

MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING

March 19, 2019
Belize City Hall

Present:

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

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt, City Administrator

Mr. Rafael Sosa, Manager, Office of the Mayor

Attendance by Invitation:

Mr. Hubert Pipersburgh, LED Manager

The meeting was called to order at 3:15 p.m. by Mayor Wagner after which he led his Councilors in reciting the Belize National Prayer.

1.0 Corrections to February 19, 2019 Caucus Minutes

- 1.1 Correction to 2.3 to read as follows: The committee, which was formed to review the proposal from Men @ Work Towing & Impound Co. Ltd. at the January 15, 2019 Caucus Meeting convened on February 6, 2019.
- 1.2 Correction to 2.3.1 to read as follows: Following its meeting, the committee decided that the Council should retain control and information management of its traffic zones. The committee also decided that the Council should assume responsibility for the wheel locking clamps.



- 1.3 Correction to 2.3.2 to read as follows: The committee requested of Men @ Work Towing & Impound Co. Ltd. that it provides a price structure not only for derelict vehicles but also for towing and garaging derelict vehicles parked in No Parking Zones.
 - 1.4 Correction to paragraph 2 of Presentation on JBS Foods to read as follows: Mayor Wagner welcomed the opportunities being provided by JBS Foods.
 - 1.5 Correction to paragraph 4 of Presentation on New Green Transit Network – IDB to be spelt out, i.e. Inter-American Development Bank. Correction to paragraph 5 – Bravo Motors.
 - 1.6 Correction to 3.1 (Bridging Loan) to read as follows: Mayor Wagner informed that the current Heritage Bank Loan is at nine percent (9%) interest rate and would see the Council making a monthly payment of \$71,000.
 - 1.7 Correction to 3.1.1 to read as follows: Councilor Vaughan expressed his support for the bridging loan from Heritage Bank.
 - 1.8 Correction to 3.2 to read as follows: Mayor Wagner moved for a motion authorizing the Mayor and the Council to approach Heritage Bank ...
 - 1.9 Correction to 3.2.2 to read as follows: Deputy Mayor Arnold stated that buses are the cause of the destruction of a lot of manhole covers.
 - 1.10 Correction to 3.2.4 – Add Sanitation Dept. and Special Constable Dept.
 - 1.11 Add the following sentence to 8.3: A motion was moved for Mrs. Ana Maria Espat to be appointed to the post of **Building Unit Manager**. All Councilors voted in favor.
MOTION PASSED
- 2.0 Ratification of February 19, 2019 Caucus Minutes**
- 2.1 Councilor Gentle moved for the Minutes to be ratified with corrections/additions.
 - 2.2 Councilor Hylton seconded the motion.



3.0 Matters Arising from Minutes

3.1 Councilor Vaughan stated that the Minutes of Caucus Meetings should not record when Councilors abstain from voting on motions.

3.1.1 Mayor Wagner opined that Councilors should vote **YES** or **NO** on motions and that there should be no abstentions. On the matter of abstentions, Mayor Wagner disagreed with Councilor Vaughan and stated that abstentions should be recorded in the Minutes.

3.1.2 Deputy Mayor Arnold stated that the Minutes should reflect as much as possible what takes place in Caucus.

3.1.3 Councilor Castellanos remarked that Councilors should indicate reasons why they choose to abstain from voting on motions.

3.1.4 Councilor Elijio expressed the position that he will not vote on any matter if he is not provided with anything in black & white.

3.2 Relocation of House/Homeowner on Ring Road

3.2.1 The City Administrator informed that an initial payment has been made for the procurement of the Mennonite House.

3.2.2 Councilor Elijio shared that he has observed buses being parked on Ring Road Park.

3.2.3 Councilor Vaughan stated that the Council should approach the bus owner because the buses would present a problem even if they are parked on the street.

3.2.4 Mayor Wagner lamented the fact that, notwithstanding the Council's expansion of its vehicle fleet, there still exists poor enforcement. Mayor Wagner further stated that this represents an indictment on the Council's enforcement unit.

3.3 **Submission of Financial Reports** – Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the City Administrator to submit financial reports on a quarterly basis instead of a monthly basis. All Councilors present voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**



3.4 Candice Miller Claim – The City Administrator provided a brief update on the Candice Miller Claim. The City Administrator informed that Mr. George Swift has been appointed by the Court as the Mediator and that the first mediation session is scheduled for March 22, 2019.

3.5 Bus Stop on Regent Street West

3.5.1 Councilor Pollard Jr shared that he will provide the Council with a proposal to address the situation with the bus stop located at Regent Street West.

3.5.2 Councilor Vaughan informed that bus drivers are still urinating publicly because there exists no restroom facility. Councilor Vaughan recommended that the City Administrator explores the option for the Council to provide a portable toilet.

3.5.3 The City Administrator recommended that the Council purchase a portable toilet at an estimated cost of \$8,000.

3.5.4 Deputy Mayor Arnold shared that a Traffic Officer is always posted at the area where the buses are parked. Deputy Mayor Arnold suggested that the Council approaches the proprietor of Mike's Club.

