

**MINUTES of VIRTUAL CAUCUS MEETING**

Belize City Hall  
August 27, 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. Delthrude 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

The meeting was called to order at 10:13 a.m. by Mayor Wagner after which he led his Councilors in reciting the Belize National Prayer.

**1.0 Corrections to July 21, 2020 Minutes**

- 1.1 Item 7.1 should read as follows: *Elevator Shaft – Water seeps in underneath and has to be pumped out regularly.*

**2.0 Ratification of July 21, 2020 Minutes**

- 2.1 Councilor Hylton moved for the Minutes to be accepted with correction. Councilor Castellanos seconded.

**3.0 Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Under Item 3.7, Deputy Mayor Norales shared that he spoke with Mr. Donald Sampson of Seremei LLC and was informed that the Council's heavy-duty equipment should arrive in Mexico in the first week of September. Deputy Mayor Norales informed that the heavy-duty equipment will arrive in Belize a week thereafter.

- 3.2 Under Item 3.8, Councilor Vaughan stated that the City Engineer has provided a report on current street infrastructure works.

**4.0 Update on Municipal Court**

- 4.1 The City Administrator reported that the electrical works are being carried out by the Council's two licensed electricians. The City Administrator stated that the electrical works are taking longer than expected.

- 4.1.1 The City Administrator stated that the exterior works to the old City Hall building is extensive due to structural cracks.

- 4.1.2 The City Administrator shared that the MIS Department is completing the computer wiring.

**5.0 Renewal of Contract for Ranger Security & Courier Services**

- 5.1 The City Administrator informed that the new contract is being drafted and will be ready within a week.

**6.0 Mayor's Matters/Motions**

**6.1 Proposed Settlement in Civil Appeal No. 18 of 2019 – The Mayor of Belize City/  
Belize City Council v Candice Miller**

6.1.1 Mayor Wagner informed that the Council is in receipt of a proposed settlement, by Mrs. Candice Miller, in the amount of \$367,948.86. Mayor Wagner explained that the Council would be required to make a monthly payment of \$10,000 until the judgment is paid in full. Mayor Wagner shared that the Council's legal team is proposing a counter-offer of \$200,000 with monthly instalments of \$10,000.

6.1.2 Councilor Castellanos expressed that the Council should work towards the best possible offer.

6.1.3 Councilor Vaughan stated that the Council should go with the recommendation of its legal team.

6.1.4 Councilor Arnold asked if the Council's legal team provided any information as to why it is recommending a counter-offer.

6.1.5 The City Administrator stated that Candice Miller's attorneys contacted the Council with proposed settlement. The City Administrator shared that the claimant is taking into consideration the outcome of the General Elections.

6.1.6 Councilor Pollard Jr. recommended that the Council stick with its decision to appeal the judgment that was handed down in October of 2019.

6.1.7 Deputy Mayor Norales suggested that the Council's counter-offer should be equivalent to a year's salary for Candice Miller. Councilor Gentle agreed with Deputy Mayor Norales' suggestion.

6.1.8 Councilor Hylton expressed her support for a counter-offer of \$150,000.

- 6.1.9 Councilor Elijio stated that he will support whatever final decision that the Council makes. Councilor Castellanos agreed with Councilor Elijio.
- 6.1.10 Mayor Wagner stated that he will direct the City Administrator to communicate to the Council's legal team its decision to reduce the counter-offer to \$150,000. Mayor Wagner stated that if the claimant refuses the Council's counter-offer, the Council would move ahead with its appeal.
- 7.0 **Sale of 2008 Volvo BL60 4 x 4 Backhoe (condemned) to GEL Quarry Company Limited**
- 7.1 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of the sale of Council backhoe (condemned) to GEL Quarry Company Limited at the cost of \$14,000. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**
- 8.0 **Cleaning Up of System – Unpaid Traffic Violation Tickets**
- 8.1 Mayor Wagner stated that since 2008, there has not been good accountability in respect of the payment of unpaid traffic tickets. Mayor Wagner informed that the Traffic Department has in excess of \$3 MIL in traffic ticket receivables.
- 8.1.1 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council will submit a request to the Ministry of Local Government for a write-off of the \$3 MIL in receivables that are uncollectable for the period 2008 – 2018.
- 8.1.2 Mayor Wagner remarked that the issue of unpaid traffic tickets is due to the poor leadership and management of the previous Council. Mayor Wagner shared that there exists a similar situation with unpaid property taxes that are recorded on the Council's books as receivables.

8.1.3 Mayor Wagner stated that a team will be assembled and charged with the cleaning up of the traffic ticket system. The team will comprise the City Administrator, the Audit Manager, the MIS Manager and the Traffic Administrative Manager. Councilor Arnold recommended that the Communications Manager be a part of the team.

8.1.4 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the assembling of a committee to clean up the system for unpaid traffic traffic tickets. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

**9.0 Resolution to Authorize Mayor to Allocate Funding (\$20,000) for Reconstruction of House for Belize City Resident**

9.1 Mayor Wagner shared that he spoke with Mr. Philip Osborne of Caribbean Holdings Limited. Mayor Wagner further shared that Mr. Osborne informed him that Caribbean Holdings Limited will provide the building materials for the reconstruction project.

9.1.1 Councilor Elijio commended Mayor Wagner for undertaking the reconstruction of house for resident, Ms. Oriemae Marie Evans.

9.1.2 Councilor Pitts expressed her support for the home reconstruction.

9.1.3 Councilor Arnold commended Mayor Wagner for eliciting support and assistance from the private sector.

9.1.4 Mayor Wagner stated that many City residents are living in deplorable housing conditions.

9.1.5 Councilor Vaughan stated that the Ministry of Human Development (Social Services) should be called out for neglecting the deplorable living conditions of residents.

9.1.6 Councilor Pollard Jr. shared about two families in the Queen's Square Constituency who are currently living in deplorable conditions. Councilor Pollard Jr. recommended that the Council build a stockpile of building materials.

9.1.7 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of an allocation of \$20,000 for the reconstruction of home for resident, Ms. Oriemae Marie Evans. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

## **10.0 Council's Financial Obligations**

10.1 Mayor Wagner impressed upon his Councilors the need for them to be mindful of the Council's financial obligations as they relate to operational expenses and salaries.

10.1.1 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council's revenues are still not where they used to be.

10.1.2 Mayor Wagner urged his Councilors to build relationships with the business community.

## **11.0 Proposal for Food Pantry**

11.1 Mayor Wagner informed that he received a proposal from the Party Chairman for a City-wide food pantry distribution.

11.1.1 Mayor Wagner expressed that he took issue with the funding and Internet components of the proposal.

11.1.2 Councilor Vaughan stated that the proposal should have been submitted through the Chairman of the Eastern Caucus. Councilor Vaughan recommended that Councilors review the proposal and determine the extent to which the Council could provide support.

11.1.3 Mayor Wagner stated that the food pantry would be distributed by the Standard Bearers/Area Representatives and not the Councilors.

11.1.4 It was agreed that the Chairman of the Eastern Caucus would meet with the Party Chairman to review and discuss the proposal.

## **12.0 Reconstitution of Disciplinary Committee (DC)**

12.1 Councilor Vaughan informed that the current composition of the Disciplinary Committee (DC) includes the City Administrator, a Councilor, the Director of Administration, the Human Resources Manager, the Revenue Manager and the Council's Legal Advisor.

12.1.1 Councilor Vaughan proposed that a second Councilor be added to the DC and that either the Director of Administration or the Human Resources Manager should become an ex-officio member.

12.1.2 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the reconstitution of the Disciplinary Committee (DC). **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

## **13.0 Approval of Infrastructure Works Contracts**

13.1 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of infrastructure works contracts with GEL Quarry Limited for Police Street (second phase), Apollo Street, Armadillo Street, Caesar Ridge Road, Kraal Road, Police Street, Sylvia Flores Street and Yvette Massiah Street. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

## **14.0 City Administrator's Report**

14.1 The City Administrator reported that the Traffic Department's revenues declined by 11% in all areas.

14.2 The City Administrator stated that the Council collected 43% less and spent 57% More. The City Administrator shared that the Council has been using the Municipal Bond and its overdraft facility to bridge the financial gap.

- 14.3 The City Administrator reported that the Council's payment obligation to Belize Waste Control Limited (BWCL) stands at seven weeks during the current low season.
- 14.4 The City Administrator stated that, going forward, the Council needs to develop a two-month financial plan.
- 14.5 Councilor Vaughan requested that the Council considers not cutting the Councilor's stipend. Councilor Vaughan stated that he supports a cut in allowances.
- 14.6 Councilor Vaughan stressed the need for the Council's Enforcement Unit to step up its efforts. The City Administrator stated that efforts are being made to ramp up the Council's enforcement.
- 14.7 The City Administrator stated that 40% of the Council's staff is currently on vacation leave. The City Administrator informed that this number includes non-essential employees and employees who work in Departments that don't have much happening right now.

#### **15.0 Submissions to Building Unit**

- Request from Belize Dry Cleaners to rejuvenate sidewalks – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Mr. George Orellano, Belize Marine & Mooring Services Ltd. to construct a concrete breakwater in front of existing pier – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Delfina Cowo, Michael Finnegan Market to construct security gate – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Reina Ochoa, Michael Finnegan Market to replace marley floor with tiles and to seal a hole in the wall - **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Mrs. Ana Maria-Espat for revision of rates for advertisements/billboards on public land – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Roxy Requena, Michael Finnegan Market to construct wooden and sink structure – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Jacqueline Usher, Michael Finnegan Market to construct an open shed – **MOTION PASSED (NO OFFSET)**



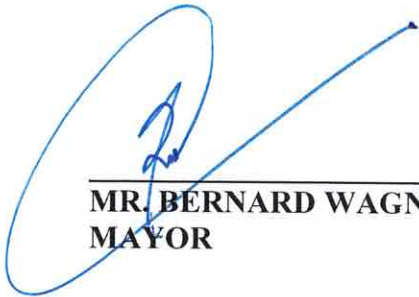
- Request from Edwin Quijano, Michael Finnegan Market to replace existing timber door and window with hurricane shutter window and door – **MOTION PASSED (NO OFFSET)**
- Request from Ying Hui Zhen to concrete portion of reserve for the purpose of placing outdoor planters – **MOTION PASSED**

#### **16.0 Other Business**

- 16.1 Councilor Vaughan provided a report on the covering of manholes on Dean Street and Water Lane.
- 16.2 Councilor Vaughan asked about the status of the project proposal that was submitted by Councilor Castellanos.
- 16.3 The City Administrator reported that there exists no evidence that the open lot, adjacent to the Belize City Swing Bridge, is gazetted for a fire hydrant.
- 16.4 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of proposal for construction of restaurant and park at open lot adjacent to Belize City Swing Bridge. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

#### **17.0 Adjournment**

- 17.1 Councilor Gentle moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Councilor Hylton seconded. The meeting adjourned at 1:52 p.m.



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



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