

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

January 28th, 2025

10:00 a.m.

Present at the meeting were the following:

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| 1. Mr. Bernard Wagner | Mayor |
| 2. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr. | Deputy Mayor |
| 3. Ms. Kaya Cattouse | Councillor |
| 4. Mr. Evan Thompson | Councillor |
| 5. Mr. Edmund Kwan | Councillor |
| 6. Mr. Sherwin Garcia | Councillor |
| 7. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | Councillor |
| 8. Mr. Malcolm Nunez | Councillor |
| 9. Mr. Dorian Usher | Councillor |
| 10. Mr. Eluide Miller | Councillor |

Absent with Apologies:

- | | |
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| 1. Mr. Javier Castellanos | Councillor |
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Mr. Albert Vaughan	City Administrator
Ms. Carissa Casanova	Administrative Manager, Office of the Mayor

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:19 AM.

1.0 Belize National Prayer

1.1 Mayor Wagner led all present in reciting the National Prayer of Belize.

2.0 Welcome Remarks

2.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed those present, thanked them for being in attendance, and observed that the meeting consisted of a full agenda.

2.2 Mayor Wagner encouraged the Councillors to comply with the standing orders, particularly as the Council plans to livestream Council meetings at least once per quarter. He further advised that Councillors should articulate their positions in a respectful, clear, and concise manner.

2.3 The Mayor then commended the City Administrator for his efforts to enhance the appearance of City Hall, where the business of the city is conducted. He also noted that steps were being taken to maintain the dignity of the Council's meeting room by carefully managing the events held there.

2.4 Mayor Wagner reminded the Councillors that they were chosen by the people to lead the city, and the residents have placed their trust in them, and further expressed his satisfaction that the Council's meeting space was being treated with the reverence warranted.

2.5 Mayor Wagner advised that the offices are being painted, and emphasized the importance of maintaining City Hall through the use of a detailed maintenance schedule. He further advised that the Council has engaged a company to have the building repainted, and the tiles on the ground floor buffed.

2.6 The mayor noted that videos and announcements produced by the Council are being played on the TV on the ground floor, and acknowledged that the Council's culture has changed tremendously since taking over in 2018.

2.7 Mayor Wagner concluded by encouraging the Councillors to have a productive day in getting the work of the people done.

3.0 Ratification of the October 17th, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

3.1 Correction to (2.2). Change “caucus” to “Council meeting”.

3.2 Adjustment to (4.12). Remove “but there hasn’t been much progress”.

3.3 Correction to (6.39). Change “I” to “i”.

3.4 Adjustment to (6.44). Change “pipelines” to “court processes”

3.5 Correction to (12.41). Change “contact” to “contract”

3.6 Correction to (12.60). Change to “facilitated and funded through the Ministry of Local Government”.

3.7 Councillor Miller moved for the minutes of the regular Council meeting held on October 17th, 2024 to be ratified. Seconded by Councillor Garcia

Councillor Usher arrived at 10:33 am.

4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 (4.15) Mayor Wagner requested an update on whether the proposal for the increase in Councillor’s stipends had been submitted to the Department of Local Government by the Finance Director.

4.2 The City Administrator explained that the proposal had not been submitted and that he would discuss the matter further with the Finance Director in the upcoming Director’s meeting.

4.3 (6.6) Mayor Wagner asked for an update on the removal of derelict vehicles across the city.

4.4 The City Administrator advised that a committee has been established which includes the enforcement manager, and the finance director. He further explained that there is a plan of action in place, and observed that since the Council took action on Faber’s Rd., the street is in a much better condition.

4.5 Deputy Mayor Pollard noted that he observed an enforcement officer stationed in the area.

4.6 The City Administrator confirmed the same, and further advised that the company is asking for 90 days after the signing of the agreement before commencing vehicle removals, and noted that 90 days after the signing of the agreement would be just after mid-March.

4.7 Councillor Garcia advised that there were concerns about derelict vehicles being stored on a Tibruce St. property.

4.8 Mayor Wagner and other Council members also noted that there were derelict vehicles in Buttonwood Bay and another on Faber's Rd.

4.9 The City Administrator assured the Councillors that these areas would be addressed and advised that the Police Department's tow truck was also being utilized. He further advised that a Traffic Management Committee meeting would be scheduled in the coming month and identified hotspots would be prioritized.

4.10 (9.5) Mayor Wagner asked for an update on the status of the bus driver whose behavior was being monitored.

4.11 The City Administrator advised that the driver was terminated, and the E-transit Unit is operating with three (3) drivers at present. He added that applications were being reviewed and that interviews would be conducted in due course, but the unit is able to manage with three (3) for now.

4.12 Councillor Thompson inquired if there was someone responsible for cleaning the buses because he noticed that the windows were dirty.

4.13 Mayor Wagner and the City Administrator confirmed that someone is being paid to clean the buses.

4.14 The City Administrator assured the Council that he would address this concern.

5.0 Announcements by the Mayor

5.1 Mayor Wagner announced that the HR and Administrative Managers will be joining a Catalyste+ mission to Belize on Thursday, January 30th. The invitation was extended by the Ministry of Economic Development as part of the Canada-Caricom Expert Deployment Mechanism (CCEDM) program, which supports organizations in strengthening their institutional capacity through short-term mentorship from qualified professionals.

5.2 Mayor Wagner noted that the annual Board of Survey would be conducted on April 1st, at City Hall and the Traffic Department. He advised that the Department of Local Government would be assessing the Council's compliance with Standard Operating Procedures, reviewing cash book entries, and ensuring compliance with the financial orders.

5.3 The City Administrator advised that two (2) Council members are required to be in attendance. He explained that the Deputy Mayor must be one of the participants and another Councillor would be needed. Councillor Miller volunteered to participate.

5.4 Mayor Wagner announced that an invitation has been received from the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) to participate in a consultation regarding Resilient Infrastructure and Sustainable Urban Development, Finance and Resource Mobilization/Strategy, and Gender Responsible Communications.

5.5 Mayor Wagner announced that the Council has been invited to send a delegation to the 2025 Smart Summit and Expo, organized by the Taipei Computer Association and our sister city, Kaohsiung. The event will be held from March 20th to 22nd, and a six-member team, including Mayor Wagner, Councillors Castellanos and Hamilton, the Mayor's Aide, the MIS Manager, and the CEMO Coordinator, has been selected to attend.

5.6 The City Administrator asked that the team be reminded of the required travel documents. Mayor Wagner assured the City Administrator that the Mayor's Aide is working with the team to prepare the necessary documents.

5.7 Mayor Wagner then announced that he has been invited to participate in a Wilton Park dialogue on advancing sustainable urbanization within the Commonwealth. This event will take place from March 30th to April 1st and will be held in West Sussex, United Kingdom.

5.8 Councillor Miller congratulated the Mayor for receiving an invitation to Wilton Park. This recognition highlights the hard work and dedication shown over the past few years. Councillor Miller also expressed his confidence that the Mayor would effectively represent the Council.

5.9 Mayor Wagner announced that the Council is close to finalizing the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) negotiations, which began in 2019. He commended the CBA committee members, including Deputy Mayor Pollard, Councillor Hamilton, Councillor Miller, and the City Administrator. Mayor Wagner also acknowledged the contributions of the Director of Administration, the Administrative Manager, and the late City Administrator, whose contributions were instrumental in completing the process.

5.10 Mayor Wagner further advised that both the Council and the Christian Workers' Union have agreed on the final draft which has been submitted to the Labour Commissioner for final review.

5.11 Mayor Wagner announced that the floating boardwalk feasibility study grant was approved in late 2024 by Blue 21 and the Government of the Netherlands. A project kick-off session will occur to introduce the project team, objectives, and expected outcomes; during this meeting, preliminary project planning will occur. Mayor Wagner commended Deputy Mayor Pollard for making the trip to Canada to promote the initiative.

5.12 The mayor recalled that the project stemmed from a matchmaking exercise, on a trip to Panama in 2022. He noted that the efforts being made would not only lead to a feasibility study grant but that the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCOM) would also be seeking funding for the actual construction of the boardwalk.

5.13 Mayor Wagner highlighted the significance of this project for Belize City, emphasizing that the proposed boardwalk would be the first of its kind in the Americas. This environmentally friendly boardwalk promises to boost recreational activities, tourism, and local economic development. It will offer both residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy the scenic Southern Foreshore. Mayor Wagner expressed confidence in the project's success, citing the strong interest it has garnered.

5.14 Mayor Wagner reminded those present of the upcoming Strategic Planning Session scheduled for Saturday, February 1st. The goal of the session is to identify and prioritize the manifesto items that can be accomplished this year. Mayor Wagner encouraged the Councillors to focus on one or two areas within their portfolio that can reasonably be accomplished. Mr. Raineldo Guerrero, an experienced strategic planning consultant, will facilitate the session.

5.15. The final compactor procured through the grant received from the Embassy of Japan will be handed over to the Council on Thursday, January 30th. In addition to the handing over, the Council will be showcasing its entire fleet of vehicles and heavy equipment. Mayor Wagner expressed that this display underscores the transformation that has occurred within the Council. He recalled that upon taking office, the Council's fleet consisted of only two (2) pickup trucks.

5.16 Mayor Wagner further explained that Deputy Mayor Pollard, who was then the Councillor responsible for traffic, proposed the procurement of a new fleet of vehicles for the Council. At that time, twelve (12) new trucks were purchased, each with an expected life span of 5 years. It has been 6 years since the initial purchase, and the Council has now been able to trade in most of the old fleet in order to cover a portion of the cost of sixteen (16) new vehicles. This upgrade to the Council's fleet promises to take the organization to another level and will increase its capacity to provide services to the City.

5.17 The Mayor continued by sharing that additional heavy equipment is still needed, especially with the Grid System coming on board soon. Additionally, skilled workers are to be identified and the workforce will need to be divided equitably to see maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

5.18 Councillor Thompson agreed with Mayor Wagner's statements and further emphasized the importance of employing competent staff.

5.19 Mayor Wagner concluded his updates by advising the Councillors that the requirements of the Integrity Commission are to be taken seriously.

5.20 The City Administrator advised that he is making arrangements for a representative of the commission to meet with the Councillors to properly guide them in completing the required forms.

5.21 Deputy Pollard explained that the commission's staff is helpful and willing to review their documents to ensure that everything is in order before submission.

6.0 General Updates from the City Administrator

6.1 The City Administrator began by thanking those present for the excellent relationship he has been able to develop with those in the executive arm of the Council.

6.2 The City Administrator then explained that he is working to upgrade all of the Council's locations. The work started at the mile 4 compound, but the rain has delayed the work.

6.3 He commended the efforts of the PR team and asked for the livestream of the Council meetings to begin in April.

6.4 The City Administrator then invited the Directors of Finance, Communication, and Administration to provide their respective reports.

6.5 The Director of Communications, Mrs. Erin Garnett-Miller, commenced her report by informing the Council that the CARICOM/SICA flags installation at the flag monument was recently re-established through a collaboration between the PR Department and the Office of the Mayor. She further advised that the flags have already begun to fade, and a new order for flags will be placed in collaboration with the Parks Department.

6.6 The Director of Communications further advised that maintaining this initiative would be costly, and the intent is to partner with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in replacing the flags. In the interim, the Council will place an order for the current flags to be replaced.

6.7 Since the launch of the William David Fonseca Parking Facility the PR Department has been working to raise awareness and encourage the use of the space as a parking option for people visiting the downtown area.

6.8 The PR department is now working on the promotion of the Council's property tax incentives. This initiative not only boosts revenue but also demonstrates the Council's commitment to easing financial burdens on our residents.

6.9 Director Garnett-Miller then thanked the Councillors for their support in participating in the Public Investment Forum which was recently hosted by the Council. The purpose of the forum was to pique the interest of potential investors in the Council's municipal securities offerings.

6.10 Four issues of the Council's monthly newsletter have now been published. New features have been added, which include highlighting a Council member in each issue. Councillors Usher and Thompson have been interviewed for their features.

6.11 In addition to the Council member highlight, birthdays and anniversaries of staff members are being added as well.

6.12 Since the onboarding of the new cohort of Youth Shadow Councillors (YSC), they have all been introduced to the Councillors and taken a tour of the Council. They have been very active in the Council environment since that time.

6.13 The Programs Department's Christmas initiatives were a success and included the Youth Innovation Incubator Christmas Program and the Christmas PeeWee Basketball Classic. A total of eighty-eight (88) children participated or were impacted by these initiatives.

6.14 As part of their efforts to ensure no one gets left behind, the Programs Department along, with the Child Advisory Body (CAB) and YSC, visited the Youth Hostel and Mental Health Resource Center to provide gifts, treats, and care packages during the holiday season. About sixty-nine (69) people were impacted through these efforts.

6.15 The Mayor for a Day essay competition received sixty-two (62) submissions from high schools all over the city. The top three winners have been contacted, and the first-place winner will be joining the mayor for 1 day in the coming weeks.

6.16 The Urban Garden Pilot Project was restored, and the garden beds have received new soil. The Finance, Works, and Sanitation teams all pitched in to help make the overhaul possible. Fresh cucumbers and habaneros have been planted, and the Programs Department is reaching out to restaurants and market vendors to sell the produce and offset some of the costs associated with managing the program.

6.17 The Department of the Environment (DOE) contacted the Council to collaborate on their National Cleanup Day initiative. DOE contributed \$5,000.00 to the Council to assist with the initiative, which was held on January 18th. The Pickstock Hutment and Lovely Ln. areas were cleaned with approximately twenty-five (25) loads of garbage removed.

6.18 The Youth Panel Discussion on Gender-based Violence and Violence Against Women & Girls was held as part of the Council's 16 Days of Activism initiatives. Partners included UNICEF, UNFPA, R.E.T International, and the Department of Youth Services. Locally, 100 students participated, and a total of three hundred (300) students were sensitized to the issue nationwide.

6.19 Ninety-eight (98) young men from high schools across the city participated in the Mengage Empowerment Sessions, which focused on at-risk youth. Discussions centered on leadership, resilience, and emotional intelligence.

6.20 The Director of Communications concluded her presentation.

6.21 The Director of Administration began her presentation by sharing that the CEMO Liaison Officer represented the Council at the 13th Caribbean Conference on Comprehensive Disaster Management under the theme Road to Resilience. Discussions at the conference centered around innovative disaster management strategies for the Caribbean.

6.22 CEMO is planning an internal strategic meeting to be held on February 5th which will focus on making improvements to the various subcommittees' operational plans.

6.23 Regarding the HR Department, the Director of Administration advised that uniforms for the Enforcement Department were procured and are being embroidered. Once completed, the uniforms will be distributed to the officers.

6.24 Salient LLP, the HR Consulting firm utilized by the Council, has met with all department managers to develop process flows for each department. Process Flows are crucial for operational efficiency and for defining the various roles and responsibilities within the organization.

6.25 The Christmas Staff social was a success, and though there were some incidents involving staff, they have since been addressed.

6.26 Interviews have been held to fill the position of E-taxi driver, Enforcement Officers, Youth Officer, Summons Server, Mechanic, and for a special project being undertaken by the Municipal Court, Revenue, and Valuation Departments.

6.27 The CBA is finally completed and with the Labour Department for review.

6.28 The IT Manager, along with other members of management, met with Champion Security to address the upgrading of the Council's alarm system and to review additional services being offered to the Council.

6.29 The payroll system was updated in accordance with the new income tax adjustments, which should already be reflected in employees' salaries.

6.30 The Director of Administration then advised that the Parks Department worked along with the PR Department for the lighting of the Sir. Manuel Esquivel Overpass, and other initiatives which were hosted in the parks. Partners for these initiatives included Bowen & Bowen, Madisco, and Hon. Kareem Musa.

6.31 The Council also worked with Hon. Kareem Musa to renovate the deck at Dolphin Park.

6.32 The Director of Administration concluded her presentation.

6.33 The Director of Finance then provided an overview of the proposed budget of the upcoming fiscal year. Over the last six years, the budget has been gradually increasing with the upcoming budget being the largest yet.

6.34 The Director of Finance advised Councillors to encourage their teams to meet revenue targets so that the Council can cover its planned expenses.

6.35 Councillor Miller advised that he and other Councillors were expecting to be engaged in the budgeting process and that they would have had an opportunity to review the budget together. The Director of Finance then explained that they were a bit behind in the Council's budget submission.

6.36 Councillor Hamilton asked to be advised on which initiatives were approved and which were not so that Councillors can be aware of what programs can be facilitated through their portfolios.

6.37 For information purposes, the Councillors requested an adjustment to the Director's presentation to more accurately reflect the funds that will be directly available for use by the Council.

6.38 After his presentation, the Director of Finance was advised to submit the budget to the Ministry of Local Government.

6.39 To conclude this portion of the meeting, the City Administrator advised that he was providing an opportunity for the Councillors to engage technical staff in these important discussions.

7.0 Notices

7.1 No matters were tabled.

8.0 Questions

8.1 No matters were tabled.

9.0 Petitions

9.1 Councillor Cattouse reported that residents near the Water Ln./Duck Ln. intersection have requested the installation of a mirror on one of the buildings. This mirror would help vehicles turning onto Water Ln. see oncoming traffic without having to enter the intersection first. She further explained that a serious accident is imminent, and several minor accidents have already occurred.

9.2 Councillor Cattouse was advised to submit the request in writing, to the traffic management committee for consideration.

9.3 Councillor Cattouse reported that a speed bump at the intersection of Racoon St. and Seagull Streets, near the police station, is missing a portion on the edge. This has led to three motorcycle accidents in the past month as motorcyclists speed through the gap, causing vehicles to hit them.

9.4 The Mayor asked the City Administrator to have the works team address the bump and expressed that regardless of repairs, wreckless motorcycle users are the cause of many accidents.

9.5 Councillor Cattouse petitioned the Council to address the issue of shipping containers being unloaded within city limits, particularly in residential areas. She highlighted that containers are often unloaded at all hours of the night, blocking driveways. Specifically, she mentioned that containers are unloaded twice weekly on Sunray Ave., and in one instance, an emergency vehicle was unable to access an elderly couple's home due to a blocked street.

9.6 Deputy Mayor Pollard advised that a Council regulation exists whereby containers should not be unloaded within city limits, rather goods should be transferred from the containers using a box truck or other means. If there are circumstances that necessitate the unloading of a container within the city, the traffic department is required to be present to regulate the flow of traffic.

10.0 Presentation of Reports from Councillors

10.1 Councillor Usher advised that there were no updates to provide from the Cemetery Department.

10.2 Councillor Garcia provided an update on the events held at the various parks across the city. He then advised that the Parks Department is working to maintain the parks and medians with the assistance of the Sanitation Department.

10.3 Councillor Garcia further reported that the Sub-Umbra Floreo Lion's Club has expressed interest in adopting Fiesta and Dolphin parks.

10.4 A meeting was held on January 29th with representatives from Atlantic Bank to discuss the possibility of adopting a few parks and medians. Additionally, the Council should receive a schedule from G.A. Roe & Sons by the end of the month regarding the works being done the Jane Usher Park.

10.5 Councillor Hamilton reported that the Hubert Pipersburgh Helpdesk has been actively reaching out to diaspora associations in Florida, Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago to create a comprehensive database for the Belize City Council.

10.6 She commended the LED Manager for her efforts with the diaspora in 2024 and advised the Council that a prominent member of the diaspora community in New York, Ms. Sharmaine Lopez, was able to visit City Hall on her recent trip to Belize.

10.7 In his report, Deputy Mayor Pollard highlighted that the weather has been a major challenge for the Works Department since the last Council meeting. He noted that a tropical storm caused damage to streets throughout the city. The unusual weather patterns have made it difficult to conduct substantial road work, but they are trying to keep up as best as possible.

10.8 Deputy Pollard further advised that the rehabilitation of St. Thomas St. is finally completed. Additionally, the department has been making upgrades at the 4-mile compound. The security booths are being demolished and new ones will be built, so far, the foundations for the new booths have been laid.

10.9 Deputy Mayor Pollard reported that fifteen (15) loads of clay have been placed on the lower side of the compound. An additional ten (10) loads are needed; three (3) have been delivered, and seven (7) are pending. Meanwhile, the front of the 4-mile compound will be concreted in 12-foot segments. Scrap metals and other waste materials are being disposed of, with some issued to staff for personal repairs.

10.10 Deputy Pollard then stated that the Audit Department has started the process of disposal of unserviceable equipment. He explained that the equipment is taking up space on the property, and is not offering any value to the Council because they are non-functional.

10.11 The City Administrator advised that Mayor Wagner is strongly recommending that the compound be chipped and sealed instead of placing hardcore material on top of the clay.

10.12 Deputy Mayor Pollard added that they are proposing to relocate the current garage to the back of the compound, with a proper shed and restroom.

10.13 Deputy Mayor Pollard reported that street patching continues city-wide, but the weather has hindered proper maintenance. In the interim, the team has been using all-in material, to fill the potholes, which is washed away by rain. With expected weather improvements, proper patching will soon commence.

10.14 The City Engineer has been instructed to make an appeal to MIDH regarding the rehabilitation of the highways leading into Belize City.

10.15 The City Administrator explained that Council resources are being used to repair the highways which are outside the organization's purview. He emphasized the need for the Council's technical personnel to be more proactive in their duties, particularly in informing the ministry about the Council's highway work. Despite not being the Council's responsibility, this issue remains a matter of great concern.

10.16 Deputy Mayor Pollard explained that they are exploring alternative methods to address the highways, especially near the Lord Ridge Cemetery. The Council has not been advised of the ministry's timelines for completing the rehabilitation, and other streets in the vicinity are now being affected due to increased traffic as motorists avoid the highways.

10.17 Other updates from the Deputy Mayor included the commencement of the reconstruction of the pump station barrier which helps to keep trash from entering the turbines, and the completion of the dismantling and storage of the Christmas tree and lights at the overpass.

10.18 Challenges being faced by the works department include being severely understaffed, and a lack of transportation since both buses are down for repairs. The plan is to use the salvageable parts from one of the buses to repair the other.

10.19 To address this issue promptly, the City Administrator advised that the work would be outsourced until a new bus can be acquired.

10.20 The equipment at the paint shop is still pending. Especially given the weather conditions, the paint currently being procured does not last since it was not made to withstand the elements. Deputy Mayor Pollard advocated for the use of proper thermoplastic paint which will save the Council in the long run.

10.21 Deputy Mayor Pollard explained that with the support of the Mayor and City Administrator, they are anticipating a very productive year from the works department.

10.22 Deputy Mayor Pollard concluded his report by providing a list of streets that were concreted under the previous administration and are in urgent need of repairs. He emphasized that the efforts of the entire works department are required to address these streets before they deteriorate further.

10.23 Councillor Miller reported that the MIS Department provided technical support for the Council's tree lighting ceremony and other holiday events. He commended their efforts along with those of the PR Department. The MIS Department also addressed various tasks including replacing the traffic ID printer, meeting with Champion Security about the alarm system, and managing door access systems throughout the Council. setting up an audit office, handling 10-15 requests per day, and being actively involved in Grid System development.

10.24 Regarding the Belize City App, Councillor Miller advised that the team had been working with Telepin, the creators of the Digiwallet app, and received an estimate that exceeded the budget available for the project. Other companies will be engaged to provide quotations that fit within the budget.

10.25 The server room has a leak, which the MIS Department is working to address, and they are acquiring new network devices and a drone. They are also looking to fill the Junior Technician position and anticipate further development of the department.

10.26 The LED Manager has been collaborating with downtown businesses to boost disaster preparedness through business continuity planning and has actively been engaging with the diaspora.

10.27 There will be no Supersales in the first quarter of the year, and efforts are underway to revive the BCAP program via the LED Unit.

10.28 The Traffic Department aimed to generate \$600,000 in revenue for December but fell a bit short of their goal. The department generated \$550,000, which is still an improvement of over \$20,000 when compared to last year's performance. Operational efficiency at the Traffic Department has improved, and there is a need to identify a better, long-term physical location for the department.

10.29 Councillor Miller commended the Traffic Manager for his efforts and thanked Council members who supported the manager on the passing of his mother. Councillor Miller also notified those present that he had participated in a Trade Board Training held in Belmopan by the Department of Local Government.

10.30 The HR Committee has been working to identify policy shortcomings, one of which is awarding employees for their academic achievements, including those pursuing master's and doctorate degrees. The current policy only recognizes bachelor's and associate degrees, so amendments will be made to acknowledge and reward further educational efforts.

10.31 Councillor Cattouse reported on several key initiatives and events. The Youth Incubator Christmas Program included yoga sessions, arts and crafts in the Student Hub, and male empowerment sessions. She expressed gratitude to Deputy Mayor Pollard, Councillor Thompson, and Municipal Court Manager, Mr. Jermaine Hyde for their insightful and inspiring motivational talks.

10.32 Councillor Cattouse also highlighted the Youth Panel Discussion, which was a collaboration between the Council and UNICEF, UNFPA, and RET International. This fourth annual discussion on gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking saw the attendance of 100 students, with Councillor Nunez also participating.

10.33 The Student Hub received 16 new chairs and implemented safety measures, such as routine restroom breaks to monitor students in groups. The Council is collaborating with the Department of Youth Services to establish a second Student Hub on Magazine Rd. by August-September of this year, pending an MOU.

10.34 Councillor Cattouse advised that she had been contacted by Ms. Michelle Young who is interested in partnering with the Council to address the issue of homelessness in Belize City. Councillor Cattouse and the Programs Manager met with her to discuss further, and arrangements were made for Ms. Young to tour the Welcome Resource Center, the Salvation Army, and the Department of Human Services to explore future collaboration with these entities.

10.35 In the realm of sanitation, the Council addressed hotspots, issued littering tickets, and conducted educational campaigns. They also assisted with Christmas and New Year's events. However, challenges included non-operational equipment, and unsafe transportation practices, which the Mayor requested to be discontinued.

10.36 Councillor Cattouse requested that the working hours for employees who have recently been transferred to the Sanitation Department, be adjusted to 45 hours weekly as is standard for Sanitation staff.

10.37 Councillor Cattouse then requested assistance in addressing the flooding situation in the Berkley St. area. She was advised that the culvert is the issue.

10.38 Councillor Cattouse concluded by advocating for new uniforms for the Sanitation Staff, noting that their current uniforms have faded and may require more frequent replacements due to the nature of their work. She also highlighted other issues faced by the department, including problems with Council equipment and a mold issue in the coordinator's office.

10.39 Councillor Nunez reported that in June of 2024 the Programs department applied for a grant through Bloomberg Philanthropies' Youth Climate Action Fund for USD 50,000, which has now been approved.

10.40 Councillor Usher advised that the Cemetery & Public Health Department is seeking to address the bushing of the vacant properties, but have expressed that additional personnel are needed to do so.

10.41 Councillor Thompson reported that the shutters to the garbage been have been replaced at the market, but the walls are also in need of repairs. Daily police patrols at the market are ongoing to ensure security. In December, on wholesale days, the Market collected \$8,970.00.

10.42 Councillor Kwan reported that he met with a delegation from Taiwan along with the Ministry of E-governance who are working to sort out the city's camera systems. The aim is to enhance enforcement through the use of photo and video evidence to reduce infractions like speeding, and running red lights.

10.43 Councillor Kwan thanked the City Administrator for providing new uniforms for the Enforcement Department. He suggested renaming the department to "Municipal Police" to command more respect from the public.

11.0 Request for leave to move the adjournment of the Council on a definite matter of urgent public importance.

11.1 No matters were tabled.

12.0 Motions by Mayor & Councillors

12.1 Councillor Garcia moved a motion for the Council to approve the adoption of Faber's Rd. Playground, formerly known as Lion's Club Park, by Supreme Automotive Belize Ltd. Seconded by Councillor Kwan.

12.2 The Council was advised that the Lion's Club has forfeited the option to renew its adoption of the park. MOTION APPROVED.

12.3 Councillor Garcia moved a motion for the Council to approve the rental of Booth #1 at the Memorial Park to Mr. Bernard Lemmot, owner of Smoking Tamales, to sell food. Seconded by Councillor Thompson. MOTION APPROVED.

12.4 Councillor Garcia moved a motion for the Council to approve the adoption of Dolphin Park by the Sub Umbra Floreo Lion's Club. Seconded by Councillor Miller.

12.5 Councillor Miller inquired if the Area Representative was in support of the request. Councillor Garcia assured the Council that someone from the Area Representative's committee had been involved in the process.

12.6 Councillor Thompson asked if this is the same Lion's Club that forfeited the adoption of Faber's Rd. Playground. Councillor Garcia clarified that it was not the same group, and advised that there are two Lion's Clubs. MOTION APPROVED.

12.7 Councillor Garcia moved a motion for the Council to allow Belize Futurex E-Scooter & E-Skateboards to rent E-Scooters & E-Skateboards at Digi Park on Weekends and Public & Bank Holidays.

12.8 The Mayor and Councillors shared concerns regarding the safety measures in place for the use of the equipment. Councillor Garcia advised that he was concerned about safety, and suggested that the operations be moved to the Memorial Park.

12.9 Councillor Cattouse suggested that the proprietor make a presentation to the caucus at the next Council Council meeting.

12.10 Councillor Miller noted that Digi Park is not conducive for this type of activity as it is already congested and space is limited.

12.11 Councillor Kwan inquired whether the E-scooters and E-skateboards would need to be licensed since they are motorized. He was advised that it would not be necessary in this instance due to the size of the equipment.

12.12 Mayor Wagner also advised that the proprietor should make a presentation to the Council regarding his proposal. MOTION WITHDRAWN.

12.13 Councillor Garcia moved a motion for the Council to approve a policy for the management of adopted roundabouts. Seconded by Councillor Councillor Kwan.

12.14 Councillor Miller provided an overview of the policy which includes a removal of the costs associated with advertising within the space, a standard 3-year term for each agreement, bi-weekly maintenance, painting, and landscaping as necessary, and an annual report from the custodians on their contributions to the maintenance.

12.15 Mayor Wagner asked how the Bhojwani roundabouts would fit into this policy. Councillor Miller advised that the plan is to engage with the custodians to advise them of the new requirements despite their agreement being more long-term. Mayor Wagner advised that the cannons on the roundabout that faces inland need to be relocated.

12.16 Councillor Garcia moved a motion for the Council to approve the rental of the booth known as Candy World to Ms. Andrea Jones. Seconded by Councillor Thompson.

12.17 Councillor Cattouse abstained from voting due to concerns of an internal dispute. MOTION APPROVED.

12.18 Councillor Miller moved a motion on behalf of Councillor Castellanos, for the Council to approve the signing of an MOU between the Council and the Central Building Authority (CBA) to formalize the collaboration between the two entities and facilitate the proper implementation of the Building Act amendments. Seconded by Councillor Kwan.

12.19 The City Administrator advised that he would like the opportunity to submit the MOU to the Council's attorney for review before signing. Mayor Wagner shared that he did not understand the need for an MOU given that the Belize Building Act outlines the relationship between the two entities and their respective roles. MOTION WITHDRAWN.

12.20 Deputy Mayor Pollard asked if there was any time frame within which the CBA is expecting the MOU to be signed and suggested that the necessary review be expedited.

12.21 Councillor Miller moved a motion on behalf of Councillor Castellanos, for the Council to approve the renewal of the MOU between the Council and the Statistical Institute of Belize to facilitate the exchange of critical GIS data. MOTION APPROVED.

12.22 Councillor Miller moved a motion for the Council to approve an employment contract between the Council and Ms. Lura Kelly who has reached the age of retirement. Seconded by Councillor Usher.

12.23 The City Administrator shared his support for the request based on the manager's recommendation and emphasized the importance of having a succession plan in place to ensure the smooth operations of a department when employees separate from the Council. MOTION APPROVED.

12.24 Councillor Cattouse moved a motion for the Council to approve an employment contract between the Council and Mr. Julio Contreras, a small machine mechanic. Seconded by Councillor Nunez. MOTION APPROVED.

12.25 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the renewal of a media contract between the Belize City Council and Belize News Network for the provision of promotional services. Seconded by Councillor Garcia.

12.26 The Councillors asked if the Council was pleased with the service of the provider and whether they had complied with the requirements of the agreement. Mayor Wagner confirmed that the services were satisfactorily provided to the Council. MOTION APPROVED.

12.27 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the audited financial statements for fiscal years ending March 31st, 2022, and March 31st, 2023 as audited by the external auditing team of HLB Belize, LLP. Seconded by Councillor Miller.

12.28 Mayor Wagner provided an outline of the financial audit and advised the Council that an electronic copy would be made available to them in due course.

12.29 Councillor Miller recognized the Mayor's efforts as well as those of the finance team in completing the audit.

12.30 Mayor Wagner acknowledged that the completion of the audits has been pending for some time and he is pleased that they are completed. MOTION PASSED.

13.0 New Business

No matters were tabled.

14.0 Submissions from the Building Unit

14.1 A request from Mr. Akeem Smalling for the provision of a no-objection letter to break a portion of the green area to be replaced with driveway access adjacent to Parcel #4736 Coney Dr., Belize City.

14.2 The Planning Department has no objections to creating the access, which will not impede the sidewalk. This proposal will allow the public to gain access to the property that he has been leasing from Nazarene High School. MOTION APPROVED.

14.3 A request from Anthony Thurton & Associates to install an elevated pedestrian crosswalk on Coney Dr. in front of Parcel No. 4792 due to increased traffic and unsafe speeds. This situation poses a hazard for pedestrians and vehicles accessing the compound. The organization is willing to cover the cost, and the Planning Department has no objection but suggests painting the crosswalk first before considering an elevated one.

14.4 The City Administrator advised that the company is requesting an elevated crossing, but suggested that the businesses be further engaged to rehabilitate the street. Mayor Wagner assigned the City Administrator and Deputy Mayor Pollard to engage with the business community to further explore the idea.

14.5 Initially the Mayor and Councillors were not in support of the elevated ramp but rather a painted pedestrian crossing. After further discussion, however, Councillor Thompson advised that the painting and signage may not prove to be effective.

14.6 Deputy Mayor Pollard emphasized that decisions should be data-driven.

14.7 Councillor Miller advised that in some cases unpopular decisions might need to be made for the benefit of the public.

14.8 Councillor Cattouse then considered the inappropriate use of the painted crosswalk and considered that it might be a hazard.

14.9 Councillor Miller voiced support for the placement of the elevated crossing. He explained that the painted crosswalk may still lead to accidents involving pedestrians.

14.10 Councillor Cattouse expressed that she prefers the painting of the crosswalk and the installation of signage rather than installing an elevated bump, but shared her concern that simply painting a crosswalk might lead to future accidents.

14.11 Mayor Wagner called for a vote, and all Councilors present, with the exception of Deputy Mayor Pollard voted in favor of installing the elevated crossing. MOTION APPROVED.

14.12 A request from Ms. Gail Burke Spence to place a bus shed near the High Court on Regent St in memory of Michael Young, an esteemed colleague who has passed. The City Planner explained that the bus stop will tie into the Council's plan for the e-transit system.

14.13 Concerns were raised regarding the practicality of the bus shed, and safety concerns associated with its installation. Deputy Mayor Pollard recalled that the previous bus stop was removed from the same location back in 2018, and expressed that a bus stop already exists on the opposite side of the park on Albert St. Additional concerns were raised regarding the occupation of the bus shed by the homeless. MOTION APPROVED.

14.14 The Council was also made aware of the condition of the existing bus sheds, particularly the one next to Palotti High School, as well as the roundabout.

14.15 A request for the Council to approve the renewal of lease agreements for the following vendors to occupy the street reserve on Mahogany St.: Yolanda Caine, Kingsley Augustus, Alfred McCulloch, Kenny White, Desiree Mitchell, Celedonia Miranda, Sergio Nunez, Nahomi Usher, Ainsley Castro, Kim Taylor, Cecil Jenkins, Marion Coffin, Michelle Gotoy, Donna Samuda, Janet Anderson, Wilwest King, Wilfred Turner, Kelsey Dominguez, Stephanie Ramclam, Mishawn Mejia, Jannie Merritt, Elaine Ortiz, Donald Wright, Akeem Briceno, Marlene Laing, Irma Bermudez, Laurel Willoughby, Joan Digna Rivera, Carlos Andrade, Salvador Garay, Anna Murrillo, Kristy Lea McKenzie, Francisco Javier Benitez, Trevonney Aldana, Ursulo Mendoza, Dudley Nunez, Djimon Shawn Roberts, Le-Tesha Tate. MOTION APPROVED.

14.16 A request from St. John's Credit Union for a letter of no-objection to construct a drain along the length of an alley off Buttonwood Bay Blvd. & Coney Dr. The City Planner advised that the credit union was open to covering half the cost of the construction as an offset towards their property taxes. An estimate of \$96,000.00 was submitted for the project, but the Works Department estimated that the work would cost about \$74,000. In addition to the drainage, the credit union is requesting that the Council upgrade the street leading to their entrance.

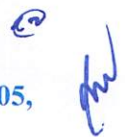
14.17 The Council determined that this was not an area of priority as the benefits to residents would be minimal. MOTION DENIED.

14.18 A request by Ms. Wendy Castillo for the Council to provide a letter of no-objection for the installation of signage on the public reserve to advertise business in the building located at #1755 Coney Dr.

14.19 The Planning Department advised that they were not in support of the request as there is sufficient space on the public property to place the sign. The Council voted to approve the request on the condition that there is no obstruction of the drain due to the installation of the sign. MOTION APPROVED.

14.20 A request by Mr. Robert Chan for the provision of a letter of no-objection for the construction of a commercial use structure located at Parcel No. 5050 & 137 Philip Goldson Highway. MOTION APPROVED.

14.21 Deputy Mayor Pollard asked if consideration had been given for adequate parking. The City Planner advised that 25 parking spaces were accounted for on the private property. MOTION APPROVED.



15.0 Other Business

15.1 No Matters were tabled.

16.0 Adjournment

16.1 Councillor Kwan moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councillor Garcia.

The meeting concluded at 3:38 pm.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



ALBERT VAUGHAN
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

