



MINUTES OF ORDINARY CLOSED COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday May 27th, 2015
Belize City Hall Council Chambers

Present:

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| 1. Mr. Darrell Bradley | Mayor |
| 2. Mr. Alain Gonzalez | Councilor |
| 3. Mr. Dion Leslie | Councillor |
| 4. Mr. Dean Samuels | Councillor |
| 5. Mr. Kevin Singh | Councillor |
| 6. Mr. Michael Theus | Councillor |
| 7. Mr. Philip Willoughby | Councillor |
| 8. Mr. Jason Edwards | Councillor |
| 9. Mrs. Hyacinth Latchman Cuellar | Councillor |
| 10. Mr. Bernard Pitts Jr | Councillor |
| 11. Ms. Alifa Elrington | Councillor |
| 1. Ms. Candice Miller | City Administrator |
| 2. Mr. Jermaine Hyde | Administrative Officer |

Minutes of Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 10:18am.

Councilor Jason Edwards opened the meeting with a prayer.

The Mayor welcomed Councilors and Directors to the fourth meeting of the Council 2015- 2018.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting was not available and had to be deferred.

The Mayor expressed his disappointment that there were no minutes available. He stated that it is mandated by law that minutes of every council meeting be recorded and the Council will run into problems because the records are not kept. This he explained is in breach of standing orders.

He emphasized at the start of this Council that there should be a Minute Book, Contract Book and a Resolution Book.

Ms. McKenzie added that it is in the standing orders that minutes are sent to the Ministry of Local Government.

It was noted that a substantial area of the last meeting cannot be reviewed and parts 2 and 3 of the agenda would be skipped.

Mayor Darrell Bradley

i. Monthly Financials

1. Mrs. Ordonez highlighted in the financial report to the Council showing a 73% collection rate for the period of 2014\15.
2. It was noted that necessary adjustments were made by the Valuation department to write off and close old accounts in the system that were inactive.
3. Mayor requested that at the next meeting Mrs. Ordonez prepare a comparative report showing the collections of the previous and current year.
4. The Mayor stated that a comparison of the two years would evaluate the collection strategies the Council has put in place like the blockage of driver's license and the implementation of the Compliance Unit.
5. He stated that the Council should track these changes to ensure that there is an increase in the collection rates.
6. Mrs. Ordonez pointed out that in the area of the Municipal, things are moving a bit slow, especially since there hasn't been a lot concluded cases coming out of the courts.
7. Ms. McKenzie highlighted that the strategy of the court has been to facilitate Consent agreements instead of going through the lengthy trial process.
8. Ms. McKenzie also stated that when consents are made at the Court many times arrangements are made at City Hall where the cashier collects monies and this shouldn't be.
9. Councilor Elrington noted that instructions being given to the Special Constables to stand down in the closure of businesses have impacted collection as well. She added that she has raised this issue before and the practice continues. She pointed out that the manager and coordinator are given instructions during their operations because business owners make arrangements to come in and make payments and it never happens.
10. Mayor noted that he first wanted to be satisfied that the collection strategies are being effective and that the collection rates are indeed increasing. Secondly, he wanted to make a point of it that no one should interfere with the process of the enforcement personnel.
11. Ms. McKenzie stated that there are situations where the court pronounces judgment on a matter and the cashier at City Hall collects the money.

12. The Mayor asked Mrs. Ordonez to highlight some of the factors that are causing the delay in her view.
13. Mrs. Ordonez stated that the delay exist with a lack of information from the lands department relating to the ownership of land and changes made to land titles. The officers from Valuation that conducts the researches in Belmopan are limited to the number of searches they conduct in a day.
14. Councilor Elrington added that the officers are only allowed to conduct 5 searches per day.
15. Ms. McKenzie pointed out that because of this issue, she advised them to send the matter to the court so they can be lodged in the court and avoid it being statute barred.
16. Mrs. Ordonez added that in addition to this issue, another delay occurs when trying to get the matter before the magistrate. Having many adjournments and not getting having the matter concluded slows down the process as well.
17. Ms. McKenzie stated that if valuation and compliance unit does the due diligence before it reaches the Court, then there wouldn't be a need for adjournments so investigations can be done.
18. Mayor inquired into the number of properties that have been sold.
19. Mrs. Ordonez stated that 5 or so properties have been sold.
20. Councilor Elrington added that the land's department needs to be more forthcoming with information or we will forever be having this problem. It holds us back significantly when we only get 5 searches for the day.
21. Mrs. Ordonez indicated that the Magistrates still adjourn matters instead of getting them concluded and this practice holds back the Council.
22. Mayor asked the names of the magistrates at the Municipal Court.
23. Ms. McKenzie stated that the two magistrates are Magistrate Hoare and Magistrate Lucas. She added that Magistrate Lucas is hardly ever at work and Magistrate Hoare travels out district to hear matters as well.
24. Councilor Willoughby pointed out that there have been several meetings held with the CEO Mr. Smith, and Commissioner Mr. Vallejos concerning the data sharing. He added that the land registry is in a process of inputting data in the GIS system, which will eliminate the 5 searches per day limitation.

