

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

10:00 a.m.

May 3rd, 2023

Present:

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| 1. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr. | Deputy Mayor |
| 2. Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh | Councillor |
| 3. Ms. Kaya Cattouse | Councillor |
| 4. Mr. Michael Novelo | Councillor |
| 5. Mr. Edmund Kwan | Councillor |
| 6. Mr. Javier Castellanos | Councillor |
| 7. Ms. Deannie Requena | Councillor |
| 8. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | Councillor |
| 9. Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt | City Administrator |
| 10. Ms. Carissa Casanova | Administrative Manager, OFM |

Absent with Reason:

- | | |
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| 1. Mr. Bernard Wagner | Mayor |
| 2. Mr. Albert Vaughan | Councilor |
| 3. Mr. Micah Goodin | Councilor |

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1.0 Belize National Prayer

Deputy Mayor Pollard began the meeting by leading all who were present in reciting the National Prayer of Belize.

2.0 Welcome Remarks

2.1 Deputy Pollard welcomed all present and stated that after the postponement of the meeting scheduled in the previous week, the work of the Council must move forward.

2.2 Deputy Pollard acknowledged the absence (with reason) of Councillors Goodin and Vaughan and went on to thank the Councillors present for taking the time to attend the meeting. He further explained that Council meetings are really where the business of why the Council was elected takes place.

2.3 The Deputy then went on to express sentiments of support to Councillor Vaughan who has been dealing with a tragedy. He extended thoughts and prayers to Councillor Vaughan and his family, the family of the deceased, and the Holy Redeemer Credit Union which is a friend of the Council. Deputy Pollard stated that things happen that are beyond our control, but that there is a need to move forward. He also encouraged those present to lend support to Councillor Vaughan however they can.

2.4 Deputy Pollard reminded the Councillors to be cognizant of the times that are approaching and encouraged the Councillors to ensure that they leave behind a legacy based on the work that they are doing. He further stated that the Council is doing a tremendous job in ensuring that the mandate is being carried out responsibly, despite constraints.

2.5 Deputy Pollard notified the Councillors that he often hears from residents and the community about the good work that is being done and added that there are still opportunities for them to do more if they work together.

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2.6 Deputy Pollard advised each Councillor that they should liaise with their respective managers, ask for updates, and check to ensure that everything is running smoothly. He continued to advise the Councillors to work with the same vigor that they have been and to liaise with the City Administrator. He expressed that updates and communication are very important and further stated that it is a critical time for the Council as scrutiny is being received from all angles.

2.7 Deputy Pollard closed by explaining that Councillors should be making efforts to ensure that they are all on the same page, he stressed that the job is not a solo act, but that they should all be ensuring that they work together to get the job done.

3.0 Ratification of the March 28th, 2023 Regular Council Meeting

3.1 Correction to (4.4) of the regular meeting minutes. Inclusion of the following statement, “Although these were not provided to the Council’s building Unit,”.

3.2 Correction to (6.9) of regular meeting minutes. Inclusion of “There were discrepancies that prompted the change in policy.”

3.3 Correction to (10.4) of regular meeting minutes. Change to “Council successfully applied for the connection of electricity”.

3.4 Correction to (10.2) of regular meeting minutes. Change to “Councillor Pipersburgh then stated that she is preparing to provide a three (3) month sign language course that will be available to the general public.”

3.5 Moved for the March 28th, 2023 regular meeting minutes to be ratified. Seconded by Councillor Kwan. All present agreed to have the meeting minutes accepted as presented.



4.0 Matters Arising from Minutes

4.1 The City Administrator noted that several meetings were scheduled with the former director of the Central Building Authority (CBA), Mr. Seremei Cayetano to discuss the way forward for the Council's planning department, and subsequently, members of the CBA have returned to the Council's building unit and have started to train staff to use the approved forms, and are meeting with IT to implement online submission of building plans. The City Administrator stated that Mr. Evondale Moody, Chief Engineer at the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) is now the acting Director of the CBA. She reassured the Council that the intention is to recertify the building unit following the training, and noted that she was to attend a meeting with Mr. Moody, but had to reschedule due to the caucus meeting.

4.2 Deputy Pollard informed those present that the grader being procured by the Council should be at the port, and also shared that in addition to what was passed in Caucus, a formal contract was structured, which gives an added layer of protection to the Council. He noted that the agreement has been signed by the vendor and the City Administrator, and added that a 25% payment is due and will be forwarded to the vendor as soon as possible. Deputy Pollard reassured those present that the grader should be at the works compound by next week up and running, where the last portion of the payment will be transferred, following which, the transfer of title will be completed.

4.3 Councillor Novelo stated that he is still trying to make progress on the median at the Lord Ridge Cemetery. He explained that he has tried to work through the proper channels, by contacting the City Engineer to arrange a meeting with MIDH and City Planner, but to date, this has not been done. He advised that he would be more aggressive as this initiative needs to be finished before the end of the term.

4.4 The City Administrator advised that this matter will be discussed in her pending meeting with the Chief Engineer.

4.5 Councillor Novelo noted that he had no knowledge of the meeting and requested to know why he had not been informed.

4.6 The City Administrator explained that she had a pending meeting to discuss several matters with Mr. Moody and that not informing Councillor Novelo of the meeting was not deliberate.

4.7 In an effort not to prolong the discussion, Deputy Pollard cited the earlier discussion on the importance of maintaining communication.

4.8 Deputy Pollard recommended that a meeting be held between Councillor Novelo, the City Administrator, and the City Engineer and Planner to review the Council's view on the matter of the Lord Ridge Cemetery so that those meeting with the Chief Engineer can go into the meeting on the same page.

4.9 Councillor Castellanos requested an update on the pending speed bump for Pitts Alley. He was advised that traffic-related matters are to be reviewed by the Traffic Management Committee which has not met since the last caucus meeting.

4.10 Deputy Pollard advised Councillor Castellanos to request that Councillor Vaughan and the Traffic Management Committee address the matter with some expediency.

5.0 Announcements by the Deputy Mayor

5.1 No matters were tabled.

6.0 Notices

6.1 Councillor Castellanos requested to know what progress has been made with the Handyman Program.

6.2 The City Administrator advised that the LED Manager met with the principal of Tubal Trade and Vocational Institute, however, no update has been received since the meeting. The Councillor was assured that work is being done to get the program underway.

6.3 Councillor Castellanos then requested that derelict vehicles in the Pickstock area be identified, stickered and then removed.

6.4 The City Administrator noted that the derelict vehicles initiative is ongoing, but has waned a little. The City Administrator further explained that the Council has been challenged in finding a buyer willing to pay for the derelict vehicles currently on the Works Compound as the remaining vehicles are shells. She added that the tagging of derelict vehicles is an ongoing process.

6.5 Deputy Mayor Pollard, acknowledged that Councillor Castellanos would like to start the derelict vehicles campaign in Pickstock, and asked that the team then go back to Faber's Rd., once this is done. He explained that in the mornings especially, the derelict vehicles on the street hold up traffic. There is oil on the sidewalk, and in his opinion, the Council has exhausted consultations and warnings to the owner of the junkyard.

6.7 Deputy Pollard went on to say that the issue of the derelict vehicles on Faber's Rd. is not for a lack of effort on the Council's part, and the staff can't be blamed because they went out and have taken measures to reduce vehicles. He further stated that the matter has now become a traffic issue and suggested that the curbs in the area be painted red, as a solution.

6.8 Councillor Novelo explained that during one operation, in the Buttonwood Bay area, two tow trucks were used, with one being parked at each end of the street they were working on. He added that police officers were present to ensure the safety of those carrying out the operations, and suggested that the same method might be useful on Faber's Rd.

6.9 Councillor Castellanos suggested that perhaps an official policy could be formulated by the attorney on how to address the matter.

6.10 The City Administrator advised the Council that the junkyard is operating without a trade license, and the proprietor has no intention of stopping and doesn't seem to be afraid of the Council.

6.11 The City Administrator further advised that Council will be more aggressive as the proprietor continues to relocate the vehicles to 14 miles, but admitted that the process has been slow.

6.12 Deputy Pollard stated that it doesn't appear that vehicles are being moved, but that more are being added, and suggested that perhaps the Council can help him move the vehicles.

6.13 Councillor Pipersburgh notified all present that she will be out of the country from the 27th of May until the 3rd of June.

6.14 Deputy Mayor Pollard wished Councillor Pipersburgh safe travels.

7.0 Questions

7.1 Councillor Pipersburgh asked if there were any updates to be provided on the status of the parks in Port Loyola and Lake Independence.

7.2 The City Administrator explained that there was no update on the park in the Port Loyola Area. With respect to the park in Lake Independence, the City Planner has presented the design, and the approved contractor is currently working on an estimate.

7.3 Deputy Mayor Pollard noted that Council had approved the rehabilitation of two streets, namely Joy, and the crescent where BFLA is located. He indicated that there is a development project that investors are hoping to get off the ground and he would like to get the area upgraded as was requested.

