical Planning Housing and Urban Development department accusing him of being contemptuous of the County Assembly resolution to step aside.

On the other hand, Ms Mercy Wanja lacks the requisite qualification and experience to handle the department of Infrastructure, contrary to Section 45(1) (a) and 69 (2) (b) of the County Governments Act, 2012. are accusing the Governor of dishonouring their resolution that declared three Chief Officers unfit to serve in specific dockets earlier this year after they were found culpable of graft, incompetence, abuse of office and failure to file reports to the Assembly to account for their spending of public funds.

In a circular dated 25th October 2019, Governor Wambora reappointed the accused officers to the lucrative dockets that they were deemed incompetent to serve in, sparking the outrage of the Ward Reps. The MCAs also accuse the Governor of usurping the mandate of the Chief of Staff by personally reshuffling and appointing public officers.

The MCAs are now demanding that all the County Government departments to submit their budget implementation status for the Financial Year 2019/2020 to the Assembly's Liaison Committee and each County Chief Officer to forward to the legislature the current status and report of pending bills in their respective Department within seven days of the resolution.

Unspent Bursary Funds are Safe - MCAs



Education Committee Chairman Hon. Patrick Mukavi (Kyeni North)

The County Assembly of Embu has dispelled rumours that Ward Representatives embezzled and squandered funds meant for bursaries to help needy children in the 2018/2019 Financial Year.

County Assembly Education Committee Chairman Hon. Patrick Mukavi rubbished allegations that MCAs had pocketed the monies to the disadvantage of the applicants, stating that the leaders had no capacity to cash funds from the county treasury.

He termed the claims as malicious and a ploy to malign the names of elected Ward Reps. Speaking while responding to a statement sought by Nthawa MCA Hon. Nathan Mwari on the status of the undisbursed funds set aside and allocated to university and boarding secondary school students the Kyeni North MCA said Ksh 53 Million, out of a total kitty of Ksh 103 Million was not released to the County Treasury during the fiscal period that has since lapsed.

He said that the Ksh 50 Million that was released earlier benefitted the needy students in polytechnics and day secondary schools who had applied for financial assistance.

The remaining tranche was to be released soon

after, but the MCA reveals that the National Treasury held on to the funds until the Financial Year ended, leaving the intended beneficiaries helpless.

Mukavi added that MCAs, in collaboration with the County Executive had done their best to try and unlock the funds from the National Treasury, but their efforts were frustrated by blatant refusal by the National Government to release the said funds to the county. He added that Embu Ward Representatives had the duty to protect public funds and therefore would not misuse the same.

The chairman further pointed out that after consultation with senior officers at the County Executive's Education docket, an agreement had been struck to release the monies to the intended beneficiaries after the County Assembly approves a Supplementary Budget.

He however said that Ward Bursary Committees would have to replace the beneficiaries who had already completed their studies.

The MCA pledged to closely follow up on the prioritisation of release of the funds to the marked beneficiaries as soon as the Education Department gets the delayed tranche of 2018/2019, before proceeding to awarding of fresh bursaries for the 2019/2020 Financial Year.

Assembly Adopts Standard Operating Procedures



County Assembly Clerk Jim Kauma (Centre Seated) joined County Assembly Service Board members, Heads of Departments and Trainers during a Performance Management workshop at the Weston Hotel

The County Assembly of Embu will go down in history as the first devolved legislature in the country to formulate and operationalise Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for every department in a bid to improve overall service delivery.

According to the Clerk of the Assembly Jim Kauma, the Standard operating procedures, which are written, step-by-step instructions that describe how to perform a routine activity will help in maintaining consistency of work output and consequently ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in all departments of the legislature.

The Clerk said the SOPs were developed as a first step in streamlining the operations of the Assembly in the quest to transform the legislature into an institution that conforms and adheres to world-class trends in regard to execution of duties.

He added that the SOPs have been crafted in a way that will ensure continuity of services even when key players are not in their duty stations.

Kauma sought to point out that by following the steps of performing certain duties as outlined in the SOPs, County Assembly staffers would now be more conversant with the duties of their colleagues and excellently step in whenever someone is away from their workstation.

He said the SOPs would also help employees understand the roles of workmates in other departments.

Lead consultant Noel Olweny from Advancierge Africa Strategic Solutions Limited who helped in the drafting of the SOPs said the manuals have in the past helped boost the performance of multinational companies and state agencies by standardising the way tasks are carried out in various

units. Olweny lauded the Assembly for adopting the tool and expressed confidence in improved the future work output.

In addition to the SOPs, the County Assembly has also developed a Communication Strategy to restructure the way the legislature packages and disseminates information to both its internal and external communications. The Communication Strategy was developed in close partnership with Zimimu Consultants.

Speaking when launching the document, the Clerk reemphasised that the Communication Strategy would be the nerve centre of the County Assembly's information sharing network. He said it would also determine the flow of information among Administrators, Staff and Ward Representatives before reaching the county citizenry or being consumed internally.

Kauma further pointed out that the County Assembly would therefore seek to forge and maintain connection with stakeholders, the media and the general public to allow work efficient legislation towards achievement of county goals.

He acknowledged that the most basic dynamics in communication exist between the message and the audience, saying it was these dynamics that the Assembly sought to reinforce so that the message gets to the audience seamlessly.

The Clerk stated that Legislature's main focus was attaining a systematic, constructive and interactive engagement with the Embu County populace; which is the Assembly's main client. He added that this would be important especially with plan to roll out the 'Bunge Mashinani' program which seeks to demystify the Assembly by devolving plenary sittings to the ward level.

Taxman's Award for Exemplary Compliance



Clerk Jim Kauma Receives an award from Sifa Jefferson of the KRA iTax Department in honour of the Assembly's exemplary tax compliance record in the Eastern Region

The County Assembly of Embu has in the past been feted by the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) for exemplary tax compliance and sustained adherence to set taxation regimes.

Officers from the taxman's Embu regional office paid a courtesy call on Assembly Clerk Jim Kauma and presented a plaque signed by KRA Commissioner General John Njiraini recognising the county legislature for consistency as one of the top taxpayers in the region.

Tax Compliance Supervisor Dishon Muiruri said the Assembly scooped the award for timely remittance of taxes, unmatched record keeping and being one of the largest taxpayers in the region. He added that the taxman not registered any hitches with the Assembly in terms of tax compliance.

Muiruri who was flanked by a team of officers from iTax, taxpayer education and compliance departments said KRA would also endeavour to analyse the stumbling blocks that may thwart effective revenue collection by the County Government.

He added that the taxman would soon be conducting a training tailored for the County Assembly staff to build their capacity in taxation matters equip them with the necessary skills to effectively handle the broad spectrum of tax re-

gimes that the County Legislature is required to comply with.

The KRA officers also tasked the County Assembly to sensitise the general public on the importance of complying with tax requirements, stating that the only way Kenyan citizens played their part in nation building was by contributing part of their earnings for development of infrastructure and service delivery.

On his part, the Assembly Clerk said the institution was honoured to be identified as an exemplary taxpayer, though the legislature was only adhering to the law by making timely remittance of tax deductions for both staff and MCAs as well as keeping proper records of taxes paid.

Kauma said the Assembly had suffered its fair share of bashing from the general public for political reasons, but added that receiving an award for topping in tax compliance was an indicator of the legislature's leadership capability in setting a trend for law abiding to the Embu County citizenry.

The Clerk encouraged other institutions and individual taxpayers to emulate the example set by the Assembly and ensure timely payment of taxes, saying this would give the National Government the impetus to spur economic growth through funding of development projects across the country.

MCA Wants Cotton Farming Revived



CLARION CALL: Nominated MCA Hon. Edith Wanjira Nyaga (Pictured) has called for concerted efforts by the County Government to ensure the revival of cotton farming in the Mbeere region. The MCA opines that income from resuscitation of cotton farming will improve the livelihoods of many families

An Embu Ward Representative has petitioned the County Government to institute measures aimed at reviving cotton farming in the semiarid and water scarce areas.

Nominated MCA Hon. Edith Nyaga sought a statement from the Committee on Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives Development on the measures the County Government has put in place to revive and reinvigorate cotton production within Embu County.

The MCA wondered whether the County Government was aware that the production of cotton in Embu had dwindled to despicable levels and has virtually collapsed over the years, despite being the sole economic mainstay for farmers in the Mbeere region.

In addition, the Ward Rep demanded to be informed whether the County Executive had prepared any policy to guide and manage the cotton subsector, plus what budgetary allocation has the County Executive provided to the cotton subsector for the 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 fiscal periods.

Speaking while seeking the statement at the County Assembly, the MCA stated that she sought the statement following the realisation that cotton; a major cash crop in the lower parts of the county was on the verge of total collapse,

yet several families had depended on the crop for decades in the past.

She observed that cotton production had gone down in many areas and the demand for Embu cotton had also declined to the point of the little crop available lacking market completely. The MCA also noted that cotton was the only crop hardy enough to thrive in extremely harsh weather conditions.

While seeking the intervention of the County Government by setting up a fund to finance the revival, research, extension and marketing of cotton farming in the county, the MCA warned that many impoverished farmers might starve after selling the little food they managed to grow in the dry region.

She pleaded for the help of the financial County Government, pointing out that the *Muguka* variety of Khat popular in the region could not be grown in very dry areas, therefore leaving residents with only cotton as the only cash crop that could rescue them from abject poverty.

The Agriculture Committee, through Nominated MCA Hon. Bernard Nyaga Kandia asked Temporary Speaker Hon. Sicily Warue to allocate the committee at least 14 working days to consult with the County Executive and draft a detailed report in response to the concerns.

Expedite Cotton Seed Issuance - MCA



Minority Leader Hon. Leonard Masters Mwaniki (Kiambere) urging the County Government to expedite the issuing of cotton seeds to farmers in the Mbeere region before the end of the rainy season

The Embu County Government has been advised to expedite the supply a batch of cotton seeds procured for issuance to farmers in the Mbeere region before the current rainy season ends.

Minority Leader Hon. Lenny Masters Mwaniki revealed that he was privy to information that the county had acquired a huge consignment of cotton seeds, but noted that there was no indication of any plans to distribute them during this rainy season, which he said is nearing its end to give way to a dry spell.

Mwaniki who is also the MCA for Kiambere stated that cotton crop is a biennial crop that takes two seasons in the field; therefore, the targeted beneficiaries of the seeds would loose out if this season lapses with the seeds not planted. He added that this would be a positive move to revive cotton farming if timely planning was facilitated.

Temporary Speaker Hon. Phillip Nzangi said the issue should be brought into the County Assembly as a matter of county importance to allow MCAs ventilate on it. The Makima MCA also observed that the

semiarid Mbeere region was in dire need for such interventions that would bolster the economic activities expected to uplift the livelihoods of residents.

Agriculture Committee Chairperson Hon Rev. Elizabeth Kibai pledged to take up the matter and report back to the House within seven days. Kibai MCA said her committee was working on a response to another statement sought by Nominated MCA Hon. Edith Nyaga the previous week on what the County Government was doing to revive cotton farming in Embu.

In her Statement, the MCA wondered whether the County Government was aware that the production of cotton in Embu had dwindled to despicable levels and has virtually collapsed over the years, despite being the sole economic mainstay for farmers in the Mbeere region.

In addition, the Ward Rep demanded to be informed whether the County Executive had prepared any policy to guide and manage the cotton subsector, plus what budgetary allocation has the County Executive provided to the cotton subsector for the 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 fiscal periods.

Assembly Endorses Waivers for PWDs



Nominated MCA Hon. Bernard Nyaga Kandia who has been in the frontline championing for the rights of Embu County's People With Disability (PWD) at the County Assembly praised the move to waive taxes for the traders falling in the Special Interest Group's bracket

Embu Ward Representatives have endorsed a proposal to exempt persons living with disability from paying trade license fees, permits, cess and market charges in order to promote their entrepreneurial endeavours.

The County Assembly committee on Finance and Economic Planning proposed to introduce waivers for the physically challenged business people on all charges levied on traders by the County Government as an incentive to encourage them to venture into business as a way of generating income.

Kyeni South MCA Hon. Salesio Kimaru, while seconding the second reading of the Embu County Finance Bill, 2019, said the committee introduced a clause requiring any person registered with the National Council for Persons with Disability would henceforth be required to apply to the County Government for waiver of the levies.

Nominated MCA Hon. Bernard Kandia lauded the move as a noble idea that would uplift the livelihoods of the people living with disability across the county by enabling them to trade without being harassed for lack of trade licenses. He however warned against abuse of this provision by unscrupulous able-bodied businessmen.

Minority Leader Hon. Lenny Masters Mwaniki also noted that some dishonest individuals might scheme on how to register their businesses using the names of people living with disability to avoid remitting taxes to the county government. He therefore urged county enforcement officers to be extra vigilant on the loophole.

The Kiambere MCA stated that people living with disability are also not subjected to taxes at the national level and therefore said Embu County was only following the good example set by national institutions to cushion the special interest group from the hassles of having to source for funds to pay for licenses.

On her part, Nominated MCA Hon. Ednah Muisyo thanked the Finance Committee for considering waiving the trade licenses and permit fees for people living with disability, saying that despite being astute entrepreneurs, the group faces challenges competing with other traders and therefore needed a morale booster.

The MCAs unanimously adopted the proposal to waive the taxes for people living with disability for the remaining part of the 2019/2020 Financial Year, setting precedence for perpetuation of the waivers in future.

MCA's in Bid to End Village Bar Menace



Kyeni South MCA Hon. Salesio Kimaru, during a County Assembly plenary sitting decried the high number of alcohol dens in the villages. The MCA wants bars restricted to urban centres to reduce the cases of alcohol abuse, insecurity and underage drinking in the rural villages.

Embu Ward Representatives want the County Government to stop licensing liquor dens in villages to curb the upsurge of cases of alcoholism amongst the rural populace.

Kyeni South MCA Hon. Salesio Kimaru revealed that alcohol selling kiosks had sprouted in several homesteads in villages, consequently accelerating the rate at which the unemployed population plunges into alcoholism. He called for review of existing liquor licenses to only allow for the opening of bars in towns, urban centres and market centres as opposed to villages.

Hon. Kimaru who spoke at the County Assembly during the second reading of the Embu County Finance Bill, 2019, shocked the Legislature by stating that in some areas, liquor dens outnumber homesteads. He also added that many families were faced with the financial burden of rehabilitating alcohol addicts who developed dependency on hard liquor due to their close proximity to bars.

He added that unchecked mushrooming of bars in the rural areas had also promoted underage drinking, crime, immorality and proliferation of illicit liquor due to the inability of law enforcers to access the rural areas. The MCA at the

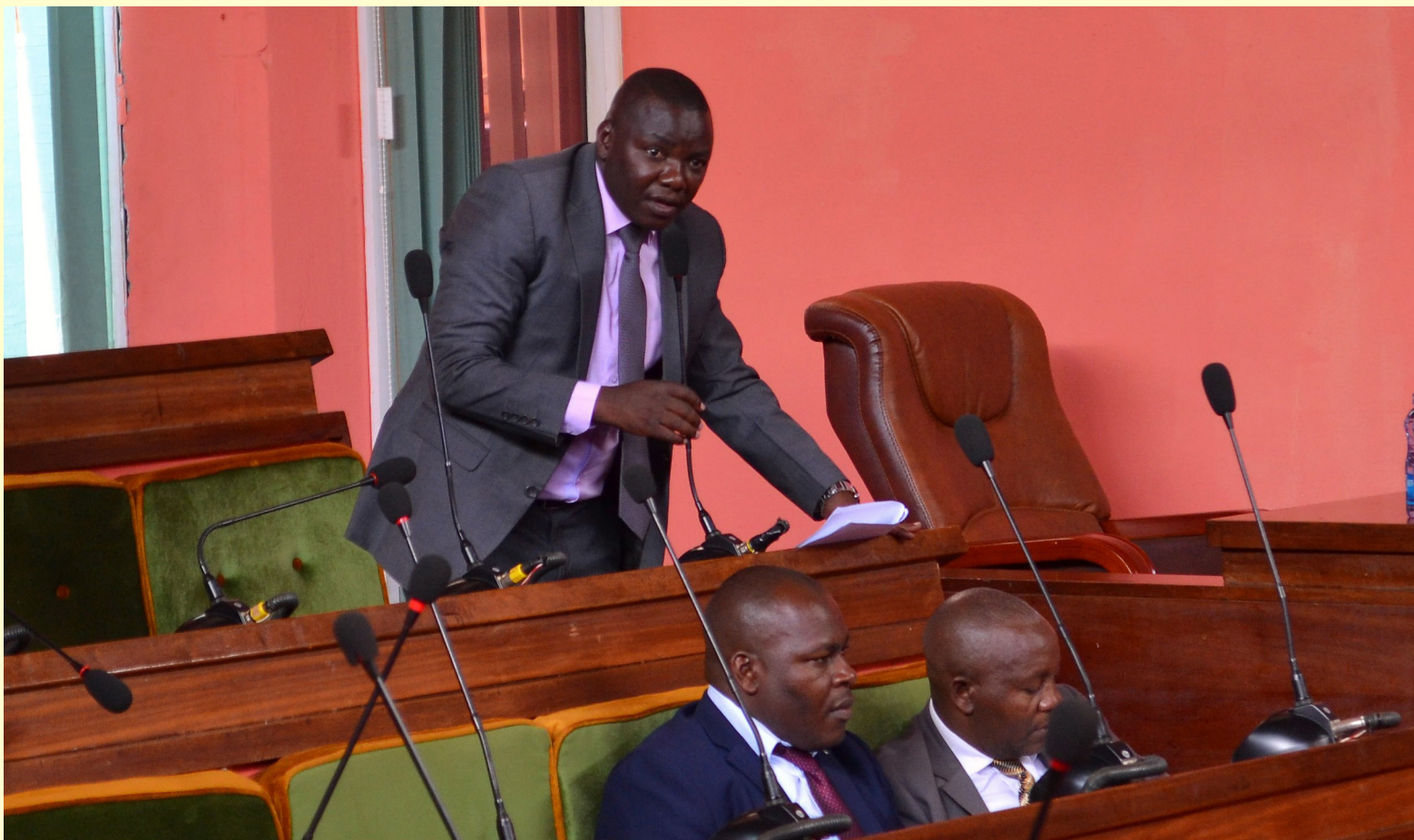
same time warned that though the county needed tax from traders, licensing bars in villages would be more detrimental in the long run prove more detrimental than lack of revenue.

Nominated MCA Hon. Bernard Kandia supported calls to abolish bars in the villages saying alcoholism was robbing the county of energetic workforce when youth become addicted and overdependent on alcohol. He also noted that uncontrolled alcohol sale was also a factor that contributed to insecurity in the villages and said the trade ought to be restricted to urban centres.

Similar sentiments were echoed by nominated MCAs Hon. Sicily Ruguru and Hon. Rose Kinyua who complained over the numerous bars situated close to residential areas, churches and schools, therefore causing a public nuisance to residents who do not partake of alcohol. The duo said excessive consumption of alcohol had plunged many households into economic stress as addicts sell off family property to drink.

The Assembly unanimously supported the call to close all bars operating in villages and called upon the County Government not to renew their trade licenses unless the areas they were situated in were classified as commercial centres.

Mystery of Ksh 17.5M Seedlings Probed



Deputy Speaker Hon. Steve Munene Mugendi alias "Simba" ventilating on the revelations that the County Government spent Ksh 17.5 Million in 2017 on tree seedlings that could not be traced

Embu Ward Representatives have demanded information on where tree seedlings procured by the County Government at a whopping Ksh 17.5 Million in the 2016/2017 Financial Year were planted.

Deputy Speaker Hon. Steve Simba, while deliberating on the Assembly's Public Accounts and Investments Committee (PAIC) report on findings of the Auditor General on the financial statements of the Embu County Executive for the year ended June 2017 said there was no sign that seedlings worth Ksh 17.5 Million had been supplied or planted in any part of the county.

The PAIC report tabled by the Committees Chairman; Makima MCA Hon. Phillip Nzangi indicated that during the year under review, the County Executive had an approved budget of Ksh 3,000,144 for overhaul of infrastructure and civil works under development expenditure for Lands and Urban Planning Department.

However, the actual expenditure under this item was Ksh 17,500,000 spent on the supply of tree seedlings procured from Kenya Forest Services on 13th March 2017. Nzangi revealed that the budgeted provision for procurement of certified seeds was Ksh 14,499,856, while the actual expenditure was Ksh 17.5 Million resulting in an unapproved over-expenditure of Ksh 3,000,144.

The report that was unanimously adopted by the

Ward Reps also revealed that no documents were made available to show that there was an approved reallocation of funds set aside overhaul of infrastructure and civil works to procurement of seedlings. In addition, no records were made available to indicate how the purchased seedlings were issued out, therefore no beneficiaries exist.

In addition, no records were made available to indicate how the purchased seedlings were issued out. Further, the budgeted provision for procurement of certified seeds was Ksh 14,499,856 while the actual expenditure was Ksh 17,500,000 resulting in an unapproved over-expenditure of Ksh 3,000,144.

Hon. Simba tickled the House when he stated that there would be a man-made forest covering the county by now if the seedlings were planted two years ago. He observed that if the seedlings had been bought for at most Ksh 50, the county would have issued out more than 350,000 seedlings of various species and Embu would be a reforestation success story, unless all the seedlings withered and dried up.

That the County Executive did not follow the PFMA by failing to seek the approval from the County Assembly for Ksh 3,000,144 reallocated for tree planting. The Legislature now wants the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) to take up the matter, since the entire Ksh 17.5 Million may have been embezzled.

Shipping Container Stalls Eyesore - Muturi



Ruguru Ngandori MCA Hon. Harrison Muturi Sammy (Mwombo) has complained over the mushrooming of steel shipping container stalls which he says are making Embu town look like a slum.

An Embu Ward Representative has expressed concern over the mushrooming of steel shipping container kiosks within the county headquarters as opposed to construction of concrete business premises.

According to Ruguru Ngandori MCA Hon. Muturi Mwombo, the opening of hundreds of stalls in metallic cargo containers was indicative of an economic meltdown occasioned by poor circulation of money within the county; a situation he said was worrying and needed to be addressed critically.

Muturi said the many “tin structures” stacked on top of one another along every street in Embu town were an unsightly eyesore that was making the once vibrant trading hub in the region, which was booming with business now look like a big sprawling slum. He said the containers should be relocated.

The MCA told the County Assembly that it was embarrassing to see the neighbouring P.I town, which is in Kirinyaga County, barely three kilometres away, developing at a faster rate than Embu town despite the latter having been the Provincial Headquarters of Kenya’s second largest province.

The Health Committee Chairman observed that the business environment in the county was hos-

tile for major private developers and largescale entrepreneurs, causing them to shy away from investing their monies in the now sleepy town and dull town. He added that incentives for investors were inexistent in Embu.

Muturi revealed that members of the Embu business community had intimated to him that trading in the county was becoming difficult day-by-day as contractors and suppliers who largely depend on the County Government for tenders were either not being paid or contracts awarded to ‘foreigners’.

He urged the County Government to think of innovative ways of attracting investors into Embu town to save face and also revive the business vibrancy that was once witnessed in the past. Muturi also wondered why the billions of investments promised in previous Investors’ Conferences had not materialised.

Temporary Speaker Hon. Phillip Nzangi acknowledged the MCA’s concern as a genuine economic problem that needed to be addressed. He however ruled that the matter was not properly tabled in the House for legislation and therefore advised businessmen to write a petition to the County Assembly highlighting the issue.

Containers Result of Poor Planning - Collo



Kirimari MCA Hon. Morris Muchiri Nyaga a.k.a 'Collo' admits that the steel container stalls in Embu Town are an eyesore, but says this is due to poor planning by the County Government

The County Government of Embu has failed retail traders by failing to properly plan the county headquarters and provide adequate infrastructure for business, a Ward Representative has stated.

Speaking while responding to complaints that shipping container stalls had littered Embu town, making it untidy and messy, Kirimari MCA Hon. 'Collo' Morris Muchiri said H.E Governor Martin Wambora's administration ought to have provided enough space to be rented by the thousands of small scale traders who wish to earn an income through trading in the town, but that was yet to happen.

He added that the steel containers, though unsightly, were a desperate measure to ensure that the traders scouting for premises to set up their businesses do not migrate to the neighbouring Kirinyaga County in search of stalls. The MCA also noted that most of the stall owners were unemployed youth who had turned to business as their only way of earning a living.

Further, Muchiri observed that the County Government had an insatiable appetite for taxes from traders, but did not endeavour to provide the enabling environment for the business community to operate in and consequently cause a rise in revenue collection.

He challenged the County Government to put up a multi-storey market to absorb all traders in shipping containers, leaving the town neat.

The MCA who is also the chairman of the County Assembly Committee on Finance and Economic Planning spoke during a County Assembly plenary sitting during the second reading of the Embu County Finance Bill, 2019, said attainment of the county's projected revenue targets would largely depend on the traders running small businesses in Embu town. He therefore advised the County Government to consider investing in improved infrastructure to house them permanently.

Ruguru Ngandori MCA Hon. Muturi Mwombo had earlier kicked the hornets' nest by lamenting over the mushrooming of steel shipping container kiosks within the county headquarters as opposed to construction of permanent business premises and called for their removal from the Central Business District. He wondered how a former Provincial Headquarters could only afford to "dump" traders in shipping containers, asserting that the many "tin structures" stacked on top of one another along the busy streets of Embu town were an eyesore that made the town look like a slum.

Implement e-Revenue, County Govt Advised



Minority Leader Leonard Masters Mwaniki (Kiambere) with pupils from St. Anne's Rutumbi Primary School. Masters has demanded that the County Government operationalises the e-Revenue system to fully automate revenue collection for better accountability

The Embu County Government is on the spot for spending more than Ksh 140 Million on an inexistent electronic revenue collection system that was meant to eradicate massive graft involving county senior county officials.

County Assembly Majority Leader Lenny Masters disclosed that the much-hyped e-Revenue system had been allocated Ksh 143 Million for installation and an extra Ksh 90 Million for operationalisation, but three years down the line, the County Government was still using manual revenue collection methods.

Masters posed that the refusal to install the e-Revenue system was informed by the fact that it would be impossible to siphon money once the data is keyed into the system. The Kiambere MCA added that manual revenue collection was the most successful conduit for corruption within the county.

Majority Leader Michael Njeru (Kithimu MCA) stated that there was clear sabotage on the attempts to implement e-Revenue collection in the county. He termed as unfortunate the deduction of Ksh 155 Million from the county's share of national revenue due to failure to meet its Ksh 950 Million revenue target, stating that some corrupt individuals had pocketed the monies collected.

Mwea MCA Harrison Mwaluko who chairs the County Assembly's Budget and Appropriations Committee echoed the sentiments of his counterparts, saying the county could not afford to lose colossal amounts of funds to corruption cartels that had positioned themselves in major cess collection points.

The leaders now want the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations to swing into action and probe the happenings in the county's finance docket. They hinted that the looting of public funds was going on unabated despite the concerns raised by the Assembly.

Muminji MCA Newton Kariuki proposed a freeze on all revenue collection procedures until the County Executive sits with Ward Reps to iron out pertinent issues that thwart effective tax collection or lead to embezzlement of the collected funds.

On his part, Evurore MCA claimed that there was a cartel that after realising Governor Martin Wambora was serving his last term, had decided to wantonly loot public funds with impunity so that they can make enough money to enrich themselves before they leave office in 2022. He said this trend must be stopped by all means possible.

Anti-Corruption Protests Hit Embu Town



Residents of Embu displaying placards outside the County Assembly to protest against increased cases of graft in the County Government as repeatedly exposed by Ward Representatives

Embu town was a no go zone as angry residents, led by their Ward Representatives took to the streets to protest against rampant corruption in the County Government.

A horde of incensed demonstrators stormed H.E Governor Martin Wambora's offices threatening to eject two Chief Officers accused of embezzling public funds running to more than Ksh 500 Million in the last three years. County Assembly Speaker Hon. Josiah Thiriku and his Deputy Steve Simba had a hard time as a joint squadron of Administration and Regular Police unsuccessfully roughed them up and tried to arrest them for leading the protest march.

The leaders promised to paralyse the operations of the County Government until the Governor sacks corrupt officers implicated in graft by the Legislature.

It took the intervention of MCAs and their followers to rescue the Assembly Leadership from the hands of the Police Officers who were joined by County Askaris in their attempts to handcuff the County Assembly Speaker and book them for inciting residents against the County Government.

The situation threatened to get out of hand as MCAs confronted baton-wielding police officers. The protestors later marched through the streets of Embu town, bringing business to a standstill as they blocked traffic and lit bonfires to demand the resignation of Finance Chief Officer Ruth Ndirangu and her Finance counterpart Jayne Ndegi who are accused of siphoning public funds.

The outnumbered Police Officers could only watch as drama unfolded, awaiting reinforcement. County Revenue Collectors deployed for normal du-

ties in busy bus termini, markets and roadblocks found themselves in unfamiliar territory as livid demonstrators stormed into cess collection booths and forcefully expelled them before demolishing and razing the structures, which they termed as dens of corruption.

The town was characterised by a heavy presence of anti-riot police officers who lobbed teargas canisters as rowdy residents engaged them in a stone-throwing attack. Traders in the town had to shut down their business premises for fear of damages as the running battles between the riotous mob and police ensued.

The Embu Ward Reps on Wednesday passed a Motion to stop revenue collection across the county until Governor Wambora interdicts the two Chief Officers implicated in mega graft. The leaders also want the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) to investigate the massive graft allegations and prosecute the officers found culpable.

MCAs who addressed the media on the side-lines of the protest vowed not to relent in their fight against corruption within the County Government, warning Governor Wambora that more drastic action was in the pipeline if he would continue defending the impunity perpetrated by his senior officials.

The protestors vowed to mobilise the business community against remitting any parking fees, market charges, cess, land rates and business permit payments levied on them by the County Government, claiming the funds always end up in the pockets of a few individuals instead of being channelled into development projects.

Prohibit Ugandan Milk Imports - MCA



Kagaari South MCA Hon. Robert Ileri wants cheap imported milk from Uganda banned from being sold within Embu County to protect local dairy farmers from low milk prices and exploitation by processors.

An Embu MCA has called for prohibition of sale of milk from neighbouring Uganda in a bid to cushion the county's dairy farmers from huge losses and exploitation by local creameries.

Kagaari South MCA Hon. Robert Ileri said it was painful to see packets of milk from Uganda on the shelves of Embu shops, yet the local dairy farmers who invest into the business heavily have to pour their milk due to lack of market during periods when it is overproduced.

The Ward Rep demanded an explanation as to who allowed cheap milk from Uganda to be sold in Kenya at the expense of local dairy farmers who depend on income from milk sales for the upkeep of their families. Ileri also called for formulation of a policy regulating the production, marketing and sale of milk and other dairy products within Embu County to protect farmers.

He also lamented that local milk companies were taking advantage of the ongoing milk glut to exploit dairy farmers by buying the commodity cheaply and at times withholding farmers' money. The MCA singled out the Kenya Cooperative Creameries and Brookside which were buying a litre of

milk at Ksh 29 and Ksh 31 respectively, down from Ksh 35.

Speaking at the County Assembly Chambers during a plenary sitting, Ileri revealed that Brookside had not paid Kirimiri Farmers' Self-Help Group for the last two months, yet they were still picking the product every day. He said this was a terrible punishment on dairy farmers, but they had no option other than contending with the mistreatment because they had nowhere else to take their milk.

Ileri lauded the County Government for initiating the construction of a milk processing plant at Ugweri market centre in his ward, saying this was a positive move that would ensure that Embu dairy farmers would reap the maximum benefits from their investment into the business.

He also said that the milk factory would ensure that consumers of dairy products were assured of getting the best quality as the County Government endeavours to edge out sellers of adulterated milk.

Ileri added that sale of branded milk from Embu would also give residents a sense of pride as well as ensuring that payment of dairy farmers would be timely and money would circulate better within the county.

Establish County Grain Reserve - Kimaru



Kyeni South MCA Hon. Salesio Kimaru examining a motorised chaff cutter at the Embu ASK Show. The MCA has urged the County Government to consider establishing a grain reserve to store cereals.

The Embu County Government has been challenged to set aside a kitty to buy and store farm produce from farmers during harvest seasons and sell back at subsidised rates when famine strikes.

Kyeni South MCA Hon. Salesio Kimaru said it was time that the county's leadership learnt a lesson from the ongoing drought that has pushed thousands of residents to the brink of starvation.

He said drastic measures like establishing a County Grain Reserve inevitably have to be instituted to cushion the county populace from the ravaging effects of hunger in the near future.

Kimaru observed that Embu farmers sell their produce to profiteering brokers at throwaway prices during harvest seasons to avoid post-harvest losses due to lack of proper storage facilities, only to buy back the same produce ten times the initial price when food shortage kicks in and the threat of hunger becomes a reality after rains fail.

Speaking during a County Assembly plenary sitting, the MCA told the House that a two-kilogram container of maize which was retailing at Ksh 20 is currently being sold at Ksh 150, while the same amount of beans which farmers disposed to brokers at Ksh 80 was going for a minimum of Ksh 250 depending on the location and variety.

The sentiments were echoed by Nominated MCA Hon. Elizabeth Kibai who is also the chairperson of the County Assembly Agriculture Committee. She said farmers who sold their produce at low prices immediately after harvesting often found themselves at a loss during the now so common dry spells. She however said her committee was planning to initiate value addition projects.

On his part, Kagaari South MCA Hon. Robert Ileri asserted that the Kithimu, Karurumo and Ugweri regions of Embu County were regarded as the bread basket of the county because they usually experience bumper harvests of maize and beans. He regretted that despite being major grain producers, the regions currently had nothing to rely on in terms of food supplies.

Ileri pointed out that a 90-kilogram bag of maize that had been sold at Ksh 1200 late last year was currently retailing at Ksh 4,000, while a bag of beans had skyrocketed to Ksh 6,500. He said the current high prices of foodstuff was unreachable for most households and urged the County Government to put measures in place to avoid such a scenario in future.

The MCAs said the county should in the near future not be caught flatfooted by drought again, because the situation is always predicted and therefore mitigating measures ought to be put in place to guarantee that Embu residents do not experience the biting effects of hunger.

Karambari Playground Headache for MCA



Deputy Minority Leader Hon. Newton Kariuki who is also the MCA for Muminji Ward. The MCA wants the ownership of a piece of land at Karambari which was set aside for a playground demystified. He says the land has been encroached by private developers as County Officials watch.

An Embu Ward Representative has sought information on how the County Government acquired land for a playground and why it is not demarcated.

Muminji MCA Hon. Newton Kariuki has in the past expressed fears that a senior County Government official might have sold public land at Karambari in Mbeere North Sub-county which was set aside for a playground to a private developer.

Now the MCA wants to know how much the county paid for the land and see supporting documents of the transaction between the buyer and seller, the size of the land bought, parcel and Title Deed numbers, and whether the land was officially handed over to the relevant County Government docket.

He said the County Government of Embu bought a parcel of land to establish playing fields for various sporting disciplines at, but revealed that the County Lands Department dispatched its officials to demarcate two acres out of the land larger portion.

Speaking at the County Assembly Chambers during statement hour, the MCA demanded to know why a private developer had started digging trenches on the public land in readiness to construct commercial buildings. He said no visible beacons had been erected to

show the demarcations, but confirmed that vigorous construction works had started in earnest.

He sought an official position from the County Assembly Lands Committee as to what was happening at the said playground, saying lands County Executive Committee member Joshat Kithumbu was too arrogant to pick calls from MCAs or respond to the legislature's summonses to appear before its committees to answer pertinent questions.

Kariuki called for speedy investigations into the matter, but warned that by the time the CEC member replies to the Assembly's queries, the grabbed playground might have already developed into a market centre.

He suspected that the county lands minister may have illegally sold the prime land parcel secretly and pocketed the proceeds.

The Muminji MCA has also demanded to know what steps the County Lands department has taken to address the encroachment on the parcel of land in question by private developers. County Assembly Lands Committee vice chairperson said the committee would investigate and report back to the House on the matter within 14 days.

MCA's Scoff at 'Bully' Runyenjes Parliamentarian



Temporary Speaker Hon. Sicily Warue (Nominated MCA) presiding over an Assembly sitting.

An Embu Ward Representative has scoffed at Runyenjes Member of National Assembly Hon. Eric Muchangi for alleging that the County Assembly was wasting public funds in unnecessary spending sprees.

Muminji MCA Hon. Newton Kariuki told off the parliamentarian who earlier spoke at a local vernacular station labelling the Assembly as extravagant, warning him to keep off county affairs and stick to legislating at the National Assembly. Hon Kariuki urged Muchangi to stop bullying MCAs with unsubstantiated claims and retorted that the MP was not a prefect to police the County Assembly on 'baseless rumours'.

In a strongly worded statement delivered at the County Assembly chambers during a Special Sitting, the Ward Rep said the MP had no moral authority to lecture the Assembly when the electorate in Runyenjes Constituency were yearning for services as their legislator at the national level spends time politicking in media stations.

He added that the County Government had gone out of its way to issue bursaries to needy students although this was supposed to be the work of the Member of Parliament, at the same time challenging the MP to be genuine with the electorate in accounting for usage of his Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty. Hon. Kariuki also sought to remind Muchangi that par-

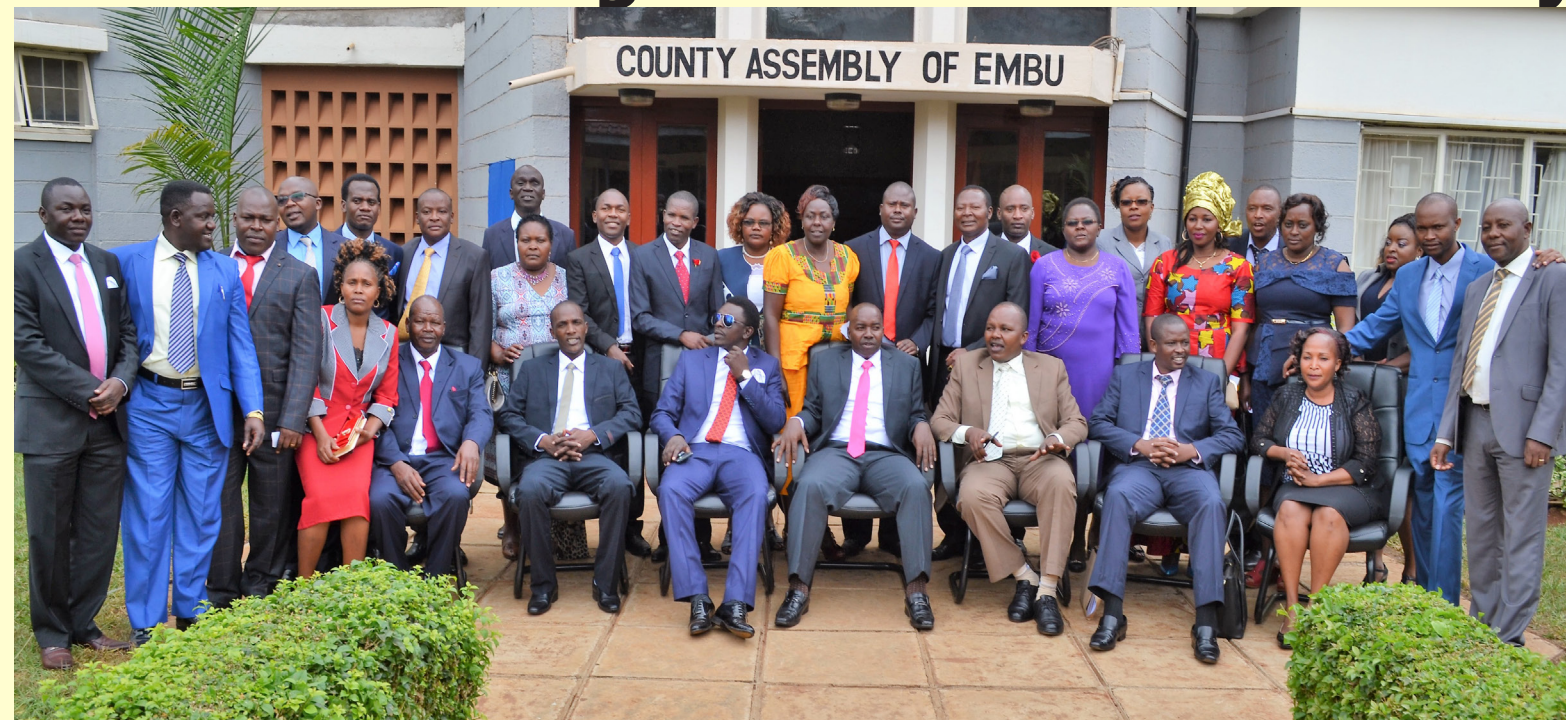
ents in his constituency were crying for his help and needed more bursary funds disbursed. The MCA also observed that a toilet block at a school in Runyenjes, constructed through CDF funds had recently collapsed; an indicator of poor workmanship and consequent wastage of public funds.

He amid applause from his counterparts said the MP should first address such shoddy projects before venturing out of his area of jurisdiction. The MCA wondered how the MP could purport to have audited the County Assembly accounts and concluded that funds had been utilised imprudently, yet he had not checked the questionable spending in his own constituency.

Hon. Kariuki took issue with Members of Parliament for what he termed as deceiving the Kenyan citizenry with fictitious projects like the free primary education, which he noted had not taken off at the ward level. He said after failing in their duties, MPs should desist from distracting MCAs from their quest to bring development at the grassroots level.

The MCA observed that Muchangi was wrong in translating his political war with Runyenjes MCA Steve Simba into a confrontation with the entire County Assembly. Kariuki urged Muchangi to confine his attacks on the Deputy Speaker, who is said to be garnering for the Runyenjes parliamentary seat in their home turf.

Committees Reorganised to Boost Productivity



Members of the County Assembly of Embu pose for a group photo after an Assembly sitting.

The County Assembly of Embu has reorganised Sectoral and Standing Committees and elected new chairmen in a major shakeup ahead of the re-opening for its third session on February 11th 2020.

According to Majority Leader Hon. Michael Njeru who also chairs the Committee on Selection which executed the changes, the realignment of Assembly Committees was occasioned by the Governor's reorganisation of his ministries at the County Executive, which saw the Water and Irrigation docket merged with the Lands, Physical Planning and Urban Development portfolio.

Mavuria MCA Hon. Ngari Mbaka is the new Chairman of the Infrastructure Committee, deputised by the Majority Leader, replacing former Deputy Majority Leader Murithi Kiura of Mbeti South who is now the Vice Chairman for Finance and Economic Planning Committee. Nthawa MCA Hon. Nathan Mwari will chair the Youth Empowerment and Sports Committee. Kyeni South MCA Hon. Salesio Kimaru is the new Chairman of the Public Participation Committee, with Hon. Bernard Kandia (Nominated) as his deputy, while Kagaari North MCA Hon. Patrick Rugendo chairs the newly formed Ward Equalisation Committee with Mbeti North MCA Hon. Peter Murithi serving as the Vice Chairman.

Nominated MCA Hon. Edna Muisyo will serve as the chairperson for the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee, deputised by Kyeni South MCA Hon. Patrick Mukavi whereas Gaturi South MCA Hon. Fredrick Gatumu is the new chairman for the Committee on Delegated Legislation and Hon. Terry Mbuchi is his Vice Chair. The move comes barely a week after former Majority Chief Whip Hon. Judy Mbuya (Nominated) and Deputy Majority Leader Hon. Murithi Kiura (Mbeti South) were ousted and replaced with Hon. Harrison Mwaluko (Mwea) and

Hon. Salesio Kimaru (Kyeni South) respectively. The changes were also termed as an attempt to streamline the legislature's activities in an effort to bolster service delivery.

In a communication to the House during a special sitting, Speaker Hon. Josiah Thiriku also announced that Nominated MCA Hon. Sicily Njiru was the new legislature's representative to the County Assemblies Forum (CAF), replacing Hon. Agnes Gakungu. Hon. Edith Nyaga on the other hand was appointed as the new Chairperson of the Assembly's Jubilee Womens' Caucus.

The MCAs that retained their committee chairmanship include: Nominated MCA Hon. Rev. Elizabeth Kibai (Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative Development), Minority Leader and Kiambere MCA Hon. Lenny Masters Mwaniki (Trade Investment, Tourism and Industrialisation), Kyeni North MCA Hon. Patrick Mukavi (Education), Ruguru Ngandori MCA Hon. Muturi Mwombo (Health), Kirimari MCA Hon. Morris Muchiri (Finance and Economic Planning), Nginda MCA Hon. John Gicovi (Lands, Physical Planning and Urban Development), Mbeti North MCA Hon. Peter Murithi (Gender, Culture, Children and Social Services) and Evurore MCA Hon. Duncan Mbui (Administration and Public Service). Others include Mwea MCA Hon. Harrison Mwaluko (Budget and Appropriation), Nominated MCA Hon. Jane Ann Murithi (Implementation), Makima MCA Hon. Phillip Nzangi (Public Accounts and Investment), Nominated MCA Hon. Rose Kinyua (Members' Welfare), Deputy Speaker and Runyenjes Central MCA Hon. Steve Simba (Liaison), Majority Leader and Kithimu MCA Hon. Michael Njeru (Selection) and the Speaker Chairs three committees namely: Powers and Privileges, Appointments and Assembly Rules and Business.

The changes took effect immediately after the reorganisation of committee membership and election of chairmen and their deputies.

The County Assembly of Embu



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