

MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING

Caucus Room
Belize City Hall
June 17th, 2021

Present:

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. **Ms. Kaya Cattouse** Councilor
7. **Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton** Councilor
8. **Mr. Edmund Kwan** Councilor
9. **Mr. Michael Novelo** Councilor
10. **Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh** Councilor
11. **Ms. Deannie Requeña** Councilor

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt, **City Administrator**

Mr. Eluide Miller, **Manager**, Office of the Mayor

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. in the presence of Deputy Mayor Allan Pollard Jr. and Councilors Albert Vaughan, Michael Novelo, Javier Castellanos, Stephanie Hamilton and Micah Goodin.

1.0 Councilor Vaughan led all in attendance in reciting the Belize National Prayer.

1.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed all to the meeting.

Councilor Pipersburgh and Councilor Requena arrived at the meeting at 9:12 a.m.



2.0 Ratification of May 20th, 2021 Minutes

- 2.1 Councilor Hamilton moved for the ratification of the May 20th, 2021 minutes of the meeting. Seconded by Councilor Goodin.

Councilor Cattouse arrived at the meeting at 9:17 a.m.

3.0 Matters arising from Minutes

- 3.1 The City Administrator provided an update on the matter concerning the procurement of heavy duty equipment from Mr. Sampson. The City Administrator noted that she was finally able to get in contact with Mr. Sampson via phone where he advised that the Council could pick up the dump truck, which the Council now has in its possession. The City Administrator then shared that the truck was used by the Sanitation Department the night of June 16, 2021 and they have reported several issues with it since. These issues were in relation to the horn, windshield wipers and leakages from the hydraulic pump.
- 3.1.1 The City Administrator shared that Mr. Sampson spoke with Mr. Ramon Menjivar (Works Manager), Mr. Simeon Alvarez Jr. (Sanitation Manager) and Mr. Chris Banner (Legal Counsel) and highlighted that he isn't keen on releasing the street sweeper to the Council until he is back in the country. It is believed that this is in an effort to keep the street sweeper "hostage" in the event that the Council does not cover the remaining payments even though the payment for the street sweeper has been made.
- 3.1.2 The City Administrator stated that Mr. Sampson is increasingly difficult to deal with and shared that he has committed to provide the Council with a return date at which time a meeting can be arranged to discuss the way forward.
- 3.1.3 Councilor Novelo questioned the Council's need for the remaining pieces of equipment.
- 3.1.4 The City Administrator shared that the Council is in dire need of the remaining pieces of equipment to carry out works across the City. She then shared that the total acquisition cost of the pieces of equipment is \$200,000.00 of which \$160,000.00 has been paid. The remaining \$40,000.00 covers the cost of the two dump trucks outstanding.



- 3.1.5 Councilor Vaughan expressed his disappointment and suggested that the Legal Counsel advise the Council on the way forward in order to get value for monies spent. Councilor Vaughan suggested that Mr. Sampson has breached the terms of contract.
- 3.1.6 Mayor Wagner shared that he is in support of having the Legal Counsel look into the matter, as Mr. Sampson is not upholding his end of the agreement.
- 3.1.7 The City Administrator stated that the Legal Counsel has suggested an addendum to the contract.
- 3.1.8 Councilor Goodin expressed his disappointment as he was very wary and skeptical of the agreement from the onset as the equipment are all used pieces of equipment. Councilor Goodin stated that it is very unfair as Mr. Sampson is defrauding taxpayers and so the Council should pursue this matter legally as a precedent must be set.
- 3.2 The City Administrator shared that the Council has submitted its formal response to the CWU regarding the proposed framework for renegotiations of the CBA. The Union has asked for the Council to reconsider its position and stated that the Mayor has asked that the Legal Counsel review the framework to see how the Council can adopt and utilize it.
- 3.2.1 Mayor Wagner stated that the idea is to get a Collective Bargaining Agreement in place and shared that the Union is not in support of the phasing out of employees who are beyond the age of retirement and will provide suggestions to the Council at a later date.
- 3.2.3 Councilor Novelo questioned the timeline for a response.
- 3.2.4 Mayor Wagner shared that all relevant information has been provided to the CWU and they have committed to getting back to the Council.
- 3.2.5 Councilor Vaughan highlighted that 40% of the Council's revenues are expended on personal emoluments. Councilor Vaughan then stated that the Council should stand its ground in negotiating with the CWU, as it is important that staff members that are of retirement age are retired at the appropriate time.

- 3.2.6 Councilor Novelo seconded the sentiments shared by Councilor Vaughan and stated that the Council must create opportunities for young people in order to increase productivity which in turn help the Council to better accomplish its mandate to the residents of Belize City.
- 3.2.7 Councilor Hamilton shared that she is in full support of the phasing out of retirees as it is an effective way of cutting the Council's expenditure.
- 3.2.8 Mayor Wagner shared a file with the names and pictures of all those employees who will be retired through the phasing out process.
- 3.3 The City Administrator offered some clarification on the lean and light listing stating that no attention was given to the names of those on the list. She then shared that the list was made based on the Council's ability to continue its operations without filling these positions as well as the amount of payouts due to those employees on the list. The City Administrator noted that transfers were made where possible in order to avoid adding additional employees to the list.
- 3.3.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard expressed concern in regards to the amount of supporting details given the Councilors and the fact that Managers had some input in the process as he believes that the goal is to save costs but the Managers may not be of the same view.
- 3.3.2 The City Administrator shared that managers were consulted and noted that the Council has had some issues managing some of the same employees on the list which has even led to the Council being held liable for some of their wrongdoings.
- 3.3.3 Deputy Mayor Pollard questioned if the Councilors will have a look at the lean and light list on an individual basis.
- 3.4 Councilor Goodin highlighted efforts being made to educate the community and have them register with waste control and solid waste management. Councilor Goodin stated that the intention is to continue to program for three (3) months in order to be effective. In addition, a poster competition is being launched to enforce the message of "no littering".

Councilor Kwan arrived at the meeting at 9:33 a.m.

4.0 Announcements by Mayor

- 4.1 Mayor Wagner shared that the Council has continued its efforts to get investors to buy into the Municipal Bond and stated that the Council got a subscription of \$1,000,000.00 from Belize Natural Energy Ltd. Mayor Wagner then outlined what payments would be made using the funds from this investment.
- 4.2 Mayor Wagner stated that the team is still pursuing other subscriptions and highlighted several meetings with potential investors. Mayor Wagner expressed that it is important to get investors to invest into the City in order to roll out some infrastructural work, as there are several streets that are in urgent need of repairs.
- 4.3 Councilor Vaughan highlighted efforts being made to set up a meeting between Hon. Julius Espat (Minister of Infrastructural Development & Housing) and the Council in order to request their assistance in getting infrastructural work done across the City.
- 4.4 Mayor Wagner shared a letter that was sent to the Ministry of Works by the City Planner in reference to vendors on the Philip Goldson Highway and outlined the risk it poses to vehicular traffic and pedestrians.
- 4.5 The City Administrator shared images of the aforementioned stalls along the side of the highway.
- 4.6 Mayor Wagner commended the sister city relations between the Belize City Council and other municipalities as they have been seeking guidance on administrative matters such as MIS and Human Resources.

5.0 Presentation: Belize City Games - Mr. Devin Daly and Mr. Marvin Ottley

- 5.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed Mr. Daly and Mr. Ottley to the meeting.
- 5.2 Mr. Ottley shared the idea of reviving the City Games, which first started in 2018 and was recently revised in early 2021. Mr. Ottley noted that there is a small group who is coordinating and conducting research, which includes himself, Mr. Daly, Mr. Stanley Reneau and Councilor Cattouse.



- 5.3 Mr. Ottley highlighted that this group is making an effort to include more sports in order to make the City Games more dynamic and inclusive. This will be accomplished by introducing fifteen (15) disciplines in order to allow for each constituency to be able to partake in the games.
- 5.4 Mr. Ottley stated that there is no tentative start date and shared a proposed structure for the City Games Committee with Mayor Wagner being the proposed Chairman.
- 5.5 Mayor Wagner shared that he is always in support of sporting initiatives and encourages the concept of the Belize City Games. Mayor Wagner then commended the National Sports Council for collaborating with the Belize City Council in their efforts to revitalize the Belize City Games.
- 5.6 Councilor Cattouse highlighted that the Belize City Games is one of the Council's manifesto goals and stated that with the partnership of both entities the Belize City Games can surely come to fruition.
- 6.0 Presentation: Proposal for Tax Collection Agent - Mr. Maurice Underwood**
- 6.1 Mr. Underwood shared that he represents C & S Company Ltd. which is a collection agency that has been in operation for the past (26) years.
- 6.2 Mr. Underwood shared a concept referred to as "Pay and Play" where residents who pay their property taxes are incentivized by getting a chance to win a lottery prize each night by selecting a (3) digit number.
- 6.3 Mr. Underwood highlighted that "Pay and Play" was once introduced under the previous administration and was somewhat successful during its time.
- 6.4 Mayor Wagner questioned the amount of returns the previous Council generated by launching this program.
- 6.5 Mr. Underwood gave a brief overview of how the program worked under the previous administration and stated that people fail to realize that lotteries were first created to incentivize people to pay their taxes all with a view to increase revenues for municipalities.

6.6 Mayor Wagner stated that additional quantitative data will be necessary in order for the Council to further explore the proposal and thanked Mr. Underwood for his presentation.

7.0 Presentation: Welcome Resource Center - Ms. Joyce Ellis

7.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed Ms. Ellis and thanked her for her continued efforts to help residents in need.

7.2 Ms. Ellis started her presentation by carrying out a simulation exercise with all in attendance in order to highlight the vulnerability of the group of residents who benefit from the programs carried out by the Welcome Resource Center.

7.3 Ms. Ellis shared a short video, which highlighted the programs being carried out by the Welcome Resource Center, which included the (3C's) drive which seeks to get contributions in the form of cash, canned foods or clothes.

7.4 Ms. Ellis requested that the Council make a contribution to help launch an evening initiative, which aims to provide residents in need with an afternoon activity, meal and transportation.

7.5 Mayor Wagner made a personal contribution to the initiative and stated that the Council will explore the possibility of making a contribution. Mayor Wagner questioned if there is any long term plan for these vulnerable residents, stating that collaboration between the Ministry of Human Development and the Welcome Resource Center is necessary going forward.

7.6 Ms. Ellis thanked Mayor Wagner for his contribution and noted that efforts are being made to collaborate with the Ministry. Ms. Ellis thanked the Council for their time and stated that she is looking forward to future collaborations.

8.0 Presentation: Belize Tourism Board - Fort George Tourism Zone & Reopening of Cruise Tourism - Ms. Noriko Gamero

8.1 Ms. Gamero stated that she would be sharing a proposal for the Fort George Tourism Zone ahead of the reopening of Cruise Tourism to Belize.



- 8.2 Ms. Gamero gave a quick overview of the pre-pandemic state of the Fort George Tourism Zone and highlighted several issues that affect guest experience including delays due to congestion of traffic, loading and safety risks and the lack of standard operating procedures outside of the port.
- 8.3 Ms. Gamero shared a view of the different terminals within the Fort George Tourism Zone and the craft market.
- 8.4 Ms. Gamero highlighted plans to increase foot traffic of passengers to the Memorial Park and outlined collaboration recommendations.
- 8.5 Mayor Wagner noted that this matter has been on the table for some time. Mayor Wagner tabled the idea of declaring an identified corridor in order for the better flow of pedestrian traffic to the Memorial Park, which will serve as the “hub” for all tourists who come ashore. This hub will serve as the point of contact with all tour operators and will offer different forms of entertainment, food and activities for tourists.
- 8.6 Councilor Vaughan seconded Mayor Wagner’s remarks and noted that the Belize Tourism Board must do their part in demarcating the area and leading visitors to the designated area.
- 8.7 Councilor Castellanos shared that most tours are being done in other districts and this hub will help to keep some visitors within city limits and activities in the hub will serve as incentive to stay and explore the city.
- 8.8 Councilor Novelo shared that the problem has always been that the tourists who come ashore are taken on tours from the terminals they arrive at and so they do not explore the city.
- 8.9 The City Administrator shared that a consultation was done with residents in the Fort George area and they are completely against the idea of having the Memorial Park serve as the hub for tourists coming ashore.
- 8.10 Mayor Wagner thanked Ms. Gamero for her presentation and reiterated that the Council is always open to working with the Belize Tourism Board to explore ways to improve tourism in Belize.



9.0 Notices

- 9.1 Councilor Goodin reminded Mayor Wagner and all Councilors of the Virtual Town Hall meeting scheduled for June 24th, 2021 to begin at 7:00 p.m.

10.0 Petitions

- 10.1 Councilor Castellanos shared a petition submitted by Divine Mercy Church requesting for a "quiet zone" sign to be placed near the church on the Philip Goldson Highway.
- 10.1.2 Councilor Vaughan stated that the Council has passed a resolution to ban the use of jake brakes and muffler enhancements and stated that this would help to alleviate the issue.
- 10.2 Councilor Cattouse shared a petition submitted by YWCA in reference to their swimming pool, which has not been in use for some time given the Covid-19 pandemic. YWCA is requesting a donation from the Council to cover a portion of the expenses for their first month of reopening. The approximate expense for the first month of reopening is \$4,000.00. YWCA is offering the use of the pool to the Council for any sporting activities in exchange for any contributions made.

11.0 Questions

- 11.1 No questions were tabled.

12.0 Presentation of Reports from Councilors

- 12.1 Councilor Vaughan thanked Mayor Wagner for his collaboration and support in the development of the new Traffic Inspection Booth and the refitting of the Traffic Department noting that the enforcement section has been relocated to the Old City Hall building on North Front Street, Belize City.

Handwritten initials and a dollar sign symbol.

- 12.2 Councilor Goodin shared that the Sanitation Department is in communication with Sol Belize as they are interested in adopting an area within Fort George in an effort to better beautify and maintain the area. Councilor Goodin also noted that he is in communication with several Ministers of Government to see how they could possibly partner to relaunch the drain digging project across several constituencies in Belize City.
- 12.3 Councilor Cattouse highlighted efforts being made in conjunction with the National Sports Council to launch the Belize City Games.
- 12.4 Councilor Novelo shared that the Public Health Department is making an effort to address the numerous abandoned lots across the city. Councilor Novelo also provided an update on the derelict vehicles program and shared several proposals being explored to increase activity in the Memorial Park.
- 12.5 Councilor Requeña highlighted several initiatives being organized by the Public Relations Department including the highlighting of a mom and dad from each constituency across Belize City for Mother's/Father's Day and the hosting of a movie night in the Memorial Park.
- 12.6 Councilor Kwan shared that LED is working to identify opportunities for small businesses including the Belize City Food Festival, which is in its planning stages.
- 12.7 Councilor Hamilton highlighted that she had the pleasure of having the City Administrator be a part of a meeting with the Belize Tourism Board in exploring how the Council can benefit from their proposed projects as Tourism is expected to resume in the coming months. The Code of Ethics for the Diaspora Help Desk needs to be finalized.
- 12.8 Councilor Pipersburgh shared that CEMO is forming another committee, which will be meeting in the upcoming week in order to discuss the way forward and highlighted that she has spoken with several Area Representatives in order to get the Ministry of Agriculture's support as it relates to the Urban Gardening Project. Councilor Pipersburgh also shared that she is in discussions with BAPDA to see how the Council can be more considerate of those residents with disabilities.

Handwritten initials/signature

12.9 Councilor Castellanos invited Mr. Simeon Alvarez Sr., Manager of the Special Constable Department to give a presentation to the Council as it relates to his department. Mr. Alvarez highlighted efforts being made to work the Belize Police Department when carrying out night operations and stated that the department is in dire need of equipment in order to be more effective and visible when carrying out their operations.

13.0 Motions by Councilors

13.1 Councilor Cattouse moved a motion for the Belize City Council to donate \$1,000.00 to the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) in (2) equal installments in order to help offset the cost of operating their facilities for the provision of various summer programs geared towards youths across Belize City. The first installment is to be paid in the month of July followed by the second in the month of August 2021. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Pollard. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.2 Councilor Cattouse moved a motion for the Belize City Council to contribute (4) basketballs and two (2) nets up to a maximum cost of \$500.00 to Princess Royal for their summer sports program, which aims to build interpersonal skills among youths across Belize City. Seconded by Councilor Hamilton. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.3 Councilor Vaughan presented a petition to reduce the hours of service provided by Ranger Security in (5) locations, which will average savings of approximately \$19,000.00 monthly. The contract includes provisions to change service hours and locations based on the Council's needs. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Pollard. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.4 Councilor Requeña moved a motion to renew Breaking Belize News's Contract through the period June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022. The cost of the contract was reduced by 50% without a change in the services offered. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.5 Councilor Pipersburgh moved a motion for the Council to approve the Urban Gardens Initiative and for its advertisements to include the offsetting of participant's property taxes for current year or duration of the agreement. This offset would not apply to arrears. Seconded by Councilor Goodin. **MOTION PASSED.**

Handwritten initials and a dollar sign symbol.

14.0 New Business

Adjusted Working Hours

- 14.1 The City Administrator referenced discussions held in the previous meeting in reference to the Council exploring possible methods by which it can reduce its wage bill.
- 14.2 The City Administrator shared a proposed method drafted by the Revenue Team to reduce the Council's wage bill in a more immediate and direct manner. Through this method, work hours would be reduced from 40 hours per week to 35 hours per week. This would ultimately decrease the Council's wage bill by approximately \$41,000.00 per pay period. In order to facilitate the decrease in working hours, usual work hours would be changed to 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- 14.3 Councilor Goodin questioned if this would also apply to Councilors.
- 14.4 The City Administrator stated that it should be a blanket approach.
- 14.5 Mayor Wagner agreed that it should also apply to Mayor and all Councilors and implored all Councilors to take part in the reduction, as he is willing to take up to a 25% reduction in stipend.
- 14.6 Councilor Vaughan suggested that other cost saving measures be explored.
- 14.7 The Mayor and City Administrator noted that other cost savings measures are being taken in order to cut expenditure including the reduction of fuel allocations.
- 14.8 The City Administrator highlighted that managers did their part and gave up 1/3 of their salary without a reduction in their work hours last May and June.
- 14.9 Councilor Vaughan stated that the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are very real and highlighted that other entities are still having to make tough decisions to grapple with the effects of the pandemic.



Designing of the Belize City Powerball - Lake I Development Co Ltd

14.11 Mayor Wagner asked all Councilors to review a consultation from Lake I Development Co Ltd for the Designing of the Belize City Powerball in order to fully digest all the information and offer feedback at a later date.

14.12 Mayor Wagner approved the following Councilors to serve on the the Powerball Committee:

Councilor Edmund Kwan
Councilor Micah Goodin
Councilor Javier Castellanos
Councilor Michael Novelo
Councilor Natasha Pipersburgh

15.0 Submissions from Building Unit - Ms. Carla Patnett, City Planner

15.1 A request from Mr. Brent Hernandez to occupy a portion of the reserve on Coney Drive and construct a board deck that will house (3) umbrellas and a table to vend Dario's Meat Pie. **MOTION DENIED.**

15.2 A request from the Consulate of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay in Belize for offsetting against property taxes for street rehabilitations done in the vicinity of #4752 West Landivar where their offices are located. **MOTION PASSED.**

15.3 A request by Mr. Harry Pilgrim to name the street in-between Fred Westby Park and Caribbean Shipping Agencies "Mother P Lane". **Motion referred to the Street Naming Committee.**

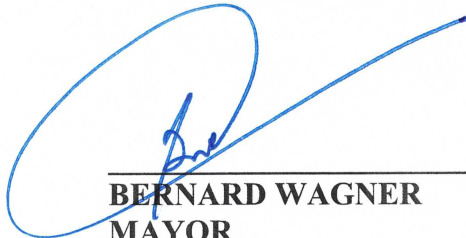
15.4 A request by Mr. Roger Saldivar Jr. for the closure of the street reserve designated as a street adjacent to Parcel No. 20 Block 45 only, Queen Square West Registration Section and permission to occupy the street reserve that gives access to his properties. **MOTION PASSED.**

16.0 Other Business

16.1 No other business was tabled.


17.0 Adjournment

17.1 Councilor Vaughan moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councilor Pipersburgh. The meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR





STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR