



## **MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING**

**Belize City Hall**

**March 17, 2020**

**Present:**

- |                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. His Worship Bernard Wagner | Mayor        |
| 2. Mr. Michael Norales        | Deputy Mayor |
| 3. Mr. Oscar Arnold           | Councilor    |
| 4. Mr. Micah Goodin           | Councilor    |
| 5. Mr. Javier Castellanos     | Councilor    |
| 6. Ms. Delthruide Hylton      | Councilor    |
| 7. Mr. Ryan Elijio            | Councilor    |
| 8. Ms. Aisha Gentle           | Councilor    |
| 9. Mr. Albert Vaughan         | Councilor    |
| 10. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr.     | Councilor    |
| 11. Dr. Candice Pitts         | Councilor    |

**Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt, City Administrator**

**Mr. Rafael Sosa, Manager, Office of the Mayor**

**Attendance by Invitation:**

**Mr. Lawrence Ellis, Waste Management Limited**  
**Ms. Sharlene Rudon, Director of Administration**  
**Ms. Monique Yearwood, Human Resources Manager**  
**Mr. Troy Smith, Valuation Manager**  
**Mrs. Ana Maria Espat, Building Unit Manager**  
**Mr. Melvin Myers, Senior Building Inspector**

**The meeting was called to order at 3:18 p.m. by Mayor Wagner after which he led his Councilors in reciting the Belize National Prayer.**

**1.0 Corrections/Changes to February 18, 2020 Minutes**

- 1.1 Under 4.1.1, add the following sentence: Councilor Pitts also asked about the credibility of the company.
- 1.2 Under 5.1.3, add the following: A two-week deadline was given for the completion.
- 1.3 Under 6.1.3, add the following: A deadline of mid-April was given for the completion.

**2.0 Ratification of February 18, 2020 Minutes**

- 2.1 Councilor Gentle moved for the Minutes to be accepted with corrections/changes. Councilor Arnold seconded.

**3.0 Matters Arising from Minutes**

- 3.1 **Demolition and Relocation of Fort George Tourism Zone Gateway** – Mayor Wagner informed that the demolition has been completed and that the next step will involve the installation of crosswalks and rails. Councilor Pollard Jr. shared that a barrier has been placed to separate the taxi operators and that a drop off area will be created. Councilor Vaughan stated that a pedestrian crossing will be also be installed.
- 3.2 **Parking Lot Agreement Between Belize City Council and Almog Holdings Limited** - The City Administrator informed that Almog Holdings Limited has revised the lease agreement and has included its trade license as an offset. The City Administrator further informed that the Council’s attorney will review the amended agreement in order for the Council to proceed with the parking lot.



4.0 **New Business**

- 4.1 Mayor Wagner expressed condolences to two Council employees and their families who recently lost their children to gun violence. Mayor Wagner shared that he approved \$1000.00 in Social Assistance to the families of Council employees, Desiree Herbert and Bernadita Lewis to defray funeral expenses.
- 4.2 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of a “recommendation letter” for Almog Holdings Limited to acquire access to Adam’s Lane. All Councilors voted in favor except for Councilor Gentle who abstained. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 4.3 **Liquor License Extensions** – Mayor Wagner asked about the Council’s position with respect to the issuance of Liquor License Extensions in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- 4.3.1 The City Administrator stated that the Council earns an average of \$10,000 weekly from the issuance of Liquor License Extensions.
- 4.3.2 Councilor Goodin recommended that the Council continue to grant Liquor License Extensions. Councilor Goodin further recommended that the Council provides advisories to the business establishments as they pertain to social distancing and other protective measures against the COVID-19. Councilor Pitts agreed with Councilor Goodin’s recommendations.
- 4.3.3 Councilor Arnold stated that stipulations should be attached to the Liquor License Extensions that would require business establishments to put in place measures that would serve to protect their customers.
- 4.3.4 Deputy Mayor Norales stated that business establishments should also be required to display health charts that provide relevant information about COVID-19.
- 4.4 Mayor Wagner requested that the Council prepare a press release by March 18, 2020. Mayor Wagner stated that the press release would outline the measures that the Council is taking to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19.

