

MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING

Belize City Hall
December 3, 2019

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. Micah Goodin | Councilor |
| 5. Mr. Javier Castellanos | Councilor |
| 6. Ms. Delthruide Hylton | Councilor |
| 7. Mr. Ryan Elijio | Councilor |
| 8. Ms. Aisha Gentle | Councilor |
| 9. Mr. Albert Vaughan | Councilor |
| 10. Mr. Michael Norales | Councilor |

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt, City Administrator

Mr. Rafael Sosa, Manager, Office of the Mayor

Absent:

Councilor Dr. Candice Pitts

Attendance by Invitation:

Mr. Hubert Pipersburgh, LED Manager

Mr. Raul Pelayo, Owner, Crème De La Crème

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.

Mayor Wagner stated that, going forward, he wants to keep the agenda for the Caucus Meetings concise in order that everyone stays attentive and focused during the meetings.



1.0 Corrections to October 22, 2019 Minutes

- 1.1 Item 2.2, the second sentence should read as follows: Councilor Pollard Jr. **stated** that when ...
- 1.2 Item 2.4.2, replace the word “infeasible” with “unsustainable”.
- 1.3 Item 2.4.4, add the following sentence: Councilor Vaughan informed that the person who coordinates the 4-H Club did not return to the Works Department.
- 1.4 Item 3.1.1 should read as follows: Mayor Wagner shared about a meeting that took place with a Jewish Philanthropist during his visit to New York City in the latter part of September where he represented the Caribbean Local Government Forum at the United Nations General Assembly.
- 1.5 Item 4.1.2, the second sentence should read as follows: The legal team will comprise Mr. Eamon Courtenay, SC, Glenn D. Godfrey & Associates, Mr. Anthony Sylvestre Jr. and Mr. Richard Bradley (BCC’s In-house Attorney).

2.0 Ratification of October 22, 2019 Minutes

- 2.1 Councilor Norales moved that the Minutes of the October 22, 2019 Caucus Meeting be accepted with corrections. Deputy Mayor seconded the motion.

3.0 Matters Arising

- 3.1 **Road Marking Applicator** – The City Administrator shared that she has asked the Traffic Department to identify a supplier for the road marking applicator. The City Administrator informed that Teichroeb & Sons Ltd. has a road marking applicator.



- 3.2 **Thermoplastic Paints** – The City Administrator made a correction to a previous update that she had provided. The City Administrator informed that a number of buckets of Thermoplastic Paint that were previously reported as missing were, instead, never ordered. The City Administrator further informed that those additional buckets of Thermoplastic Paint have now been delivered.
- 3.3 **Audited Financial Statements** – Mayor Wagner shared that Mr. Cedric Flowers, CPA is awaiting additional information from the Council’s Acting Finance Director and the Finance Department. Mayor Wagner stated that the Council wants to launch projects and programs that will be financed with the Municipal Bond in early January of 2020.
- 3.3.1 Mayor Wagner asked the City Administrator to press the Acting Finance Director and the Finance Department to urgently furnish Mr. Cedric Flowers with the additional information that he has requested. The City Administrator stated that the Acting Finance Director and her team have been working diligently to compile the relevant information.
- 3.3.2 The City Administrator stated that Mr. Cedric Flowers has requested a lot of information that was not requested for previous audits.
- 3.4 **Accrued Vacation Leave** – The City Administrator informed that the Works Manager has been sent on vacation leave until March 2020. The Traffic Enforcement Manager has been sent on vacation leave until February 2020.
- 3.4.1 The City Administrator further informed that the Revenue Manager will proceed on vacation leave in the middle of 2020 while the Acting Finance Manager will go on vacation leave around June/July of 2020.

4.0 **Presentations**

4.1 **Proposal for Belize City Social Entrepreneurship Zone (Update) – Mr. Hubert Pipersburgh, LED Manager**

The LED Manager informed that the conference call did not take place because the Jewish Philanthropist had to travel to Europe.

The LED Manager stated that, consequently, the conference call will have to be rescheduled.

The LED Manager reported that the Jewish Philanthropist is in possession of the proposal that was prepared and submitted for the creation of the Belize City Social Entrepreneurship Zone.

