

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

November 28th, 2023

10:00 a.m.

Present at the meeting were the following:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mr. Bernard Wagner | Mayor |
| 2. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr. | Deputy Mayor |
| 3. Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh | Councillor |
| 4. Ms. Kaya Cattouse | Councillor |
| 5. Mr. Michael Novelo | Councillor |
| 6. Mr. Edmund Kwan | Councillor |
| 7. Mr. Javier Castellanos | Councillor |
| 8. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | Councillor |
| 9. Mr. Albert Vaughan | Councillor |
| 10. Mr. Micah Goodin | Councillor |
| 11. Ms. Deannie Requena | Councillor |

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt
Mr. Eluide Miller

City Administrator
Manager, Office of the Mayor

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM.

1.0 Belize National Prayer

Councillor Albert Vaughan led all who were present in reciting the National Prayer of Belize.

2.0 Welcome Remarks

2.1 Mayor Wagner extended a warm welcome to everyone attending the meeting, including Councilors Requeña and Goodin, who are participating virtually. Mayor Wagner mentioned that Councilor Hamilton is expected to join the meeting shortly.

2.2 Mayor Wagner addressed the recent convention, informing everyone that the new slate has been officially documented, and the newly formed group has embarked on its campaign trail. He expressed his optimism about the positive feedback received during their interactions on the ground.

2.3 Mayor Wagner highlighted that the public has expressed great satisfaction with the significant amount of infrastructure projects being undertaken by the Council.

2.4 Mayor Wagner conveyed that the existing Council continues to serve in office, and their term concludes on the last business day in February of 2024.

3.0 Ratification of the October 11th, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

3.1 Omit (6.17).

3.2 (6.11) Change from “assistance” to “assistant”.

3.3 (10.4) Fix Councilor Pipersburgh’s name.

3.4 (14.2) Change from March 2023 to March 2024.

COUNCILOR NOVELO ARRIVED TO THE MEETING AT 10:20 A.M.

3.5 Councilor Kwan moved for the minutes to be accepted. Seconded by Councilor Pipersburgh.



4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 (4.5) - The lease agreement has been prepared, and recommended modifications have been submitted. Ms. Patnett is currently working on incorporating these changes, and it is anticipated that the finalized agreement will be ready by the end of the week.

4.2 (6.14) - Work has commenced at the Downtown Parking Lot. The City Administrator (CA) has suggested that the park should be named, urging the Council to contemplate a suitable name. Additionally, the CA mentioned that the upgrade is projected to be completed by mid-December and highlighted the need for hot mix to be included in the process.

4.3 Councilor Vaughan proposed the implementation of a public participation mechanism for the naming of the parking lot.

4.4 (6.15) - The Mayor requested the City Administrator to provide an update.

4.5 The City Administrator communicated that the initial date had to be postponed due to inclement weather. She then noted that the Pickstock Committee has agreed on January 27th, 2024, as the new date for the community festival, which will take place at the Civic Center Grounds in Belize City. This will mark the first community festival for the upcoming calendar year.

4.6 Mayor Wagner inquired about the senior citizen rates and questioned why senior citizens do not receive the prepayment discount in addition to their own senior citizen discount. Both the Mayor and Councilor Vaughan expressed their concern, considering this practice to be somewhat discriminatory.

4.7 Mayor Wagner expressed that it would be acceptable if the newly proposed discount rate of 35% is approved.

4.8 The City Administrator will seek clarification from the Ministry of Local Government.

4.9 (7.2) - The City Administrator conveyed that ongoing discussions with MIDH are taking place regarding the complete upgrade of these streets. Additionally, the CA mentioned that the streets are currently undergoing watering and grading today.

COUNCILOR CASTELLANOS ARRIVED TO THE MEETING AT 10:33 A.M.

4.10 Mayor Wagner expressed his belief that 1st Street in the Kings Park area should be included in the list of streets to be addressed by the Council this year.

4.11 Councilor Vaughan provided a list of streets that require completion, and residents are actively following up on the progress.

4.12 Mayor Wagner pointed out that the Council is currently awaiting feedback from the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing to determine whether the streets will be handled by them or if the Belize City Council will need to undertake the task.

