

MINUTES of REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

10:00 a.m.

February 28th, 2023

Present:

- 1. **His Worship Bernard Wagner** Mayor
- 2. **Mr. Allan Pollard Jr.** Deputy Mayor
- 3. **Mr. Albert Vaughan** Councilor
- 4. **Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh** Councilor
- 5. **Mr. Michael Novelo** Councilor
- 6. **Ms. Stephanie Hamilton** Councilor
- 7. **Mr. Javier Castellanos** Councilor
- 8. **Ms. Deannie Requeña** Councilor

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt City Administrator
 Mr. Eluide Miller Manager, Office of the Mayor

Attending Virtually:

- 9. **Mr. Edmund Kwan** Councilor
- 10. **Mr. Micah Goodin** Councilor

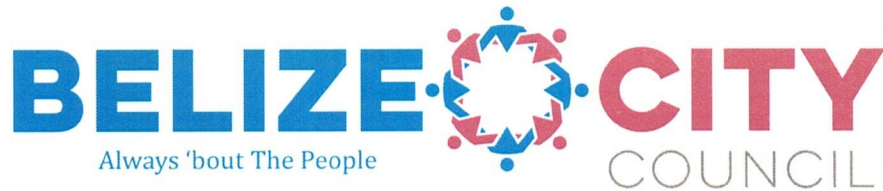
Absent with Reason:

- 11. **Ms. Kaya Cattouse** Councilor

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Mayor Wagner announced that Councilor Kwan and Councilor Goodin would be attending the meeting virtually via Zoom.

Mayor Wagner then indicated that Councilor Requeña informed him that she will be late to the meeting.



Mayor Wagner then notified the Council that Councilor Cattouse recently suffered injuries while cycling and wished her a speedy recovery.

1.0 Belize National Prayer

Mayor Wagner led all in reciting the Belize National Prayer.

2.0 Welcome Address

2.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed all Council members to the meeting and highlighted the importance of taking time out to do the business of the people.

3.0 Ratification of the January 20th, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

3.1 Mayor Wagner asked all members to review the minutes of the January 20th, 2023, regular meeting in the event they did not get to do so beforehand.

3.2 (13.14) – Change “sick” to “duty”.

3.3 (13.16) – Change “praise” to “applauded”.

COUNCILOR CASTELLANOS ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 10:20 A.M.

4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Councilor Vaughan stated that when visitors, such as representatives of the Order of Distinguished Services (ODS), attend the Council's regular meetings, they should report that the Council is in good standing.

4.2 Mayor Wagner stated that he had verbal confirmation from the ODS that they were pleased with how the Council conducted its prior meeting, and he then agreed with Councilor Vaughan that this should be done in writing.

COUNCILOR REQUEÑA ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 10:26 A.M.



5.0 Announcements by Mayor

- 5.1 Mayor Wagner announced that he attended the Medium-Term Development Strategy - Plan Belize on January 23rd, 2023. This approach focuses on six major areas: poverty reduction, economic transformation, trade deficit reduction, citizen security, environmental and natural resource protection, and good governance. This plan, led by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, outlines the government's aims and the path to attaining them.
- 5.2 Mayor Wagner stated that on January 24th, 2023, the Council presented plaques to all entities and organizations that assisted in the Belize City Cleanup Campaign following Hurricane Lisa as a token of appreciation for their support and partnership.
- 5.3 Mayor Wagner reported that the Council hosted the Valentine's Edition of its Downtown Super Sale on January 28th, 2023, with over 120 businesses/vendors participating.
- 5.4 Mayor Wagner stated that all Council members were invited to a budget meeting on January 30th, 2023. Mayor Wagner stated that the budget was presented to the representatives from the Ministry of Local Government who later approved the proposed budget. Mayor Wagner went on to share that the Belize City Council had performed admirably in the view of the Ministry.
- 5.5 Mayor Wagner shared that he was happy to attend the opening of the Belize Tourism Board's Reef Music Studio. The studio is equipped with modern recording equipment and will be used by local and international musicians. The studio also features a virtual recording mode that will enable artists to connect across the country.
- 5.6 Mayor Wagner then informed the Council that Hon. Kareem Musa and the Caribbean Shores Committee hosted an appreciation luncheon for Sanitation Department employees. Mayor Wagner stated that the event was held inside Digi Park on February 13th, 2023, and that it was a huge success.



