

Land deal involving prime Joburg sites all above board – lawyer

City in legal bid to block transfer of 33 properties

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THE COMPANY that bought 33 tracts of prime land, including the Norscott Koppies and Kingfisher Nature Reserve in Sandton, from the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) and then sold it to two other companies at below market value, says all legal requirements for the land transfers were met.

Peet Viljoen Incorporated in Pretoria confirmed that his firm acted as the transferring attorney for the Johannesburg Property Council to Eildoug Investments, and from Eildoug Investments to Zambrotti.

He said Eildoug procured the rights to purchase and sell the land on the authority of the council.

According to property records, Eildoug Investments is a financial intermediation firm. It bought two prime properties in Fourways from the Johannesburg Municipality in February and in March.

In both cases, the property was then transferred by Eildoug to two other companies, who share directors.

Zambrotti Investments 31 Pty Ltd bought erf 730 for just R2 million, despite the market value being R11m. Zamien Properties bought the second property, erf 721 in Plover Street. The land is valued at about R5m.

Viljoen said the transac-

tions were in line with the JPC's vision for Johannesburg's long-term development.

But Viljoen said Eildoug would seek clarity from the council about the validity of the land deals after evidence of fraud emerged.

Council land may only be sold once there is agreement from full council at a public meeting.

The JPC has said the land transactions had "no force and effect" as they appeared to have been done by people acting as council agents.

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Viljoen said a meeting between Eildoug and the council was on the cards, but a date had yet to be confirmed. "If there was fraud, this is something we were not aware of."

JPC general manager Ashton Broderick yesterday could not confirm if a date had been fixed for a meeting with Eildoug, but said it was inevitable that the parties involved would have to meet to discuss the allegations. "The lawyers and property companies are coming into the fold now that the story is out and their reputations are

on the line."

Viljoen said he had the original title deeds and the deals had been finalised in meetings with the city. "Eildoug wants to talk to the municipality. If the deals were fraudulent, this is not something we could have foreseen."

He could not give more information on the matter.

Broderick said the city's legal team was "on top" of the matter and that "major things will happen soon". He said the JPC knew of the irregular land deals, as transfers were done overnight or on weekends.

Broderick said he hoped people would come forward with information about fraudulent land transactions involving municipal land.

Eildoug has three listed directors – Charlotte Jonck or Charlette Maartens, Wayne Africa and Ledbury Accounting Services.

The Star tried unsuccessfully to contact Africa on several telephone numbers listed for Eildoug. The numbers were either not available or were no longer valid. Eildoug's company is listed as being based in Pretoria. The Star visited the last residential address listed for Africa, in Newlands, but no one was home. It is not clear whether Africa is still a director of the company.

City of Joburg lawyers have applied for interdicts to stop the land transfers.