25. Councilor Elrington stated that this has been the case for over two years now and that she has attended some of these meetings and to date nothing has changed.
26. Mayor requested a report on the accounts that are delinquent in property tax which amounts to 27% of all those in the system and to highlight what will be done to collect.
27. Ms. McKenzie stated that the Compliance Unit is working on that and Mr. Bodden is preparing the Distress.
28. Mayor requested an outlook of the finances of the Council.
29. Mrs. Ordonez stated that Council would run into difficulties meeting the wage bill since it has deviated from the budget.
30. Mayor asked what could be done to ensure that it doesn't default on salaries.
31. Mrs. Ordonez emphasized that the spending needs to be monitored because the budget has been exhausted.
32. The Mayor asked if the Council is in a position to do any projects.
33. Mrs. Ordonez indicated that the Council have done quite a bit of projects hence there is no rush to take on any other project at this time. She added that there were many streets that were not budgeted for but the Council undertook the project nonetheless. A lot of money was spent on streets. As it relates to Property Tax, Council has gone over the budget in terms of collections amounting to \$1.1 million. Traffic on the other hand collected \$570,000 while it was budgeted to collect \$757,000.
34. Mayor asked how the collection was so low from the budgeted amount.
35. Mrs. Ordonez explained that they were anticipating a higher collection rate because of the increase they were hoping for in the increase of fines.
36. Councilor Elrington added that Traffic is short of staff, which translates into less tickets being given and with all the construction works being done officers are needed to direct traffic more than conduct enforcement.
37. Mayor asked if there was a decrease in staff.
38. Ms. Rudon stated that the staff compliment is now at 417.
39. Councilor Leslie pointed out that it went down and added that he was informed that several of the workers that came from BML have vacated their post.
40. Ms. Rudon stated that while this is the case, the Council is not thinking of replacing any of the workers who have abandoned their post.

ii. Infrastructure

41. Mayor stated that he wanted the Deputy Mayor to give an update on infrastructure works being done but since he's not present it will be done at the next Council meeting.
42. Councilor Leslie stated that Mrs. Feinstein wants to help finance the concreting of Mahler Street.
43. Mayor said that Council can look at it but that project will be dependent on the availability of funds.
44. Councilor Leslie stated that he will relay the message and then see if she is in a position to fully finance the construction now and make payment arrangements with Council after.

iii. Palm Grove Zoning

45. Mayor asked Ms. McKenzie for an update.
46. Ms. McKenzie informed that she has submitted a draft and some minor changes are being made.
47. Mayor stated that at the next meeting Council meeting we will have the draft.

iv. Land Distribution Program

48. The Mayor requested that Councilor Willoughby be recognized and he expressed his appreciation for the Councilor's effort to see the staff land program reach its completion. He added that Council, one week prior to the meeting, was able to get a purchase approval and would be going ahead with the necessary purchasing, clearing and bushing of the property.
49. He added that within a month's time, the survey and subdivision will then follow culminating with the distribution to staff.
50. The Mayor stated that the Commercial Center and Cumberbatch Field Projects will be placed on hold due to the finances of the Council.

Councilor Theus

51. Councilor Theus raised the issue of the Albert Street Taxi Stand. He pointed out that the median in the middle of the street has presented a problem and the operators are asking that they be given reverse parking.

52. Mayor suggested that consultation should be done with Traffic Manager Mr. Jenkins and the City Engineer Mr. Williams to reach a resolution.
53. Councilor Theus indicated that the other taxi operators are asking that the Council revisit the moratorium.
54. Mayor stated that there was public consultation done and he didn't want to do anything in violation of what was agreed at the meeting.
55. Councilor Elrington stated that they overwhelmingly wanted the moratorium to be opened but with stipulations and control measures. They wanted Council to monitor the issuance of plates and make sure that it is properly managed.
56. Mayor requested that a report be made from the moratorium meeting.
57. Councilor Theus stated that he wanted to address a situation with the Special Constables but the City Administrator was still in the Liquor License meeting. He added that he finds it disrespectful that Councilors cannot sit in Managers meeting. He noted that he has gotten several complaints about Special Constables "hustling" from Chinese vendors.

(Deputy Mayor arrived)

58. Mayor highlighted that the responsibility of Councilors ought not to be involved in the daily operations of the Council. It is for this reason all Directors attend the Council meetings, so that issues relating to their departments can be addressed. He emphasized that Councilors should not go into any staff meeting or address any matter with staff members.
59. Councilor Elrington noted that she has been given the same information as Councilor Theus relating to meeting with staff and she disagrees with it.
60. The Mayor noted that the responsibility of Councilors is primarily to be the policy makers of the Council and to ensure the City Administrator, Directors and Managers are doing the necessary supervision of the staff. Councilors should not get involved in the running of the Council and the presence of Councilors at a meeting has a negative impact on the meeting.

Councilor Elrington

61. Councilor Elrington stated that the staff of HR and PR handles all of Council's events from preparation to execution and clean up after the events. She added that these staff members never get the benefit of the functions and as such she would want something done just for that department.

62. Mayor commented that it is for this reason every year at Christmas he gives them an honorarium. He couldn't recall if Ms. Ursula was on the list but he was certain the other staff members received theirs.
63. Ms. Rudon pointed out that she wasn't aware of this, and would have thought that as the Director of Administration she would have been informed.
64. Mayor pointed out that the payment is in the budget and he's surprised that she would not be aware of it, but stated it can be reviewed.
65. Councilor Elrington requested that Council look at streets that could be turned to one way. She pointed out that there are many other streets that can be turned to one way.
66. The Mayor recommended that the Traffic manager and City Engineer review the list of streets and make a recommendation.
67. Councilor Elrington suggested that Council review the Reserve parking. She suggested that an operation be carried out to see what businesses are blocking streets illegally since they haven't acquired permission from Council to do so. She pointed out that if they paying for the use of the space, then Council needs to erect a sign.

The City Administrator arrived

Other Business

68. Mayor notified that he would be in Botswana for a conference sponsored by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. He would be there from June 14th to 24th 2015.
69. Mayor informed the Council that Dr. Gonzalez is in Switzerland on a forum sponsored by the Government of Belize relating to Sports Medicine.
70. The Mayor noted that Councilor Willoughby has been invited to attend a conference in Las Vegas dealing with Solid Waste Management and its impact on flooding and disaster management. He added that Councilor's attendance would need to be financed by the Council.
71. Mrs. Ordonez stated that Council does not have the finance to foot the cost of the trip.
72. Councilor Edwards stated that the cemetery at 13miles is running out of space and needs backfilling. Mr. Williams is estimating that he will need 126 truckloads of filling and the estimated cost is \$19,490.00.
73. Councilor Leslie added that after funerals the wood that holds the cement in place is being stolen. When this occurs, the cement does set properly and holes in the tomb form releasing stench from the rotting corpse. He is requesting that the cost of purchasing the wood be added to the overall cost of the tomb.
74. Since there has been several attempts to break into the cemetery office, Councilor Leslie that a security be place at the office.
75. Councilor Edwards presented a list of 14 streets that are scheduled for upgrading which will be at a cost of \$94, 661.67. Mayor suggested that this be placed on hold, until the Council is in a financial position to do the upgrades.

76. Mayor Bradley noted that the priority of the Council must be that the wage and pension bill be met monthly. He added that the finance department should ensure that monies be kept in the account to pay salaries one month in advance. Mrs. Ordonez indicated that this has been the practice but the Council has used all the money that was set aside which totals to \$550,000 leaving \$50,000 as a reserve.
77. The City Administrator added that several street projects were completed and as such the Council can put street works on pause, especially since we are in the slow season. She added that since it is an election year Central government might be inclined to assist with some street projects.
78. Councilor Theus stated that Mosul Street is at a point where the steel is protruding out of the street and is in need of urgent repair. The City Engineer said that the contractor who did the street, Mr. Marvin Cardona, indicated that he would have gotten Cisco to place asphalt on the street. The Mayor objected saying that doing that would not be practical and what should be place on it is a layer of hot mix.
79. The City Engineer stated that Mr. Cardona was waiting for some money to be given to him from the Council that was owed to him, and then he would have concreted the street. The City Administrator pointed out that 25 of the streets done by Mr. Cardona had to fix in some way. The Mayor asked that no funds be disbursed to the contractor until he has done the necessary repairs.
80. Councilor Elrington stated that the extended sidewalk on Simon Lamb Street has created many difficulties to the flow of traffic especially since the street is a one way street. Councilor Samuels stated that it was built that way to direct traffic to the right onto Freetown. However people have been driving across Freetown into Mapp Street instead on staying on Freetown Road, creating several traffic accidents. Councilor Elrington therefore is suggesting that the sidewalk be removed. Councilor Willoughby protested stating that it will create another major intersection at that location and will be a bottleneck for congested traffic situations. The Mayor said that the City Engineer and the Traffic Manger study the situation and make a recommendation to Council.
81. The City Engineer presented a request to lease reserve on Blue Marlin Boulevard by Mr. Bruce Sanchez Jr. He stated that Mr. Sanchez has a food shop that on the street but because the street is being concreted it had to be removed. Hence Mr. Sanchez is requesting to lease the property across the street. Councilor Singh indicated that traffic coming from off the curve will be inhibited because the structure creates a blind spot. Councilors were asked to vote on the request.
82. Councilors voted and the result was 5 votes against 3 votes in favor, the majority stands hence the request was **MOTION NOT CARRIED**.
83. Mayor requested that the rental price of reserves be revisited as it can be increased.
84. The City Engineer presented a second request to put directional signs on Church Street. He indicated that the planning department has no objections against the signs. Council voted unanimously to approve the request. **MOTION CARRIED**
85. . The Mayor moved for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Singh motioned that the meeting stands adjourned, Councilor Leslie seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**


86. All Councillors present voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 12:56 pm.

Confirmation of Minutes

These minutes, which are the minutes of a Council Meeting of the Belize City Council duly convened and held on 4 May 2015 were reviewed and approved by a Resolution of the Council dated (27) May, 2015



DARRELL BRADLEY, Mayor



CANDICE BURKE, City Administrator



**BELIZE CITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION NO. 12 of 2015**

A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE INSTALLATION OF DIRECTIONAL SIGNS ON COUNCIL'S RESERVE

WHEREAS, the Belize City Council, is a body corporate established by Sec 3 (1) of the Belize City Council Act, CAP 85 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000,

AND WHEREAS, the Belize City Council, having been duly elected by the residents of Belize City mandated to serve the citizenry and entrusted with the general rule and good governance of Belize City,

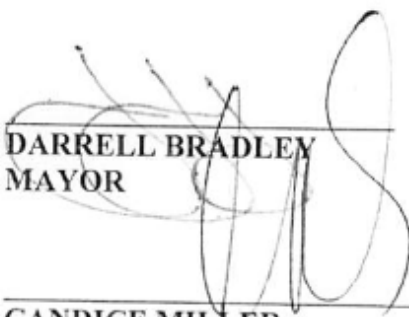
AND WHEREAS, Section 29 (h) of the Belize City Council Act CAP 85 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000, provides for the Council to manage any land owned by the Council for public purposes,

AND WHEREAS, the **BELIZE TELEMEDIA LIMITED** through its agents has formally applied to the Council in writing to install directional signs on Albert and Church Streets leading to the company's office

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council supports, approves, and confirms

- The installation of directional signs on Albert and Church streets.

In pursuance of an order of the Belize City Council made on the 27th day of May 2015, the Common Seal was hereunto affixed by:



**DARRELL BRADLEY
MAYOR**

**CANDICE MILLER
CITY ADMINISTRATOR**



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