- 4.5 Councilor Pitts stated that the Council should also prepare and issue a statement condemning the alarming rate of Crime & Violence in the City. Mayor Wagner asked Councilor Pitts to prepare said statement.
- 4.6 **Installation of Street Signs** – Mayor Wagner requested an update on the installations of street signs. Councilor Pollard Jr. stated the Council needs a new Paint Shop Coordinator. Councilor Vaughan recommended that the Paint Shop be placed under the Works Department.
- 4.7 **Ratification of BCC’s Audited Financial Statements Ending March 2018 and March 2019** – Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the ratification of the Council’s Audited Financial Statements Ending March 2018 and March 2019. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor – **MOTION PASSED**
- 4.7.1 Councilor Arnold asked if the Auditor will provide the Council with feedback as it pertains to ways in which the Council’s Finance Department could become more efficient.
- 4.8 **Proposal to Outsource Cutting** – Mr. Lawrence Ellis, Waste Management Limited
- Mr. Ellis shared that he had owned and operated Belize Maintenance Limited (**BML**) for a period of eleven years. Mr. Ellis stated that had presented a proposal to Mayor Wagner that would see the Council reinstating its contract with the former Belize Maintenance Limited now referred to as Waste Management Limited. Mr. Ellis shared that the scope of works, under the contract, would be reduced to grass cutting, the removal of orange garbage bags, and the maintenance of parks and cemeteries. Mr. Ellis stated that Waste Management Limited would take on fifty (50) of the Council’s Sanitation Employees. Mr. Ellis explained that the grass cutting would be carried out on a three-week rotation at a weekly cost of \$28,000.
- 4.8.1 Mayor Wagner asked Mr. Ellis about the formula he employed to arrive at the weekly cost of \$28,000. Mr. Ellis stated that he is proposing a ten-year contract and that the complement of fifty Sanitation employees would see an annual cost of \$600,000.

4.8.2 The City Administrator shared that the draft contract, submitted by Mr. Ellis, raises several concerns.

4.8.3 Mayor Wagner informed Mr. Ellis that the Council would have to consider the proposal at a later date.

### 5.0 City Administrator's Report

- HR Department – Total New Hires: 143 (31%)
- CWU Membership – 207 (up from 41% to 46% general staff)

#### Hires by Constituency:

**Albert: 8, Belize Rural Central: 3, Caribbean Shores: 14, Collet: 7, Fort George: 11, Freetown: 19, Lake Independence: 28, Mesopotamia: 6, Port Loyola: 18, Queen's Square: 3**

#### COVID-19 Response:

**Phase 1:** Supplies Procurement, Staff Sensitization, Public Education

**Phase 2:** Active Monitoring, Distribution of Supplies,

**Phase 3:** Policy Execution, Support & Recovery

- 1200 N-95 Masks procured.
- 1000 surgical masks procured.

**Policy Decisions:** employees/customers presenting flu-like symptoms, Council events & initiatives, financial outlays (priorities)

**Financial Update (January & February 2020)**

**Property Taxes:**

January 2019 (\$358,844), January 2020 (\$317,539), Variance: \$37,305  
February 2019 (\$953,252), February 2020 (\$1,017,441), Variance: \$64,189

**Legal Matters:**

- Glenn Leslie – Supreme Court
- WAVE Radio/Alberto August – Notice of Defamation
- CWU Pre-mediation – Tessa Ogaldez
- Outstanding Trade License – Apex Events Services
- Outstanding Lease Payments – Belize Restaurant Group/Little Boar House

6.0 **Presentation on Standardization of Allowances and NEO People** – Ms. Sharlene Rudon, Director of Administration and Ms. Monique Yearwood, HR Manager

6.1 Councilor Vaughan stated that at the previous Caucus Meeting held on February 18, 2020, the Council had directed the HR Department to apply staff allowances across the board. Councilor Vaughan asked why it was that the Council's directive was not followed.

6.2 Mayor Wagner requested of the Director of Administration and the HR Manager that they redo the standardization exercise following the directive that was previously given by the Council.

6.3 The HR Manager shared that the HR Department recently commenced the utilization of the cloud-based human resources management system known as NEO People. The HR Manager stated that the Council's Managers have received relevant training in the use of the platform.

7.0 **Proposed Lease Rates for Michael Finnegan Market** – Mr. Troy Smith, Valuation Manager

7.1 The Valuation Manager informed that there are currently seventy-five (75) booths at the Michael Finnegan Market. The Valuation Manager shared that the Council earns some \$20,000 plus from the rental of the booths.

7.1.1 The Valuation Manager shared that the Valuation Department and the Planning Department, with the assistance of the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS) Expert, had undertaken a mapping exercise at the Michael Finnegan Market. The Valuation Manager shared the details of the mapping exercise and a proposal to increase the rental fees at the Michael Finnegan Market by twenty-five (25) percent.

7.1.2 Mayor Wagner informed the Valuation Manager that he would review the proposal in more detail after which he will discuss it individually with his Councilors. Mayor Wagner commended the team comprising the Valuation Department, the Planning Department and the GIS Expert for all the work they put into developing the proposal.

8.0 **Submissions to Building Unit**

- Request from Mr. Charles Gillett, AAA Security to place shipping containers over canal, located between Pound Yard Bridge and King Street Bridge – **DENIED**
- Requests from Noe Dauphin to occupy reserves located on Freetown Road (across from US Imports and Mahogany Street (entrance of St. Luke's Methodist School) respectively – **DENIED**
- Request from Rosita & Vildo Rivero to replace timber windows & doors with hurricane shutter windows & doors and to demolish adjoining wall at booths #51 & #52 at the Michael Finnegan Market (**NO OFFSET**) – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Roxy Requena and Elmer Rios to replace timber windows & doors with hurricane shutter windows & doors and to demolish adjoining wall at booths #22 & #23 at the Michael Finnegan Market (**NO OFFSET**) – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Consuelo Estrada to install a sliding glass window at booths #35 & #38 at the Michael Finnegan Market– **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Yolanda Romero to attach roof to booth #44 at the Michael Finnegan Market – **MOTION PASSED**

- Request from Sandra Martinez, Sandrita Jucitos Mix to continue occupying reserve, located on Youth for the Future Drive (opposite Traffic Department) for the purpose of selling fruit juices – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Maria Barrientos to occupy portion of reserve, located at approach of Pound Yard Bridge, for the purpose of selling used clothes – **DENIED**
- Request from Ms. Reina Ochoa to replace timber windows with hurricane shutter windows for booth #17 at the Michael Finnegan Market – **MOTION PASSED**

Other Requests:

- Request from Mr. Kurtlan Young to Lease Kiosk at DIGI Park – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Universal Hardware Limited and Caribbean Motors Limited to Adopt Medians located between Philip Goldson Highway and Chetumal Street and between the Benny's Roundabout and fifth roundabout on the Philip Goldson Highway respectively – **MOTION PASSED**

**9.0 Other Business**

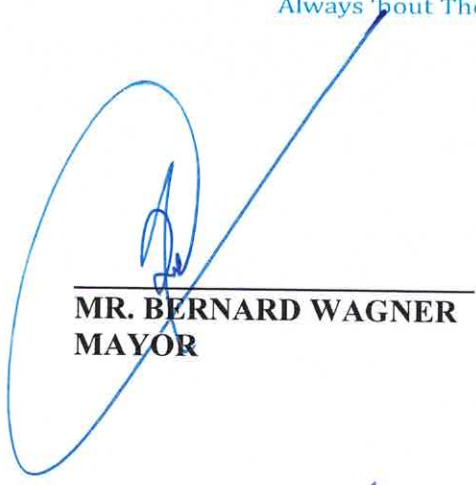
- 9.1 Councilor Pollard Jr. made an appeal for the Council to discontinue the policy that prohibits drivers from renewing their licenses as a consequence of them owing property taxes.
- 9.2 The City Administrator informed that in the months of January and February 2020, the revenue earned from driver licenses increased notwithstanding the block on those customers who owe property taxes. The City Administrator stated that she foresees a significant decline in property tax revenue.
- 9.3 It was decided that the policy that blocks drivers from renewing their licenses would be discontinued forthwith.
- 9.4 Councilor Goodin raised the matter of the Council considering financial assistance for Three Belizean students who are currently studying at the University of Technology (UTech) in Jamaica. It was decided that the Council would vote round-robin.



**10.0 Adjournment**

- 10.1 Councilor Elijio moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Councilor Gentle seconded. The meeting ended at 7:43 p.m.





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**MR. BERNARD WAGNER**  
**MAYOR**



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**MRS. STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT**  
**CITY ADMINISTRATOR**