4.2 **Crème De La Crème II – Mr. Raul Pelayo**

Mr. Pelayo shared that the Crème De La Crème II is a community park project located at the Rock Park, formerly the San Cas Park/Animal Park. Mr. Pelayo stated that he uses revenues earned from his businesses at the Rock Park to generate employment and to reinvest in the Park. Mr. Pelayo shared that he currently operates two kiosks at the Rock Park, one where he sells ice-cream and smoothies and the other where he sells burgers and quesadillas. Mr. Pelayo shared his proposal to construct two additional kiosks at the Rock Park with a deck in the middle of both. Mr. Pelayo shared that he currently employs seven people and that this number would double with the addition of two more kiosks. Mr. Pelayo stated he would enter into a lease agreement with the Council and that he wishes to forge a strong working relationship with the Council.

4.2.1 Councilor Vaughan expressed his concern about the size of the kiosks and whether they would cause any impediment to the playground section of the Rock Park.

4.2.2 Mayor Wagner stated that the Pupusa Vendors at the Rock Park are not properly regulated at the Rock Park and are creating issues particularly as they relate to the accumulation of garbage.

5.0 **City Administrator's Report**

5.1 **Evaluation and Discount Rates 2020** - The City Administrator informed that no changes are proposed for property rates. The City Administrator stated that the only change is that of the discount (25%) on property tax provided to senior citizens.

5.1.1 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of the Evaluation & Discount Rates for 2020. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

5.2 **Composition of Boards**

Trade Licensing Board - The City Administrator shared that they were no recommended changes to the composition of the Trade Licensing Board.

Liquor Licensing Board – The City Administrator informed that Ms. Valerie Woods has resigned as the Deputy Chair. The City Administrator recommended that Mr. Salvador Awe replace Ms. Valerie Woods as Deputy Chair. The City Administrator informed that Mr. David Henderson, DAVCO Representative will be replaced. The City Administrator recommended that Ms. Merilyn Young be appointed as a member of the Liquor Licensing Board.

Valuation Appeals Board – The City Administrator shared that the Valuation Appeals Board never convened due to the fact that the Chief Justice did not name anyone to serve as the Chairman. The City Administrator recommended that Mr. Troy Gabb Sr. and Major Lloyd Jones remain as members of the Valuation Board.

5.2.1 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the composition of the Trade Licensing Board, Liquor Licensing Board and Valuation Appeals Board respectively with the recommended changes/additions. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor – **MOTION PASSED**

5.3 Upcoming Christmas Events/Initiatives

Christmas Luncheon for BCC Sanitation Employees – The City Administrator informed that the students of Belize Elementary School (BES) will host the Sanitation employees for a Christmas luncheon on December 5, 2019.

Christmas in the Park – The City Administrator informed that 2000 toys will be given to kids ages newborn to 12 years.

LOVE FM Christmas Parade – The City Administrator shared that sweets for the Parade have already been packaged and are ready for distribution during the Parade.

BCC Staff Bonus – The City Administrator shared that, like last year, all employees of the Council will receive a Christmas Bonus. Councilor Vaughan asked if giving the bonus to all employees is fair as he believes that the bonus should be based on employee performance. The City Administrator stated that it would not be advisable for the Council to make any change at this juncture. The City Administrator shared, however, that the Council could consider a change in how it awards the Christmas Bonus in the future. The City Administrator shared that each employee will receive one check which will be total to the amount of his/her bonus and the cost of a picnic ham or turkey.

Corporate Gift Baskets - The City Administrator stated that Councilors have been asked to submit names of persons/businesses for the corporate gift baskets.

Christmas Pantry Hampers/Ham & Turkey Coupons – The City Administrator informed that each Councilor will receive a total of nine (9) Christmas pantry hampers, thirty (30) picnic ham coupons and thirty (30) turkey coupons.

5.4 General Updates

5.4.1 **Traffic Light System** - The City Administrator informed that the new traffic light system, installed at the intersection of Central American Boulevard and Neal Pen Road, will be officially inaugurated on December 5, 2019.

- 5.4.2 **Belize City Swing Bridge** – The City Administrator informed that the pedestrian ramp on the western approach of the bridge is now open. The City Administrator provided the following breakdown of the repair costs of the bridge:

Initial Cost: \$20,000
Secondary Cost: \$105,000
Additional Costs: \$10,800

Current Total: \$135,800

- 5.5 **Request for Study Leave from City Planner** – The City Administrator informed that the City Planner is now requesting study leave with pay for a period of six months. The City Administrator shared that the Council’s General Administrative Rules (GAR) provides for study leave on the condition that the employee signs a bond. The City Administrator shared that the Council has received four applications for the recommended post of Assistant to the City Planner. The City Administrator stated, however, that none of the four applicants seem promising.
- 5.5.1 Councilor Elijio rose in support of the City Planner’s request for study leave with pay and spoke favorably about her performance.
- 5.5.2 Councilor Pollard Jr. rose in support of the City Planner’s request.
- 5.5.3 Deputy Mayor Arnold expressed that he would like to know if any precedent has been set with respect to employees requesting study leave with pay.
- 5.5.4 Councilor Vaughan rose in support of the City Planner’s request but expressed his concern about who will be made to hold over in her absence. Councilor Vaughan also shared his concern about whether or not the Council will be able to afford the payment for the six-month study leave. Councilors Gentle and Hylton shared Councilor Vaughan’s latter concern.
- 5.5.5 Councilor Norales rose in support of the City Planner’s request.

5.5.6 Mayor Wagner requested of the City Administrator that she provides a quantification of the cost of the six-month study leave and that a suitable person be identified to hold over during the City Planner's absence. The City Administrator shared that following a meeting she had with Mrs. Anna Espat, Building Unit Manager, Mrs. Espat appears now inclined to holding over during the City Planner's absence. The City Administrator stated that the City Planner is scheduled to proceed on study leave in early January 2020.

5.6 Legal Matters

5.6.1 **Judgment & Appeal (Candice Miller Claim)** – The City Administrator informed that Justice Courtney Abel has granted the Council a “stay of execution”. The City Administrator shared that she and the Mayor submitted signed affidavits that were sealed by the Court.

5.6.2 **Cecil Jenkins/Shana Whyte** – The City Administrator shared that through their attorneys, Mr. Cecil Jenkins and Ms. Shana Whyte, both former employees of the Council, are seeking compensation. Mr. Jenkins is seeking compensation of \$31,000 with the Council making a counter offer of \$10,000. Ms. Shana Whyte is seeking compensation of \$17,796 with the Council making a counter offer of \$5000. The City Administrator shared that the Council's counter offers have been sent to the attorneys for the two former employees.

Councilor Goodin stated that the Council needs to have stability and, thus, should avoid legal claims and exorbitant legal fees.

Deputy Mayor Arnold stated that both former employees did not hide the fact that they would have never worked in good faith with the new Council.

5.6.3 **Outstanding Trade License and Lease Payments** – The City Administrator informed that the Council is proceeding with legal action against Apex Belize Ltd. and the Little Boar House for outstanding trade license and outstanding lease agreement payments respectively.

Financial Summary: Income – November 2019

Collections: Property Tax and Traffic

- \$1.6 MIL (Up until November 20, 2019, only 620,000 collected)

Expenses for December 2019

- Salaries: \$800,000
- Christmas Bonuses & Tokens: \$250,000
- Christmas Initiatives: \$65,000
- Balloon Payments: RJB (\$250,000), Benson Ramclam (\$100,000),
- Back Payments: Insurance, Utilities, Belize Waste Control, Ranger Security, Income Tax

6.0 Submissions to Building Unit

- Request from Vendors Rina Ochoa and Luz Zelaya to construct an awning that will join Booths #17 & #26 at the Michael Finnegan Market, also requesting an offset (100%) – **MOTION PASSED (no offset)**

The City Planner shared that the Council has always granted 100% offsets. Mayor Wagner stated that the Council needs to revise its current policy and to implement a 60/40 offset formula.

- Request from Home Park Neighborhood Watch Association (King's Park) to erect a police booth in the Lopez Mateos Park – **MOTION PASSED**
- Request from Crème De La Crème I for the construction of a single staff bathroom at its location next to Belize Elementary School (**DENIED**)
- Request from Crème De La Crème II to construct two additional kiosks at Rock Park (**DEFERRED**)

Mayor Wagner stated that the Council will revisit the request from Crème De La Crème II given the fact that its current lease agreement raises some concerns.

- Request from Mr. Louis Thompson to sell ice-cream on Regent Street adjacent to the Battlefield Park. (**DENIED**)

7.0 **Mayor's Announcements/Matters/Updates**

- 7.1 **Climate Vulnerability Reduction Program** – Mayor Wagner shared about the Memorandum of Understanding (**MOU**) between the Belize City Council and the Ministry of Works. Mayor Wagner shared that the three main areas of the **MOU** include the rehabilitation of drains, the installation of gates at the canals (Pound Yard Bridge to Orange Street) and the installation of a pumping station. Mayor Wagner shared that the Council had submitted a formal request to the Ministry of Finance for the Ministry to reimburse the costs for the dredging of the canals. Mayor Wagner stated that under the **MOU**, the Council will be responsible for the maintenance of the pumping station.

Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the ratification of the **MOU** between the Belize City Council and the Ministry Works vis-à-vis the Climate Vulnerability Reduction Program. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

7.2 **Media Contracts (RSV Ltd., KREM, Vibes Media & Belize Times)**

Mayor Wagner moved motions for the approval of media contracts with KREM TV (\$38,610/year), KREM RADIO (\$18,302/year), VIBES Media & Belize Times (\$36,000/year). **ALL** Councilors voted in a favor. **MOTIONS PASSED**

It was agreed that the proposed contract from RSV Ltd. will be revisited.

- 7.3 **KREM New Year's Day Cycling Classic** – Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of the Council's sponsorship of the KREM New Year's Day Cycling Classic. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**

- 7.4 **Downtown Rejuvenation Project** – Mayor Wagner shared a PowerPoint presentation on the Downtown Rejuvenation Project. The City Administrator shared that the coordinators of the Downtown Rejuvenation Project have requested the use of the Battlefield Park on December 21, 2019 to host the “Belize Krismos Brukdong Bram Festival”.
- 8.0 **Ratification of MOU Between BCC and Utech Jamaica**
- 8.1 Councilor Goodin shared about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Belize City Council (BCC) and the University of Technology (Utech) Jamaica. Councilor Goodin shared that the MOU will be signed and formalized in Jamaica in early 2020.
- 8.2 Deputy Mayor Arnold asked if the Ministry of Education will need to be involved. Councilor Goodin replied that the Ministry of Education will not need to be involved given the fact that Utech Jamaica will be the accrediting body for the coaching certificates.
- 8.3 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the ratification of the MOU between the BCC and Utech Jamaica. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor. **MOTION PASSED**
- 9.0 **Proposed Contract (Belize Breaking News)**
- 9.1 Councilor Goodin presented a proposed contract from Belize Breaking News.
- 9.2 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council has its FB Page and is not an entity that sells/markets ads.
- 9.3 Councilor Pollard Jr. stated that, unlike conventional media houses, Belize Breaking News (BBN) employs more modern and creative reporting techniques.
- 9.4 Councilor Norales stated that the Council needs as much publicity as it could get.

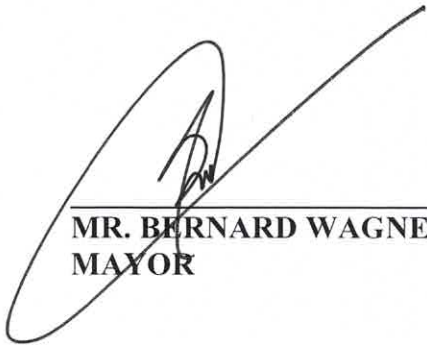


9.5 Mayor Wagner tasked Councilor Goodin with obtaining a more favorable cost from Belize Breaking News. Mayor Wagner stated that after securing a renegotiated and lower cost, the Council would vote, via round-robin, on the contract from Belize Breaking News.

10.0 **Adjournment**

Councilor Gentle moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Deputy Mayor Arnold seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Handwritten signatures in blue ink, including one that appears to be "PW" and another that is more stylized.



MR. BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



MRS. STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR