

Ex-MEC guilty of contempt

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STAFF REPORTER

THE FORMER MEC of Tourism, Environment and Conservation, PW Saaiman, and the HOD, Pat Mokhali, have been found guilty of being in contempt of court after going ahead with the disciplinary hearing of bird expert Mark Anderson, despite court orders taken against them.

The hearing also took place without notice, while Anderson was out of the country receiving an international award for his contribution to conservation at the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement in Madagascar last year.

The Kimberley High Court on Friday ordered that Saaiman

should pay the legal costs of the application and the fine for being in contempt of court.

Anderson, along with two of his colleagues, Deputy Director of Conservation Julius Koen and Eric Hermann from Scientific Services, were suspended from the Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation in August last year. Their laptops, cellphones and other equipment were confiscated from them while their offices were locked.

The suspensions were largely viewed by the general public as punishment for their proactive role in urging for the protection of the flamingos at Kamfers Dam, as their survival would be potentially threatened by the Northgate hous-

ing development in Roodepan.

Anderson, however, did so through his association with the Save the Flamingo campaign, in his personal capacity.

The charge sheet ironically did not contain any reference to the Northgate development.

Complaints were laid to the department that the suspended officials were "biased regarding the development" and that they should not act on behalf of the department when reviewing the Northgate environmental impact assessment.

Anderson resigned from the department in September last year to take up a new position as executive director of BirdLife South Africa.