4.13 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared his perspective on an innovation introduced by Medina's Construction, where streets are "capped" at a more cost-effective rate compared to using cement.

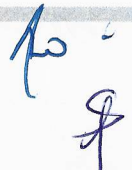
5.0 General Updates from the City Administrator

5.1 The City Administrator provided an overview of several financial indicators, highlighting a property tax compliance rate of 70% over the last seven months, a commendable trade license compliance of 96% for the current year 2023, and an impressive 99% compliance for liquor licenses. Additionally, the CA mentioned that the draft budget has been submitted to the Ministry of Local Government and urged all Council members to communicate with their respective managers if they haven't already.

5.2 Councilor Vaughan expressed the importance of keeping the Council's Strategic Plan in mind when formulating and drafting the budget.

5.3 The City Administrator emphasized that the manifesto serves as the Council's strategic plan.

5.4 The City Administrator provided updates on infrastructure development, noting that the Council has surpassed 90% completion of its initial goal of upgrading 80 streets. The Council will seek assistance from MIDH for materials to upgrade additional streets. Plans were shared for the upgrade of Buttonwood Bay Park, Digi Park, and Memorial Park. Booths at Memorial Park have been leased, and there are plans for an event to celebrate their completion. The installation of fitness nooks is scheduled to begin in mid-December, starting with Memorial Park and Digi Park, followed by other locations. The City Administrator acknowledged challenges in reconciling excessive grass despite the presence of cutting crews citywide.



5.5 The City Administrator presented a list of Christmas initiatives organized by the Council, which includes the tree lighting, triathlon, Christmas Mass, Staff Dinner, Christmas in the Park, Holiday Night Fest, and the Glow Ride. It was noted that the Council will honor one increment this year, and those without outstanding increments will receive their regular bonus. The mayor has granted an increase in the bonus for Council members. Council members were encouraged to collaborate with Councilor candidates in distributing tickets, hams, turkeys, pantries, etc. Upcoming events include the Triathlon on December 3rd, Christmas Mass & Staff Dinner, Xmas in the Park from December 7-9, Holiday Night Fest on December 15th, and the Glow Ride on December 22nd.

5.6 The City Administrator provided updates on ongoing operational initiatives, including the planned acquisition of a mini backhoe. This is in addition to the recently acquired backhoe from Benny's. The mini backhoe is specifically designed for clearing drains and comes with an exceptional payment structure offered by the vendor. The Council voted in support of this acquisition.

5.7 The City Administrator provided updates on the Council's eMobility project. She mentioned that the e-Taxis are currently in transit to Belize, the e-Buses are scheduled to be shipped on December 10th. Additionally, the e-Depot agreement is in the finalization stage. Agreements with BEL for the installation of the charging stations are ongoing, and the designs are in their final stages.

6. Notices

6.1 Councilor Vaughan expressed condolences on the passing of Mr. Glenn Tillet, a Freetown resident. He shared that Mr. Tillet's funeral will be hosted this upcoming Friday.

6.2 Councilor Vaughan expressed gratitude to Mayor Wagner for the Garifuna Settlement Day celebrations and thanked the mayor for inviting him to his home.

6.3 Councilor Vaughan raised a complaint about a development on Wilfred Peters Street, expressing the need for the Council to address the situation in that area. He also mentioned receiving numerous complaints from Belama Phase 4, particularly after recent rains, describing the area as looking very bad. Councilor Vaughan stated that they are awaiting assistance from the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH).

6.4 Councilor Vaughan shared positive feedback, noting that Apollo Street is holding up very well following its recent upgrades.

6.5 Councilor Vaughan conveyed concerns about an individual constructing small houses behind Thirsty Thursday restaurant. He mentioned that residents in the area are expressing dissatisfaction with this type of business, especially given the presence of a school and high-profile individuals residing in the vicinity. Residents fear that this could potentially bring down property values in the area.

6.6 The City Administrator shared that during the initial assessment, the houses were not complete, and as a response, the Council expressed the intention to monitor the situation closely.

6.7 Mayor Wagner suggested that the matter might fall under the purview of the Central Building Authority (CBA) since the Council does not currently have a building unit. He inquired whether the individual involved has obtained a Trade License.