3.5.5 Mayor Wagner tasked the Deputy Mayor with approaching the proprietor of Mike's Club.

3.6 Update on Pier 1

3.6.1 The City Administrator informed that the leaseholder, Mr. Joseph Kee has vacated the premises. The Council was forced to break the lock as Mr. Kee did not return the keys.

3.6.2 The City Administrator informed that the leaseholder completely gutted the structure.

3.6.3 The City Administrator further informed that the Council is in receipt of a letter from Mr. Rodwell Williams, S.C., of the law firm of Barrow & Williams requesting that the Council reimburses Mr. Joseph Kee a total of \$16,000.



3.7 Youth Shadow Council

3.7.1 Councilor Vaughan asked for an update on the Youth Shadow Council.

3.7.2 Councilor Elijio referred to the committee that was tasked to review the proposed framework.

3.8 Update on Street Works & Maintenance – Councilor Vaughan provided the following update:

- Simon Lamb Street will be completed within a week.
- A-Street will be completed within a week.
- Works have commenced on Ebony Street. Works are being carried out in phases starting with the area between the Conch Shell Bay Fish Market and Magazine Road.
- Nurse White Street will be completed within a week.

3.8.1 Councilor Vaughan informed that all street works are Chip & Seal and reiterated the fact that the Council has been able to carry out its aggressive program of Street Works & Maintenance without any financial support/assistance from Central Government.

3.9 Update on Belize City Council Municipal Paper 2019 – Mayor Wagner shared about a recent meeting that took place between himself, Alpha Capital and Prime Minister Dean Barrow on March 18, 2019. Mayor Wagner informed that the meeting was very successful and shared that the Prime Minister indicated to the team that the Council will not be required to provide a “back stop” for the bond as was previously indicated by the Central Bank.

3.10 Oath of Confidentiality

3.10.1 Mayor Wagner referred his Councilors to a portion of the City Council Act which speaks to the matter of confidentiality.

3.10.2 Councilor Castellanos recommended that persons attending Caucus Meetings, by way of invitation, be made to sign an Oath of Confidentiality.

3.10.3 The City Administrator informed that all employees are required to sign an Oath of Confidentiality upon their engagement with the Council.



4.0 Presentation of Blueprint for Bellevue Restaurant – Mr. Hubert Pipersburgh

- 4.1 The LED Manager shared about the blueprint for the proposed Bellevue Restaurant and informed that the Department of the Environment (DOE) has requested of the developers, the Hilton Group of Companies, that they obtain a “No Objection Letter” from the Belize City Council.
- 4.2 Councilor Elijio asked if the structure that was built over the water will be owned by the Council.
- 4.3 Councilor Vaughan recommended that the Council conducts a public consultation with the residents in the area.
- 4.4 Councilor Pollard Jr. disagreed with the suggestion that the Council conducts a public consultation.
- 4.5 Mayor Wagner tasked the City Administrator with addressing the matter of the “No Objection Letter” for the developers as required by the Department of the Environment (DOE).

5.0 Election of Deputy Mayor (2019 – 2020)

- 5.1 Mayor Wagner commended Deputy Mayor Arnold for the sterling job he performed, as Deputy Mayor, during the Council’s first year in office.
- 5.2 Deputy Mayor Arnold shared that the Council’s first year went by very quickly and that the Council has a lot to celebrate. Deputy Mayor Arnold reminded his fellow Councilors that the current Belize City Council is the most scrutinized Council in history. Deputy Mayor further reminded his fellow Councilors that the Council’s job is nowhere close to being complete and a lot of work still lie ahead.
- 5.3 Councilor Norales nominated Councilor Arnold to continue serving in the capacity as Deputy Mayor. Councilor Pitts seconded the nomination.



5.4 Deputy Mayor Arnold thanked Councilor Norales for nominating him and thanked his other Councilors for supporting his nomination. Deputy Mayor Arnold thanked Mayor Wagner for the confidence he placed in him as Deputy Mayor.

5.5 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the re-election of Councilor Oscar Arnold as Deputy Mayor. All Councilors present voted unanimously in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

6.0 City Administrator's Contract (discussion)

6.1 Mayor Wagner shared that the City Administrator's appraisal report clearly showed marked improvement and that the City Administrator would have to, within a period of three months, formally write to the Council indicating her wish to remain in her employment with the Council.

6.2 The City Administrator informed that she has already written to the Council, via e-mail, indicating her desire to renew her contract with the Council.

6.3 Mayor Wagner stated that he would want the Council to offer the City Administrator a contract that would extend to March 31, 2021.

7.0 Contract for Champion Security System Limited

7.1 Mayor Wagner shared that Champion Security System Limited would provide an array of services for the new City Hall that would include Closed-Circuit Television Camera (internally & externally), Fire Alarm System, Access Control System and Biometric Fingerprint System. Mayor Wagner shared that the services would be provided at a monthly cost of \$10,000 for a period of five years with an option to renew.

7.2 Councilor Elijio asked if the contract for the security systems was put out to tender.

7.3 The City Administrator informed that the contract was not put out to tender. The City Administrator shared that while other security companies had approached the Council, Champion Security System Limited was the only company that provided a Comprehensive proposal.



7.4 Deputy Mayor Arnold recommended that the Council carry out a comparative price analysis.

8.0 \$800,000 Bridging Loan

8.1 Mayor Wagner requested of his Councilors that they reaffirm their round-robin votes giving their approval for the Council to approach other financial institutions for an \$800,000 Bridging Loan to furnish the new City Hall. All Councilors present voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

9.0 Dredging of North Creek, Zeitown and Gungulung Canals

9.1 Mayor Wagner shared that following a recent site visit by a team from the Council which included himself, Councilor Vaughan, the City Administrator, the City Engineer, the City Planner and the Works Manager, it was determined that the dredging of the North Creek, Zeitown and Gungulung Canals is a matter of urgency.

9.2 Councilor Vaughan shared that the urgency is tied heavily to the duration of the dry season.

9.3 Deputy Mayor Arnold shared that under the second part of the Flood Mitigation Project, the Ministry of Works will carry out the lining of all canals in the City.

9.4 Councilor Elijio asked that it be placed on the record that the dredging of the North Creek, Zeitown and Gungulung Canals should be put out to tender.

9.5 Deputy Mayor Arnold opined that the Council should not have to put every single undertaking out to tender. Deputy Mayor Arnold stated that the Council should trust the expertise of its technical personnel.

9.6 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council has a choice between spending its next two years in office putting everything out to tender or getting the people's work done.

9.7 Councilor Norales stated that the tendering process would take considerable time and that the Hurricane Season is drawing near. Councilor Norales stated that effective and proper drainage would be dependent on the dredging of the canals.



9.8 Councilor Gentle stated that she would like to have more information and explanation with respect to the dredging of the Gungulung Canal. Mayor Wagner urged all his Councilors to request the relevant report/analysis from the City Engineer and to peruse the report/analysis so that they become more informed.

9.9 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to proceed with the dredging of the North Creek, Zeitown and Gungulung Canals. All Councilors, except for Councilor Elijio who voted no and Councilor Hylton who abstained, voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

N.B. Councilor Hylton stated that she was not comfortable voting on a matter that she does not fully comprehend. Councilor Hylton further stated that she would be prepared to reconsider her position after gaining more clarity.

N.B. Councilor Elijio exited the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

10.0 City Administrator's Report (One Year Wrap-Up)

Highlights of Report:

- The Council received more than 500 job applications mainly at the entry level.
- A key challenge remains in attracting top talent for top level positions.
- Another key challenge is in maintaining the Council's wage bill at a sustainable level.
- In March 2018, Council had a total of 415 employees. Currently, the Council has a total of 456 employees.
- CWU Membership is down from 206 to 200.
- Employee Rewards – There were a total of sixteen (16) Employees of the Year and a total of seven (7) Special Mentions in 2018.
- Increased Revenue Collections: Traffic, Licenses, GOB Transfers
- Decreased Revenue Collections: Fees & Services, Private Donations
- Decline in Property Tax Arrears from \$4.4 MIL to \$2.9 MIL (up until the end of Feb. 2019)

Moving Forward:

- Move into new City Hall
- Install traffic lights at four intersections
- Removal of Derelict Vehicles

- BEL Street Lights
- BWS Fire Hydrants
- Implement new Belize City Council Brand
- Proposed Adoption of Fred Westby Park
- School Feeding Programs/Urban Gardening

N.B. Councilor Pitts asked for an excuse at 5:50 p.m.

- 10.1 Councilor Pollard Jr asked for an update on proposal he had submitted for six (6) additional Traffic Officers.
- 10.2 The City Administrator shared that she, the Acting Finance Director and the Revenue Manager had looked at the request and agreed that taking on six (6) additional Traffic Officers would increase the Council's wage bill considerably. The City Administrator further shared that the Traffic Department needs to increase its Revenue.
- 10.3 Mayor Wagner suggested to Councilor Pollard Jr and the City Administrator that they get together and work on "phasing in" the addition of the six (6) Traffic Officers.

11.0 Other Business

- 11.1 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council has one more year to be strategic in order to accomplish its Manifesto commitments.
- 11.2 Councilor Vaughan commended Councilor Norales for rising to the floor and nominating Councilor Arnold for a second term as Deputy Mayor. Councilor Vaughan reminded his colleagues of their purpose as Councilors, i.e. to get the work of the residents done. Councilor Vaughan ended by saying that the residents of the City continue to have confidence in the Council.
- 11.3 Councilor Norales shared about an application from Mr. Ainsley Castro (Chef Ainsley) to operate a small business on Mahogany Street.
- 11.4 Councilor Castellanos shared about an invitation he received to attend an entrepreneurship training in Bahrain in April.

Councilor Norales moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Councilor Castellanos seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.



MR. BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



MRS. STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

