



MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

10:00 a.m.

January 31st, 2022

Present:

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| 1. His Worship Bernard Wagner | Mayor |
| 2. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr. | Deputy Mayor |
| 3. Mr. Albert Vaughan | Councilor |
| 4. Mr. Javier Castellanos | Councilor |
| 5. Mr. Micah Goodin | Councilor |
| 6. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | Councilor |
| 7. Mr. Edmund Kwan | Councilor |
| 8. Mr. Michael Novelo | Councilor |
| 9. Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh | Councilor |
| 10. Ms. Kaya Cattouse | Councilor |
| 11. Ms. Deannie Requeña | Councilor |
| Mr. Amir Carrillo | Finance Director |
| Mr. Eluide Miller | Manager, Office of the Mayor |

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

Councilor Vaughan led all in a word of prayer.

Councilor Kwan arrived to the meeting at 10:09 a.m.

- 1.0 Mayor Wagner greeted all in attendance and reiterated the importance of punctuality. Mayor Wagner then welcomed all Councilors back for the New Year and encouraged all Councilors to engage in the discussions to come.



- 1.1 Mayor Wagner stated that he is looking forward to the New Year and reiterated his support for all Council members.
- 1.2 Mayor Wagner shared that the City Administrator is still recovering from her battle with Covid-19 and asked for all Council members to keep her up in prayer.

Councilor Goodin arrived to the meeting at 10:13 a.m.

- 1.3 Mayor Wagner shared a video with all Council members and asked that they all observe and identify the importance team building plays within an organization.
- 1.4 Mayor Wagner highlighted the message behind the video, which shows the gradual transition from being self-oriented to adopting the mindset of being a team member.

Deputy Mayor Allan Pollard Jr. arrived to the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

- 1.5 Mayor Wagner noted that he knows the Council has had its challenges but reiterated his commitment to working for and with all members of the team.
- 1.6 Mayor Wagner highlighted that trust is integral in a team and shared that 2022 is a pivotal year for the Council. Mayor Wagner encouraged all Council members to be in tune with the manifesto and requested for each of them to adopt one of the initiative outlined therein.
- 1.7 Mayor Wagner applauded the efforts of the Urban Gardening Project, which is one of the initiatives outlined in the manifesto. Mayor Wagner then highlighted the progress being made with the E-Transit Network, stating that the buses are expected to be in the country by the middle of the year.

2.0 Ratification of the November 25th, 2021 Minutes

- 2.1 Mayor Wagner reminded all Council members that the minutes of the meeting are uploaded onto the Council's website as a measure of transparency and stated that this is one of the reason's why the Council is now recognized on a regional and international level by agencies such as the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network (CSCN) and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF).

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- 2.2 Mayor Wagner encouraged Councilors to thoroughly review the minutes of the meeting before they are ratified.
- 2.3 Correction to (10.2). Replace “refrained” with “abstained”.
- 2.4 Councilor Hamilton moved for the minutes of the meeting held on November 25th, 2021 to be ratified. Seconded by Councilor Castellanos.

3.0 Matters arising from Minutes

- 3.1 (3.15) Mayor Wagner expressed his condolences to Ms. Audett Nolberto who passed away. Mayor Wagner shared that the Council secured the services of Ms. Nolberto on several occasions given that she was in the business of carrying out due diligence.
- 3.2 (4.4) Councilor Hamilton provided an update on the CBA negotiations, stating that the most recent meeting was postponed since several members of the negotiation team contracted Covid-19 but noted that the committee has made significant progress thus far.
- 3.3 (4.4) Councilor Vaughan asked for the Finance Director to follow up with technical team to see how the CBA negotiations can proceed despite the absence of the City Administrator who is currently on certified medical leave.
- 3.4 (8.9) Councilor Novelo shared that Cabinet is desirous of continuing the LIU cleanup campaign program and noted that the Minister has requested the continued support of the Council to process the payment for the participants of the program. Councilor Novelo expressed that the Ministry is grateful for the Council’s willingness to assist with the program.
- 3.5 (7.12) Councilor Vaughan reiterated the seriousness of the Covid-19 pandemic and called for the Council’s Administration to ensure that employees are vaccinated and that they are encouraged to take the booster shot as well.
- 3.6 Mayor Wagner noted that he continues to urge employees to get vaccinated but expressed that it still remains a personal choice. Mayor Wagner shared that the Council’s vaccination rate is just above sixty percent (60%) at the last check.

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4.0 Announcements by Mayor

- 4.1 Mayor Wagner noted that the Belize Mayors' Association met with representatives from the Ministry of Finance who presented a proposed project for all municipalities, which involves the packaging and selling of all receivables. Mayor Wagner stated that this comes as a result of the high level of delinquency associated with the payment of property taxes by residents. Mayor Wagner shared that this proposed project will require the establishment of a Municipal Development Corporation (MDC), a Private Sector Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) and highlighted that it will seek to purchase the receivables of all municipalities at a discounted rate, providing instant cash flow while relieving municipalities of the need to pursue the outstanding receivables.
- 4.2 Mayor Wagner shared that the legislation is being drafted for the proposed project and announced that the Belize City Council will be the Pilot Project for this initiative. Mayor Wagner reiterated the need for proper vetting and consultation to be held ahead of its commencement.
- 4.3 Mayor Wagner shared a tool created by the Finance Department that allows for the Council to quickly ascertain the property tax compliance rate of each street within Belize City. Mayor Wagner commended the members of the Finance Department for creating the very useful tool.
- 4.4 Councilor Goodin shared that the low compliance rate seen on some streets comes as a direct result of the current economic climate and noted the need for the Council to derive some way of collecting outstanding receivables without taking away residents' property.
- 4.5 Mayor Wagner noted that the outstanding receivables that exist come as a result of taxes not being paid over a significant number of years, well beyond the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.6 Mayor Wagner offered some clarity on the increase of property taxes, stating that it is only one percent (1%) increase on the assessment value of the property. Mayor Wagner noted that long lines have been seen outside the Council given its current discount offerings on property taxes.

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- 4.7 Mayor Wagner announced that on February 3rd, 2022 the UNDP and the EU Commission will be launching its E-Mobility project (Low Emission Development Strategy) and noted that the Belize City Council is expected to play a key role. Mayor Wagner then shared that he will be delivering the Welcome Remarks at the ceremony and that Councilor Vaughan who is the Councilor with responsibility for Traffic will join him. Mayor Wagner then noted that the Council is working to declare the route, which the electric buses will run upon their arrival in mid 2022.
- 4.8 Mayor Wagner noted that this project would allow for the city to reduce its carbon footprint since residents will opt to utilize the reliable and efficient public transport system as opposed to driving their personal vehicles to work. Mayor Wagner reiterated that it is the aim of the Council to partner with the Private Sector to establish a Public Private Partnership in order to finance additional buses needed for the E-Transit public transportation system.
- 4.9 Mayor Wagner shared an update on the Parking Meters Pilot Project, noting that the Ministry will be providing the Council with the provisional letter needed to launch the pilot. Mayor Wagner noted that the pilot project is expected to run a period of one (1) year, commencing March 7th, 2022. During this time, respective municipalities will have the opportunity to gather the necessary information needed to determine the effectiveness and viability of parking meters going forward.
- 4.10 Mayor Wagner introduced Mr. Danny Madrid who joined the meeting as a representative of the Order of Distinguished Services (ODS) in the People's United Party (PUP).
- 4.11 Mayor Wagner highlighted the need for consultations to be done with the Area Representative, residents and business owners in those constituencies in which the parking meter pilot project will be rolled out. Mayor Wagner shared that he met with the CEO in the Ministry of Local Government and the CEO in the Ministry of Transport who are both in support of the pilot project. Mayor Wagner then announced that the pilot project would see the participation of two private companies, Parking Solutions Ltd. and Betta Park Solutions.



- 4.12 Mayor Wagner noted that in the case of BTL Park, the introduction of parking meters would assist the vendors who often complain that their customers do not have adequate parking spaces available given that employees from surrounding businesses utilize the public spaces for majority of the day.
- 4.13 Mayor Wagner noted that the Council does not have to provide any capital to run the pilot project and shared that the Council is requesting a 60-40% split between the Council and both entities partaking in the pilot project.
- 4.14 Councilor Cattouse inquired if the parking meters would allow for the usage of debit cards.
- 4.15 Mayor Wagner highlighted that the technology that allows for the usage of local debit cards are still being developed. Mayor Wagner shared that the meters do allow for the usage of prepaid cards as both entities are promoting cashless payment systems.
- 4.16 Councilor Kwan shared an idea for additional parking meters to be installed along the canal side near the Michael Finnegan Market.
- 4.17 Mayor Wagner highlighted that the pilot project will create jobs for enforcement officers who will be tasked with ensuring compliance by residents as well as the safety of the meters.
- 4.18 Mayor Wagner shared that he is meeting with Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) to discuss the installation of several electric charging stations across Belize City. Mayor Wagner noted that this ties in with the Council's commitment to the establishment of its e-transit network.
- 4.19 Mayor Wagner shared that several staff members have been transferred recently, noting that Mr. Jermaine Hyde who previously served as the Traffic Department's Administrative Manager now serves as the Manager of the Municipal Court, Ms. Ursula Smith who previously served as the Manager of the Municipal Court now serves as Manager in the Audit Department and Mr. Blake who previously served as Senior Accountant in the Finance Department now serves as the Traffic Department's Administrative Manager.



- 4.20 Mayor Wagner shared that Ms. Jenelle Broaster will be acting as the Traffic Administrative Officer for the next three (3) months and noted that he is pleased with the job she has been doing thus far.
- 4.21 Mayor Wagner declared that the recent allegations of corruption within the Traffic Department are completely false and expressed that he has filed a lawsuit against the principals of “Hot off the Press”, “UDP Belize” and “Guardian Newspaper” for their part in broadcasting false allegations. Mayor Wagner noted that it is his intention to pursue this to the full extent of the law. Mayor Wagner reiterated that the Council remains transparent and has zero tolerance for corruption.

5.0 Presentation: Welcome Resource Center – Ms. Aimee Jex

- 5.1 Ms. Jex thanked Mayor Wagner and all Council members for allowing her to make her presentation, which focuses on mental health sensitivity.
- 5.2 Ms. Jex introduced several topics including mental illness, deinstitutionalization of psychiatric care, treatment of acute incidents and possible responses.
- 5.3 Ms. Jex shared that mental illness is non-communicable and can become obvious through various common disorders, which include anxiety, depression, as well as psychotic and bipolar conditions.
- 5.4 Ms. Jex highlighted the movement towards the deinstitutionalization of patients due to the various human rights movements and noted that the aim is to provide community-supporting housing solutions for people with severe mental illness.
- 5.5 Ms. Jex noted that the Belize City Council has collaborated with the Welcome Resource Center in the past by providing assistance with transportation and security for their facility.
- 5.6 Ms. Jex shared that it is the vision of the Welcome Resource Center to provide a shared space for participants but noted that expansions have been limited due to lack of funds.

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- 5.7 Ms. Jex shared a request for the Belize City Council to provide the Center with transportation and security. Ms. Jex highlighted that this would help the Center to serve the public in a much more effective manner.
- 5.8 Mayor Wagner suggested that the Belize City Council and the Welcome Resource Center should meet with the different agencies including the Ministry of Health, the Department of Human Development, the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Education in an effort to come to some sort of resolution to the challenges being faced by the Center.
- 5.9 Ms. Jex thanked Mayor Wagner and the Belize City Council for their continued support and expressed her willingness to meet with all the aforementioned stakeholders in the near future.
- 5.10 Mayor Wagner and all Councilors thanked Ms. Jex for her presentation.

6.0 Notices

- 6.1 No notices were tabled.

7.0 Questions

- 7.1 No questions were tabled.

8.0 Petitions

- 8.1 Councilor Kwan tabled a petition in reference to a motion deferred at the last caucus meeting. Councilor Kwan noted that the petition is in reference to a request for a no objection letter for the proposed establishment of an UNO Gas Service Station on North Front Street.



- 8.2 Mayor Wagner noted that there is a moratorium on the establishment of gas service stations in residential areas and shared that the matter requires approval from the Department of the Environment (DOE), Fire Department approval as well as adequate consultation with relevant parties including the area representative, the business community and residents. Mayor Wagner expressed that this matter must also be brought to the caucus as a motion.
- 8.3 Councilor Novelo expressed that the gas service station at the Northern Fisherman Cooperative has reached its expiration date and is to be abolished and thus this proposed service station is to serve as an alternative.
- 8.4 Mayor Wagner shared that the owner of the proposed project must provide all relevant documentation and suggested that they should present at the next caucus meeting to answer any concerns the members of the Council may have in regards to the proposed project.

9.0 Presentation of Reports from Councilors

- 9.1 Councilor Castellanos provided an update on the twelve (12) days of Christmas initiative, which the Council contributed to. Councilor Castellanos noted that Diamonds International, Hofius, Golden Bay and JEC also contributed to the initiative. Councilor Castellanos then shared documented images, showcasing the full makeover and clothes that each participant of the program received. Councilor Castellanos thanked Mayor Wagner and fellow Councilors for their support in approving the Council's contribution to the initiative.
- 9.2 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. congratulated Councilor Castellanos on his initiative as it really embodies the "All bout the people" mantra of the Council. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared updates from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) program, which he believes will provide the city with the opportunity to generate additional revenues. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. noted that the City Planner, Ms. Carla Patnett is spearheading the communication between the Belize City Council and UNCDF.



- 9.3 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed his optimism for the new year, stating that the financial constraints brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic halted many of the infrastructural works the Council intended on carrying out in 2021. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared that he did a tour of the Council's Mile 4 compound along with Councilor Cattouse and shared their desire to spearhead the development of the compound as well as the development of the staff to support more effective and efficient maintenance of the Council's equipment and machinery.
- 9.4 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared that efforts are being made by the Works Department to prepare a list of those pieces of equipment which are no longer functional or are unserviceable and noted that this list will be shared with the Audit Department upon its completion.
- 9.5 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. stated that he is hopeful that the procurement process will be more efficient in the New Year as this will assist this Works Department in their drive to become more effective in the execution of their duties.
- 9.6 Councilor Vaughan shared that he is paying keen attention to the Special Constable Department and noted that he plans on having a strategic meeting with them in an effort to improve enforcement. Councilor Vaughan notified the Council that he would be bringing a proposal in the near future in reference to the selling of "bad" traffic tickets where the associated fines remain uncollected by the recipient of the ticket.
- 9.7 Councilor Novelo expressed the need for an increase in the fuel allotment for the Cemetery Department given the efforts being made to improve the maintenance of the Cemetery grounds. Councilor Novelo shared that it is the intent of the Public Health Department to become more effective in clearing abandoned properties across the city as well as the impounding of derelict vehicles. Councilor Novelo ended by noting that he is pleased with the performance of the Acting Manager at the Cemetery Department.
- 9.8 Councilor Goodin reported that the Micah Goodin Christmas Cup was a huge success. Councilor Goodin noted that half of the budget was distributed as cash prizes and the remainder was used for logistics, food and refreshments. Councilor Goodin then provided the Finance Director with the necessary supporting documentation to justify this expenditure.



- 9.9 Councilor Goodin shared he is of the belief that his new portfolio of Community Engagement captures many umbrellas and noted that it is his intention to meet with the diaspora across several major U.S. cities to see how they relationships can be fostered with those beyond the borders of Belize. Councilor Goodin also shared his excitement to work along with the Ministry of E-Governance to further the Council's efforts to remain pro-business through the effective utilization of modern day technology.
- 9.10 Councilor Hamilton revealed that representatives from the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) had the opportunity to meet with Mayor Wagner to discuss the Food Corridor project and noted that the blueprint is being formalized. Councilor Hamilton also shared that representatives from BTB including the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Anthony Mahler met with Mayor Wagner to discuss several other projects including the Memorial Park, Berger Field and the Belize City Swing Bridge.
- 9.11 Councilor Cattouse noted that the Belize City Council hosted its first annual Glow Parade and stated that it was a huge success. Councilor Cattouse then shared that Community Ride initiative has seen an increase in participants on a weekly basis. Councilor Cattouse highlighted donations made to the Belize U-17 female national team as well as the Marlyn Vansen medical fund.
- 9.12 Councilor Cattouse announced that the Council would be participating in the upcoming Softball Interoffice Tournament. Councilor Cattouse then stated that she is working relentlessly to see how the Sanitation/Works compound could become more organized and structured in an effort to improve efficiency. Councilor Cattouse ended by sharing the significant progress being made with the Urban Garden being established on Police Street.
- 9.13 Councilor Requeña shared that she met with representatives of Holy Redeemer Credit Union (HRCU) as the Councilor for After School Programs and NGOs to explore the possibility of collaboration on the Literacy Program previously proposed. Councilor Requeña then expressed that she intends on meeting with several educational institutions to see how they can collaborate to assist students and teachers to become more productive while utilizing the virtual learning platform. Councilor Requeña ended by sharing that she plans on visiting several U.S. cities to see how her relatives and the diaspora can assist initiatives undertaken by the Council going forward.



- 9.14 Councilor Kwan revealed that the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Anthony Mahler is planning to launch a small business program in collaboration with the Belize City Council. Councilor Kwan then highlighted that the third and fourth of the Belize City Accelerator Program (BCAP) will be receiving their assistance in the coming week.

10.0 Motions by Councilors

- 10.1 Mayor Wagner moved a motion to approve the following monthly deduction, which is to be remitted to the People's United Party (PUP) as a contribution from members of the Belize City Council. The deduction is to take effect at the next pay period.

Mayor - 5% of monthly Salary/Stipend
Councilor – 2% of monthly Stipend

Motion seconded by Councilor Requeña. **MOTION PASSED.**

11.0 Presentation: Belize Tourism Board, Food Corridor – Mr. Josue Carballo & Ms. Vanessa Jacobs

- 11.1 Mr. Carballo introduced himself and Ms. Jacobs and shared that they both work within the Product Development Department at the Belize Tourism Board (BTB).
- 11.2 Mr. Carballo noted that there has been a major shift in the plan to better map Belize City as a tourism destination.
- 11.3 Ms. Jacobs started the presentation by highlighting the concept of the proposed Food Hub, which is geared towards the transformation and rejuvenation of the Mahogany Street area. Ms. Jacobs shared that this would include the replacing of existing structures in an effort to improve aesthetics and ensure standardization. In addition, this will allow for the installation of all necessary amenities and utilities.



- 11.4 Ms. Jacobs outlined the conceptual plan for the first phase of the development which includes the installation of ten (10) new wooden adjoining 10' by 12' booths, one (1) 8' by 8' tent and one (1) 10' by 20' restroom (male and female) as well as two (2) open air 12' by 63' trellis structure with a waterproof fabric cover for dining.
- 11.5 Ms. Jacobs noted that the proposed project would require the partnership of the Belize City Council, stating that the Council would have to manage the booths, ensure traffic control and the erection of requisite street signage and provide security personnel.
- 11.6 Mr. Carballo further highlighted the benefits of the project noting that the Council will own the development following the completion of the renovation. Mr. Carballo then noted the need for a meeting to be arranged between the Belize City Council, the Minister of Tourism and the Area Representative for the Lake Independence Constituency.
- 11.7 Councilor Goodin commended Mr. Carballo and Ms. Jacobs for their unwavering commitment to bring the proposed project to life.
- 11.8 Mayor Wagner declared that a committee with several Councilors will be formed and stated that this committee will be directly involved in moving the proposed project forward.
- 11.9 Mr. Carballo shared other areas of partnership between the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) and the Belize City Council as discussed at the most recent meeting with Mayor Wagner and the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Anthony Mahler.
- 11.10 Mr. Carballo outlined a proposal to develop the Fort George area and highlighted the need for the formation of a committee that will spearhead this initiative. Mr. Carballo expressed that this project can begin within the next week or two once the Council agrees to sign on to the MOU with the Belize Tourism Board (BTB). Mr. Carballo then thanked the Council for collaborating with the BTB on the Pickstock Cleanup Campaign.
- 11.11 Mr. Carballo communicated interest in collaborating with the Belize City Council to work towards the replacement of the Belize City Swing Bridge, which remains a priority of the Council.



- 11.12 Mayor Wagner conveyed that the Council met with the CEO in the Ministry of Economic Development, Dr. Osmond Martinez and noted that the Ministry has requested for a feasibility study to be financed by the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI). Mayor Wagner then thanked Mr. Carballo and Ms. Jacobs for their presentation and reiterated the Council's commitment to partner with the BTB on the initiatives discussed.
- 11.13 Councilor Cattouse commended Councilor Hamilton, Mr. Carballo and Ms. Jacobs for their exemplary work.

12.0 New Business

- 12.1 No new business was tabled.

13.0 Submissions from City Planning Unit – Mr. Melvin Meyers & Ms. Chelsea Perera

- 13.1 Mr. Myers greeting Mayor Wagner and all members of the Council and introduced the new Assistant City Planner, Ms. Chelsea Perera.
- 13.2 Ms. Perera noted that she holds a Bachelors and Master's Degree from Murray State University and stated that she looks forward to assist the City Planning Unit in their functions.
- 13.3 Mayor Wagner noted that Ms. Perera was brought on in an effort to ensure succession planning.
- 13.4 A request from Ms. Bessie Garcia for approval to sell fruits at the corner of Albert and Church Street. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 13.5 A request from Ms. Heidy Andrade to lease a portion of the Coney Drive Reserve to establish a small food restaurant. **MOTION DENIED.**
- 13.6 A request from Mr. Ronald Meighan for approval to sell fruits at the corner of Albert and Church Street. **MOTION DENIED.**

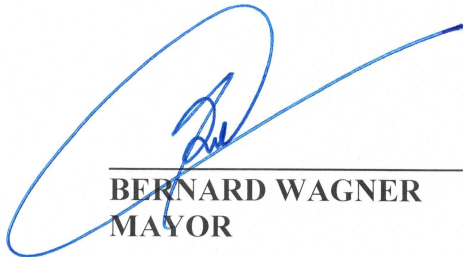


14.0 Other Business

- 14.1 Mr. Madrid greeting the Mayor and all Councilors and shared that he is representing the Order of Distinguished Services (ODS) of the People's United Party (PUP).

15.0 Adjournment

- 15.1 Councilor Cattouse moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councilor Novelo. The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



MR. AMIR CARRILLO
FINANCE DIRECTOR