- 5.7 Mayor Wagner announced that the Sir Manuel Esquivel Overpass was lit pink and red on February 14th in honor of Valentine's Day. Mayor Wagner then informed the Council that the Overpass is now equipped with color changing lights and will be lit with the appropriate color for the season all year. Mayor Wagner expressed his excitement over the Overpass being lit purple in commemoration of Women's Month.
- 5.8 Mayor Wagner then highlighted that the Council held a movie night inside the Digi Park for city residents on February 18th which was well attended.
- 5.9 Mayor Wagner joyfully announced that the Council distributed hurricane relief grants to sixty (60) deserving residents on February 21st, thanks to funds contributed to the Council by the Belize Credit Union League (BCUL). Mayor Wagner thanked the BCUL for their generous contribution and noted that the BCUL was pleased with the Council's approach in distributing the funds to needy residents.
- 5.10 Mayor Wagner noted that on February 22nd, he handed over a contribution to Hon. Anthony Mahler and the Belize Tourism Board in support of the new Reef Music Studio. Mayor Wagner went on to share that on that same evening, he had the pleasure of attending a Community Meeting held in the Aloe Vera Street Community in celebration of the newly concreted street. Mayor Wagner noted that the Council supported this project by painting the pedestrian crosswalks on the newly upgraded street.
- 5.11 Mayor Wagner went on to highlight that he attended a Handing Over Ceremony at Love Park where a newly installed playset was handed over by the Rotary Club of Canada. Mayor Wagner thanked the Council's Works Department for their contribution to the project. Mayor Wagner reiterated the importance of providing safe and child-friendly spaces for residents.
- 5.12 Mayor Wagner highlighted the rehabilitation of the Wilton Cumberbatch Field carried out by the Council. Mayor Wagner noted that residents in the community were happy to have this child friendly space rejuvenated through the efforts of the Council and were even more ecstatic to host the Council's Community Fair in their community.



- 5.13 Mayor Wagner stated that the concreting of a portion of Mahogany Street between Santa Barbara Street and Amandala Drive in the Pickstock Division has been completed because of meaningful collaboration between the Belize City Council and Hon. Anthony Mahler. Mayor Wagner stated that he recently approved the purchase of new paint to recolor the booths. Mayor Wagner also announced that the Council will rent a sweeper to clear the street before it is painted with the relevant markings.
- 5.14 Mayor Wagner revealed that the Council will host a Hot Cross Bun Holy Week Fest inside Memorial Park on Sunday, April 2nd, 2023. There will be fun activities for children which include a free Easter egg hunt.
- 5.15 Mayor Wagner concluded his announcements by announcing that the Council will be hosting a two-day revival concert in Digi Park on April 4th and 5th, 2023. This event will be headlined by an international performer. Mayor Wagner noted that the artist is being finalized and would be announced in the coming weeks, and he invited all Council members to attend this momentous event. Mayor Wagner feels that a revival is needed following the Covid-19 outbreak and Hurricane Lisa, both of which severely impacted city residents.

6.0 Notices

- 6.1 Deputy Mayor Allan Pollard Jr. announced that he will attend the Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanization Network Conference in London, England, from March 4th to March 18th, 2023. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. also indicated that he is expected to make an intervention at the conference.
- 6.2 Deputy Mayor Allan Pollard Jr. then revealed that the City of Miramar contacted him and invited him to attend an event in Miramar in late March to finalize the sister city agreement between the City of Miramar and Belize City.
- 6.3 Mayor Wagner congratulated Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. and expressed his trust in his ability to represent the city well.



- 6.4 Councilor Vaughan stated that he has been working with the Council's Valuations Department since 2018 to resolve the problem of Fiesta Park ownership but was unable to do so during his first term as Councilor. Notwithstanding this, the Government has now overturned the earlier title issued for the said parcel of land because of his persistence and sold it to the Council for only \$1.00. Councilor Vaughan stated that the park's ownership document will be presented before the Belize City Council on Friday.
- 6.5 Councilor Vaughan then encouraged Councilor Pipersburgh who holds the portfolio for Parks and Playgrounds to lead the rehabilitation of the park.
- 6.6 Mayor Wagner commended Councilor Vaughan for seeing this through and ensuring that this park is preserved for the residents of Belama.
- 6.7 Mayor Wagner then stated that a client of Barrow and Williams LLP recently wrote to the Council to express their interest in donating a parcel of land on Prince Street to the City. Mayor Wagner said that the Council will write them back to accept the parcel of land, and that the Council would then work to identify the parcel to explore how the city may use it to improve the quality of life for residents in the area.
- 7.0 Questions**
- 7.1 No questions were tabled.
- 8.0 Petitions**
- 8.1 No petitions were tabled.
- 9.0 Presentation of Reports from Councilors**
- 9.1 Councilor Requeña announced the opening of the Council's Youth Connect Student Hub tomorrow and thanked Mayor Wagner and his office, the Maintenance Unit, the Public Relations and Programs Departments, and others for their hard work in making this initiative a reality.



- 9.2 Councilor Requeña shared that she will continue to engage the Ministry of Education with a view to get more city students into schools.
- 9.3 Councilor Requeña thanked Mayor Wagner for inviting her to the recent Belize Mayors' Association meeting and highlighted that she saw how the Belize City Council's performance compares to other municipalities.
- 9.4 Beltraide recently trained eight (8) of the Mahogany Street Food Hub vendors, according to Councilor Hamilton. Councilor Hamilton also mentioned that these eight vendors have signed agreements with the Council. The canal near the first phase of the Food Hub has been cleared by the Council's Sanitation Department, and the bus stop is now being cleaned and painted. Councilor Hamilton then noted that the Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) is installing electricity, which necessitates the installation of four (4) new electrical poles.
- 9.5 Councilor Hamilton shared that she attended the diaspora meeting in Tampa, Florida along with Hon. Kevin Bernard and Hon. Anthony Mahler and highlighted that she received good feedback from the diaspora as it relates to the performance of the Council. Councilor Hamilton then shared that she also had the pleasure of attending another meeting with the diaspora in Atlanta, Georgia, and thanked Mayor Wagner for allowing her the opportunity to do so.
- 9.6 Councilor Pipersburgh expressed her delight and pleasure to have witnessed the Council team that went out to the St. Martin de Porres area to access the installation of a playset. Councilor Hamilton requested the support of the Council in installing at least one (1) additional playset in the Port Loyola Community given the lack of safe spaces for kids in that area. Councilor Pipersburgh then stated that Area Representative Hon. Gilroy Usher has reached out to her on several occasions and suggested that this be established in the Jane Usher Boulevard area, where the basketball court is currently being renovated.
- 9.7 Councilor Pipersburgh ended her update by highlighting that she received a donation of food items which were donated to the Liberty Children's Home in Ladyville following a call for donations by the Director.



- 9.8 Councilor Hamilton notified the Council that the Central Building Authority had just decertified the Council's Building Unit (CBA). Councilor Hamilton then stated that the CBA is now conducting an audit and that an update will be presented to the Council once it is completed.
- 9.9 The City Administrator stated that CBA personnel had visited a construction site in the city and that the developers could not provide them with a building permit. The City Administrator indicated that the CBA feels the construction should have been overseen by the CBA rather than the Council's Building Unit. The City Administrator then noted that the interaction between CBA personnel and developers at the site was not pleasant.
- 9.10 Mayor Wagner emphasized that the CBA was established to support greater local autonomy by giving municipalities control over developments taking place within their boundaries. According to Mayor Wagner, the CBA's decision to decertify the Council's Building Unit was taken very hastily.
- 9.11 The Council's Building Unit should have been audited before decertification, not after, according to Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr.
- 9.12 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed gratitude to the Council's Works Department for their work in restoring several city streets. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. then stated that the mayor's weekly infrastructural works meeting has been very useful in prioritizing infrastructure works to be done by the Council.
- 9.13 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed his satisfaction with the Council's proposal to renovate a considerable number of streets, stating that it is a very inclusive strategy because all Area Representatives were included in the process.
- 9.14 A deposit has been made for the new grader that the Council is procuring, and it should be in transit to Belize by the end of this week, according to Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. then revealed that the Minister of Tourism has expressed interest in donating heavy-duty equipment to the Council in the near future.



- 9.15 A site inspection of all the infrastructure projects being carried out by the Council was conducted, according to Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr., and the group was pleased with what they saw. A group from the World Bank was shown all the new roadways in the Gungulung area, which were once London Bridges, and Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. conveyed his delight at being able to report that the Council carried out those works as promised to the people.
- 9.16 Councilor Vaughan stated that one of the Magistrate posts at the Municipal Court is vacant and recommended that the Chief Magistrate be engaged in filling the vacant post.
- 9.17 Councilor Vaughan stressed the need for additional enforcement officers to be employed after a couple separated from the Council. Councilor Vaughan also stated that the Council's Enforcement Department must ramp up their enforcement efforts, which he believes are woefully lacking.
- 9.18 The City Administrator informed the Council that a revenue meeting was held in January during which the Enforcement Manager was notified of this, and that the team would meet again within a week or two to review the Department's performance in the month of February.
- 9.19 Councilor Vaughan stated that he used the parking meters in the Digi Park and Albert Street areas and that they work effectively. Councilor Vaughan stated that the parking spaces are now more equitable than they were in the past.
- 9.20 Councilor Novelo stated that he is pleased to announce that additional staff have been hired to work at the Cemetery Department. Councilor Novelo then announced that he would like to conduct a pilot project in which a fence would be built around the section of the Lord Ridge Cemetery that is in the George Price Highway median to beautify the area.
- 9.21 Mayor Wagner congratulated Councilor Novelo for guiding the Cemetery Department in boosting cemetery maintenance at the Lord Ridge Cemetery in recent months and encouraged them to keep up the good work.
- 9.22 Councilor Novelo thanked Mayor Wagner for his words and credited the Department's improvement to the additional human capital recruited.



- 9.23 The City Administrator informed the Council that the Cemetery Department employees were recently treated to lunch to show appreciation for their efforts.
- 9.24 Councilor Vaughan also emphasized the improved care of the Lord Ridge Cemetery and proposed charging a small fee to individuals who receive a burial waiver for the cleaning and maintenance of graves within the cemetery.
- 9.25 Councilor Kwan commended Mayor Wagner and all Council members for hosting a very successful Community Fair at the Cumberbatch Field.
- 9.26 Councilor Goodin also congratulated the team for a successful Community Fair in Cumberbatch Field, saying he expects to see more of these initiatives in the future.
- 9.27 Mayor Wagner stated that he met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Area Representative for the Lake Independence Constituency, who was thrilled with the Cumberbatch Community Fair and asked the Council to replicate it in each constituency in the city. The next Community Fair will be hosted at Fort George, followed by the Complex area in Lake Independence, according to Mayor Wagner.

10.0 Request for leave to move the adjournment of the Council on definite matter of urgent public concern.

- 10.1 No matters were tabled.

11.0 Motions by Councilors

- 11.1 Councilor Hamilton moved a motion for the Belize City Council to approve an employment contract for a period of one (1) year between the Council and Ms. Carla Patnett, to carry out the duties of City Planner. Seconded by Councilor Vaughan.



- 11.2 Councilor Hamilton shared that Ms. Carla Patnett, who is currently employed with the Council as the City Planner / Building Unit Technical Manager, has reached the age of retirement. Prior to reaching the age of retirement, Ms. Patnett formally expressed her interest in continuing employment with the Council on a contractual basis. Additionally, Ms. Patnett has received the recommendation of the City Engineer to continue in the capacity of City Planner.
- 11.3 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared concern over the timing of this proposal given the recent decertification of the Council's Building Unit.
- 11.4 Mayor Wagner stated that the roles of Technical Manager and City Planner are separate, and that Ms. Patnett has been acting in both capacities since her return from studies. Mayor Wagner then highlighted that a Technical Manager is needed to review and approve plans for constructions across the city while the City Planner carries out other distinct functions. As such, Ms. Patnett is still needed to serve in the capacity of City Planner despite the recent decertification of the Council's Building Unit.
- 11.5 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. thanked Mayor Wagner and expressed his support for the proposed employment contract. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. also emphasized the significance of succession planning for this position.
- 11.6 The City Administrator stated that the Council's Building Unit was decertified due to a matter of personality rather than a procedural failure on the part of the Council.
- 11.7 Mayor Wagner shared the Council's response to the Central Building Authority's decertification of the Council's Building Unit.
- 11.8 Councilor Vaughan rose in support of the proposed one-year contract for Ms. Patnett.
- 11.9 The City Administrator emphasized that the post of City Planner necessitates years of professional experience.
- 11.10 Mayor Wagner asked all Council members to indicate their support/approval of the proposed one-year contract. **MOTION PASSED.** Councilor Novelo, Requeña and Castellanos abstained from voting. All other Council members voted in favor.



11.11 Councilor Pipersburgh moved a motion for the Council to approve the adjustment of Ms. Diana Interiano's Lease Agreement at the Memorial Park to reflect a commencement date of March 1st, 2023. Since the passage of Hurricane Lisa in November of 2022, the Council has encountered some difficulties in the restoration of utilities to the Memorial Park. Considering this, Ms. Diana Interiano, who has been approved to operate a business in the park, is requesting that her lease agreement with the Council be adjusted to reflect a start date of March 1st, 2023, instead of December 1st, 2022, as was originally agreed. Seconded by Councilor Novelo. **MOTION PASSED.**

11.12 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve that Mr. Anthony Wagner, Enforcement Officer, be placed on interdiction for one (6) month following his arrest and after being charged with several offenses. The Enforcement Manager has suggested that Mr. Wagner be placed on interdiction in accordance with the General Administrative Regulation that regulates employment with the Council. If the matter has not been resolved in the judicial system after one (6) month, the Council is being advised to proceed with the separation. Seconded by Councilor Pipersburgh. **MOTION PASSED.**

COUNCILOR GOODIN LEFT THE MEETING AT 12:55 P.M.

11.13 Mayor Wagner moved a motion to approve the proposed list of streets to be upgraded/rehabilitated in 2023 in an effort to improve the quality of life for city residents. Following consultation with all area representatives, the streets on the list have been identified as needing some sort of rehabilitation or upgrading. These works will be financed by the Council's Municipal Paper Portfolio, Operations, and assistance from the Government of Belize. Seconded by Councilor Novelo. **MOTION PASSED.**

11.14 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council is working to finalize the Social Security Board's bond subscription, which will be utilized to finance this large infrastructure project. Mayor Wagner then stated that the goal is to complete all these works by June 2023, ahead of the rainy season.



12.0 New Business

- 12.1 Councilor Vaughan indicated that Design Depot, located on the Philip Goldson Highway, would want to brighten up the pedestrian crosswalk in front of their establishment by painting it in their theme colors with a pattern that promotes their brand. Councilor Vaughan then assured the Council that the Freetown Constituency, where the establishment is located, has no objections to Design Depot's proposed beautification of the pedestrian crosswalk.
- 12.2 The Council expressed its support for the proposed beautification of the pedestrian crosswalk in front of Design Depot on the Philip Goldson Highway on the condition that they also enhance the other pedestrian crosswalk on the same highway in front of Brodies Supermarket.

13.0 Submissions from the Building Unit – Ms. Chelsea Perera, Assistant City Planner

- 13.1 A request by Mr. Moguel of the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) to keep a container, security booth and tent which belongs to the BFLA on a developing street located off Mercy Lane. **MOTION DEFERRED.**
- 13.2 A request by Ms. Janet Anderson for approval to erect a 10 x 10 wooden structure in front of the Hope Center near the Belcan Bridge to vend stationeries along with adult and children underwear. **MOTION DEFERRED.** The Council recommended for Ms. Anderson to acquire a letter of no objection from the Area Representative.
- 13.3 A request by Ms. Lisseth Del Carmen Centeno for approval to vend food from the area in front of her home located on the Philip Goldson Highway. **MOTION DENIED.** The Planning Department has objections to this request as this would obstruct traffic flow in the area.
- 13.4 A request by Ms. Roxanne Rojas for approval to sell food from a cart measuring 8 x 6 feet located at #40 Albert Street. **MOTION DENIED.** The Planning Department has objections to this request as this would obstruct traffic flow in the area.

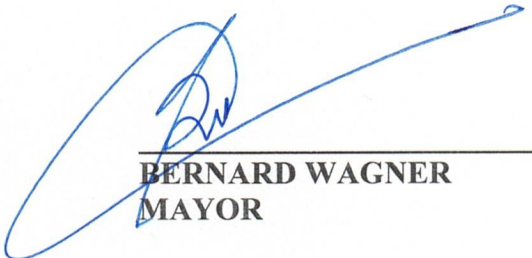
13.5 A request by Ms. Donna Foster for approval to sell food on the reserve area located at the corner of Mahogany Street and Electric Avenue. **MOTION DENIED.**

14.0 Other Business

14.1 Councilor Vaughan mentioned that the Council had previously declared a school zone in the Princess Margaret Drive area. Councilor Vaughan stated that there is signage along Princess Margaret Drive and Mercy Lane advising motorists of this. Notwithstanding this, Councilor Vaughan stated that some consideration needs to be given to residents who require parking along Mercy Lane outside of the peak hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. in order to conduct business at the bank, which is adjacent to the school on Mercy Lane.

15.0 Adjournment

15.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councilor Novelo. Meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



MRS. STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