6.8 The City Administrator shared that, currently, the individual involved has not obtained a Trade License.

6.9 Councilor Kwan raised the issue of the new development at Biltmore Plaza, expressing concern that it is obstructing the view when exiting the lane in Belama.

6.10 Mayor Wagner shared that Biltmore Plaza has indicated that they will install a mirror to help prevent any accidents from occurring at that intersection.

6.11 Councilor Castellanos shared that Pickstock Constituency had a committee meeting over the weekend, where they discussed finding a new date for the Community Festival.

6.12 Mayor Wagner shared that the new date for the Pickstock Community Festival has been set for January 28th, 2024.

6.13 Councilor Castellanos noted that the Pickstock Constituency is inviting all present and aspiring Councilor candidates to the Pickstock Christmas Event on December 16th from 2-6 at the Civic Center.

7. Questions

7.1 No questions were tabled.

8. Petitions

8.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared his recent trip to Rwanda, where he presented on the economic initiatives of the Council. He highlighted the cleanliness and sustainability of Kigali, emphasizing the importance of maintenance in Belize City. Pollard praised the infrastructural progress but expressed concerns about garbage collection and bushing. He suggested better supervision for the LIU program and proposed inspections before distributing checks to ensure accountability.

8.2 The City Administrator shared that the Council has made efforts to collaborate closely with the Leadership Intervention Unit (LIU) to implement strategic measures for more effective operations.

8.3 Mayor Wagner echoed the concerns raised by Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr., expressing agreement that the Council is not getting effective work from the LIU program. He mentioned visiting Faber's Road last week and observing its poor condition.

8.4 Councilor Novelo shared that he is no longer involved with the program.

8.5 Councilor Cattouse suggested that the garbage issue may be a cultural problem and proposed exploring the possibility of enacting a law requiring individuals to take care of the front of their properties.

9. Presentation of Reports from Councillors

9.1 Councilor Novelo extended congratulations to everyone who made it back on the slate. He emphasized his commitment to working diligently from the back end to contribute to the delivery of a People's United Party (PUP) City Council.

9.2 Councilor Cattouse expressed her gratitude to Councilor Novelo and mentioned that she has been actively on the ground campaigning for two weeks. She noted with appreciation that no one has shown any negativity during this period.

9.3 Councilor Vaughan shared that one of the magistrates is still absent at the court. He suggested that the Chief Justice should assist the Council in this matter, given that it is a revenue-generating aspect of the Council.

9.4 Councilor Vaughan shared updates, mentioning that the traffic lights on Vernon Street are operational. He also highlighted the need to examine the one-stop traffic hub and expressed his belief that Marion Jones is functioning effectively. Councilor Vaughan extended congratulations to Mayor Wagner and the newly elected slate for the upcoming elections. Additionally, he congratulated Mr. Miller for his election and expressed anticipation for working together to ensure the entire team's success in the March 2024 elections.

9.5 Councilor Castellanos expressed gratitude for the collaboration within the team and conveyed that he will miss Councilor Novelo and Councilor Pipersburgh. He extended thanks to Mayor Wagner for allowing him to represent him at the 13th Hemispheric Summit of Mayors held in the Dominican Republic in November 2023. Councilor Castellanos shared that during the summit, he spoke about inclusivity, community development, autonomy, and smart city initiatives, topics frequently addressed by Mayor Wagner. He mentioned taking an excerpt from the Belize Times where Belize called for a ceasefire in the current war, and he highlighted that several other countries supported this position at the summit.

9.6 Mayor Wagner conveyed a message, informing that the two BYD buses are prepared for shipping, and efforts are underway to confirm the vessel for December 10th, 2023.

9.7 Councilor Pipersburgh extended congratulations to all those who excelled in the convention and expressed her full support for the team. Both Councilor Pipersburgh and her shadow councilor distributed Halloween treats to various areas during Halloween, including having a campfire at Yabra. The Red Cross Program Manager indicated sponsorship for a second greenhouse for Belize City, and properties are being considered for this initiative.

9.8 Councilor Pipersburgh reported that the Council's personnel have specialized in producing sweet peppers, yielding over 200 pounds of produce, with plans to increase production. Additionally, 20 coconut trees have been planted around the compound. Operational officers underwent training, and CEMO participated in a stakeholder consultation by UNDP for first responders' awareness of needs and development. The CEMO Coordinator and the Administrative Manager are currently attending a workshop at the NEMO headquarters.

9.9 Councilor Pipersburgh outlined plans to paint Lions Park in Faber's Road Extension with the assistance of Youth Shadow Councilors, employees, and youth volunteers. She also mentioned the launch of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence last week.

9.10 Mayor Wagner expressed that Councilor Pipersburgh will be missed, especially considering the importance of gender equality in the Council. He noted the decrease from four female members to just two following the recent convention.

9.11 Councilor Requeña extended congratulations to all those who recently won in the convention held.

9.12 Councilor Goodin offered congratulations to all those who emerged victorious in the recent convention. He expressed his readiness to contribute to delivering a victory for the People's United Party (PUP) in the upcoming municipal elections.

10.0 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 Councilors

11.1 A motion was made for Ms. Stephanie Dawson for the rental of Booth #12 at the Memorial Park. The motion was seconded by Councilor Kwan. **MOTION APPROVED.**

11.2 A motion was made for Ms. Melany Dunn for the rental of a booth at Constitution Park to sell food and drinks. The motion was seconded by Councilor Kwan. **MOTION APPROVED.**

11.3 A motion was made for Mr. Jerrod Jenkins for the rental of Booth #12 at the Digi Park. The motion was seconded by Councilor Novelo. **MOTION APPROVED.**

11.4 A motion was made for the contract renewal of BNN's marketing contract for a period of one (1) year. The motion was seconded by Deputy Pollard Jr. **MOTION APPROVED.** However, it is noted that Councilor Vaughan did not vote in support of the motion.

12.0 Submissions from the Building Unit – Ms. Carla Patnett, City Planner

12.1 A request by Welcos Store seeking approval to construct a wooden or metal structure for vending food on a portion of the reserve at 3.5 Miles on the George Price Highway. The Planning Unit has raised objections to this proposal. **MOTION DENIED.**

12.2 A request by United Distributors Ltd. for a No Objection Letter from the Belize City Council. The Planning Unit has indicated no objections to the project, provided there is no blocking of the walkway or interruption of traffic. **MOTION PASSED.**

12.3 A request by Clear View for a No Objection Letter from the Belize City Council. **MOTION PASSED.**

12.4 A request has been submitted by Mr. Lee Mark Chang for a No Objection Letter from the Belize City Council for the construction of an apartment building and the utilization of a portion of the public reserve for parking. **MOTION PASSED.**

12.5 A request by Recinos Imports - Sarita Belize to lease a booth in the Memorial Park and for the construction of a structure. The Planning Unit has raised objections to this request, stipulating that the pergola must be maintained and the aesthetic of the area be preserved. **MOTION PASSED.**

12.6 A request by Mr. Ronald for a No Objection Letter from the Belize City Council to repair the pier that was destroyed by the hurricane. The Planning Unit has indicated no objections to this request, with the condition that the repaired pier remains the same width and length. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.0 Other Matters

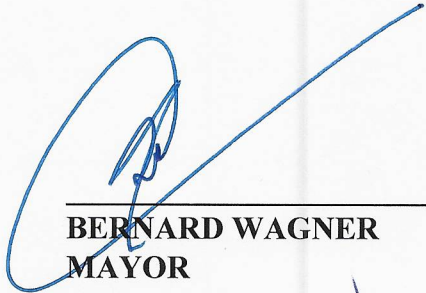
13.1 Councilor Kwan raised the idea of using the alternate parking approach as a way of addressing parking issues in residential areas. The approach is based on a system where vehicles would be required to park on different sides of the road based on specific dates.

13.2 Councilor Vaughan expressed concern about the existing issue on Faber's Road, particularly regarding derelict vehicles.

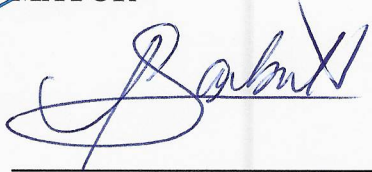
13.3 The City Administrator shared that the Magistrate granted the Council permission to move the vehicles and charge for the removal of these vehicles.

14.0 Adjournment

14.1 Councilor Kwan moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. The meeting was adjourned at 12:41 p.m.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