7.4 Deputy Pollard advised that a contractor has been contacted, however, other options are being explored. He asked if another motion would need to be brought to caucus if there are any changes.

7.5 The City Administrator indicated that no new motion would be required and inquired about the type of work that was needed on the street.

7.6 Deputy Pollard explained that the street would just require hardcore material.

7.7 The City Administrator advised that the Works Department could handle the work in-house and added that she would speak to the City Engineer and the Works Manager.

7.8 Deputy Pollard then asked the City Administrator to provide an update on a street that had been requested to be addressed by the Honourable Gilroy Usher.

7.9 The City Administrator advised that she would provide a reminder to the team Tuesday.

8.0 Petitions

8.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard shared a petition to address the number of tickets being issued to drivers on the Phillip Goldson Highway. He suggested that a discussion be held with the Enforcement Manager about providing consideration to motorists given the construction taking place on the highway. Deputy Pollard emphasized the increased wait time because of the construction and advised that motorists are being ticketed for using the shoulder.



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8.2 Councillor Cattouse stated that those being ticketed deserve the tickets because there are cones in place. Tickets are being issued to people who are impatient and who try to squeeze in front of others instead of waiting their turn. Cones are in place, and there is a sign that says “construction ahead”. She advised that the officers should ensure that the tickets being issued are legitimate.

8.3 The City Administrator advised that the tickets being issued are for failure to stay in one lane under the instruction of the officer.

8.5 The City Administrator further added that the Council is providing enforcement officers on the highways in the morning to manage the flow of traffic, and reminded those present that highways are not the Council’s responsibility, but are the responsibility of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH). She stated that the Council could request that MIDH have the contractor working on the highway, install the sign.

8.6 Councillor Castellanos asked if the Council’s enforcement officers have the authority to issue tickets on the highway.

8.7 The City Administrator assured the Councillor that they do have the authority to issue tickets, but the Council can’t put up a sign without approval from MIDH.

9.0 Presentation of Reports from Councillors

9.1 Councillor Castellanos reported that the market committee met on the 26th of April, 2023 with Mr Herrera, a market vendor, who has requested to install a folding awning on his stall. Councillor Castellanos further explained that the awning is retractable and that Mr Herrera is asking for the Council to honour the request, at his (Herrera’s) expense. The awning would be placed outside booths 59 and 59 A. Councillor Castellanos further reported that the committee had no objection, therefore the request was sent to the planning department.

9.2 The City Administrator requested that Councillor Castellanos advise those present on who the members of the market committee are.

9.3 Councillor Castellanos indicated that the members of the Market Committee are the Market Manager, another Councillor and himself.

9.4 The City Administrator advised that the Finance Director should be included.

9.5 Deputy Mayor Pollard requested that Councillor Castellanos ensure that all members of the committee are notified, with adequate notice, when meetings of the committee will be held.

9.6 Councillor Pipersburgh indicated that she had no current park updates to report.

9.7 Councillor Requena indicated that she had no updates to report.

9.8 Councillor Kwan indicated that he had no updates to report.

9.9 Councillor Novelo reported that as previously discussed, he is still working on the median at the Cemetery. He then extended an invitation to the Councillors, asking them to inform him of any complaints being received in respect of the cemetery or to forward any suggestions they may have. He explained that the dry season would be the perfect time to address any issues.

9.10 Councillor Novelo further reported that he is planning to do something special for Cemetery employees with extensive service to the Council. He expressed that while other employees of the Council have been highlighted for their years of service to the Council, those in the Cemetery Department have been left out.

9.11 Councillor Novelo stated that he will sit and plan with the Cemetery manager to do something as a token of appreciation for the Cemetery Staff, he added that not all members of staff do as they are supposed to, but the majority do.

9.12 Deputy Mayor Pollard asked Councillor Novelo to sit with the City Administrator and added that Councillor Novelo knows what the employees would like. He also suggested that the employees of the Public Health & Cemetery Department may want to be recognized publicly for their efforts.

9.13 Councillor Novelo indicated that last year the staff went on a trip to the Free Zone but has asked to go to the Cayes this year. Councillor Novelo added that perhaps they could be presented with a plaque as well.

9.14 The City Administrator indicated that Cemetery employee, Mr. Paul Esquilliano, has been highlighted for his services to the Council on the Facebook page.

9.15 Councillor Cattouse indicated that she did not have any updates to share.

9.16 Councillor Hamilton did not have any updates to share.

9.17 Deputy Mayor Pollard reported that he would be highlighting the ongoing works program with the various area representatives. He indicated that this is different from the LIU Program and stated that he would especially like to highlight the cleaning crews working in the Port Loyola area, as they are doing an excellent job.



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9.18 Deputy Mayor Pollard explained that there are two crews working in the Port Loyola area, who are out working every day regardless of the heat, and added that he commends them on a daily basis. Deputy Mayor Pollard further stated that he has observed them chopping, and pulling weeds. He did note, however, that he had to make a complaint that dirt has been piling up at the lane, and added that the Council's team needs to come around more often to gather the debris.

9.19 Deputy Mayor Pollard then took the opportunity to commend Honourable Gilroy Usher, as the area representative, for the work that his clean-up teams have been doing.

9.20 Deputy Mayor Pollard then reported on the extensive infrastructure works being conducted within the city, both in-house and with the assistance of external contractors. He noted that Teacher's Street was being addressed.

9.21 Deputy Mayor Pollard further explained that the Works Manager and his team are in Belama, and added that the plan is to address three areas within Belama and then quickly move to other areas of the City. He noted that you can now drive on Albert Hoy Ave. and that there were concerns and frustrations from residents about both sides of the street being blocked.

9.22 Deputy Mayor Pollard noted that the City Administrator urged that proper planning goes into the execution of these projects. He further added that if this is done, then issues like these can be curbed, and fewer complaints from residents would be a reflection on the work of the Council.

9.23 Deputy Mayor Pollard then explained that people are now flowing right through Albert Hoy, and added that the intersection is now being addressed. He stated that preparations are being made, and the intersection is expected to be paved.



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9.24 Deputy then reported that work should commence on Maurice Bishop St. between this week and next, as the works team is getting ready for tarring. He noted that most complaints come from this area, and stated that once the street is paved this will be a huge relief for the residents.

9.25 Deputy Mayor Pollard indicated that the work is being done simultaneously with TV Ramos, and added that the Area Representative will be pleased when they see the work that is being done.

9.26 Deputy Mayor Pollard explained that the plan is to break a portion of the street between the Phillip Goldson Highway and TV Ramos St, and then compact the street with hardcore material just for the time being. He added that even though the Council did not cause the problem, it would be irresponsible for them to leave it in the same condition. He explained that the same was done on Apollo St., and it is holding up nicely.

9.27 Deputy Pollard explained that the Works Manager believes that TV Ramos can hold up for a little while with the compacted material, to alleviate concerns from those having to drive through the salt water, and those who have to walk through it.

9.28 The City Administrator indicated that the City Engineer was tasked to liaise with the Chief Engineer to discuss the best solution to address TV Ramos St. She noted that at the last street works meeting, the City Engineer and the Works Manger had not agreed on what would be the best solution to the issue.

9.29 The City Administrator further indicated that the Council has committed to addressing the matter before leaving the area.

9.30 Deputy Pollard noted that there has still not been any confirmation on the extent of the plan that Cabinet has for MIDH works being done in the City, but nonetheless, commended the works that have been done so far.



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9.31 Deputy Mayor Pollard reported on the complaints of dust being received, which is to be expected since we are still in the dry season. He then requested that the water truck be dispatched regularly to address the areas of concern.

9.32 Deputy Pollard also reported that works on Nargusta Street have started and should be completed in the next two weeks. He then urged Councillors to stay on the ground and listen to the residents. We can't help everyone, but some requests might be grading or wetting the street. He further advised the Councillors to communicate with each other and encouraged them to share information they receive from the residents and reach out to the respective Councillors to get relevant information out.

10. Request for leave to move the adjournment of the Council on definite matter of urgent public importance.

10.1 No matters were tabled.

11.0 Motions by Councillors

11.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard moved a motion to authorize an amendment to the Contract for GEL QUARRY CO. LTD, for the upgrading of the Holy Emmanuel Area in Lake Independence due to an increase in the scope of work. Seconded by Novelo. **MOTION PASSED**

11.2 Deputy Mayor Pollard moved a motion to approve payment to GEL Quarry Company Ltd. for rehabilitative works done on streets adjacent to Apollo Street in the Belama Area. Seconded by Councillor Pipersburgh. **MOTION PASSED**



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11.3 Deputy Mayor Pollard, expressed that it's important for those in the area to support Councillor Vaughan's proactive decision. He noted that Apollo Street was a failed IDB Project, and stated that the former government should take the blame. He added that the Council should do better than what was done before. Deputy Pollard also shared that GEL didn't stop at Apollo St. but went on to the side street as well.

11.4 Deputy Pollard stated that it was a very good initiative, and added that sometimes bureaucracy needs to be cut out in urgent matters. He expressed that the feedback from the residents can't compare to the dollar figure as the work is invaluable.

11.5 Deputy Mayor moved for the Belize City Council to approve The reduction of the coupon rate by 75 basis points on the Series IV Municipal Paper that is available of up to an aggregate principal sum of Three Hundred Fifty Thousand Belize Dollars (BZ\$350,000.00) and a coupon rate of 3.75 % on the issuance of any new 1-Year Belize City Council Municipal Papers; until otherwise approved. **MOTION PASSED**

11.6 The Deputy Mayor explained that Mayor Wagner has been relentless in his efforts to get the retail market up and running and to get new investments into the Council at attractive rates and fairer terms for the Council. He explained that the Council is moving away from attracting institutional investors as this poses a bigger risk when the institutions are ready to call in their investment. The fiscal agent recommends that when looking at the three issues, they all have the same coupon rate, so the proposal is to lower the rate of the shorter-term issue and keep the longer term at 4.5 %. The motion was seconded by Councillor Pipersburgh.

11.7 Deputy Mayor Pollard moved for a motion to construct a sidewalk, on St. Joseph Street between St. Thomas Street and Princess Margaret Dr. **MOTION PASSED**

11.8 Deputy Pollard explained that traffic lights have been installed in the area and it is a school zone. He also added that the intersection has been retrofitted with pedestrian signs and signals. The motion was seconded by Councillor Kwan.

11.9 Councillor Pipersburgh inquired if additional estimates had been received from other contractors to carry out the work.

11.10 Deputy Pollard explained that the additional estimate was not from external contractors, but was an in-house estimate.

11.11 The works department is swamped with work in other areas, and this is time sensitive. Deputy Pollard explained that there was a delay with the installation of the lights and the concreting of the street. He further explained that the works department cannot leave the work that they are doing in Belama to address the sidewalks.

11.12 Deputy Pollard cited that this contractor was used to build the sidewalk on Holy Emmanuel and that is how contact was made. He assured the Council that the pricing was fair.

11.13 Councillor Kwan voiced his support for the motion because it is about the safety of our children and stated that the price is reasonable given the urgency.

11.14 Councillor Castellanos moved for a motion for the assistance of the Council in a feeding program for the elderly. The motion was seconded by Councillor Kwan.
MOTION DEFERRED

11.15 Deputy Pollard advised Councillor Castellanos that this matter required further discussion and added that Mayor Wagner had indicated a desire to be consulted on the matter. He further advised that the matter should be deferred to a later date.

11.16 Councillor Castellanos then raised some concerns regarding the process of approval for a business to receive a trade license and an expansion to their current vending location.

11.17 Councillor Castellanos was advised by his colleagues of the proper procedures and stated that once the relevant information had been received and all is in order, there should be no issue with the request being approved.

12.0 New Business

12.1 No matters tabled.

13. Submissions from the Building Unit

13.1 A request was submitted by Mr. Moses Sulph for the Council to construct a 12x12' structure for the purpose of vending new and used items at the corner of Mahogany St. and Western Ave. **MOTION PASSED**

13.2 Councillor Requena advised that the Council get a letter from the property owner/residents documenting their lack of objection to Mr. Sulph establishing his business on the reserve in front of their property.

13.3 Those present were advised that the property owner/residents don't own the reserve.

13.5 A request was submitted by Mr. Dennis Gladden to erect a business (Belize Inna Cup) on Sandlighters Promenade for the purpose of vending food and drinks. **MOTION DENIED**

13.12 The City Administrator stated that this location would not be recommended because of the proposed marina that has already been approved. She further advised that the business owner should look at other locations to place the business.

13.13 Councillor Castellanos asked that the Council finds a spot for the business owner by the next caucus meeting.

13.14 The City Planner was then asked about a pending approval for a proposed structure on a street reserve. She explained that the submission had not been made in writing, but based on communications with the business owner, the proposed structure was not recommended. She added that a site visit has been conducted and explained that there were concerns about whether the structure would be permanent or removable.

13.16 Ms. Patnett was advised that the proposed structure is not permanent as was told that a submission on the matter would be expected on the matter at the next Council meeting.

14.0 Other Business

14.1 No matters were tabled.

15.0 Adjournment

15.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councillor Kwan. The meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.


ALLAN POLLARD JR.
ACTING MAYOR


STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR



