



MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

10:00 a.m.

November 25th, 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. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | Councilor |
| 7. Mr. Edmund Kwan | Councilor |
| 8. Mr. Michael Novelo | Councilor |
| 9. Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh | Councilor |
| 10. Ms. Kaya Cattouse | Councilor |

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt
Mr. Eluide Miller

City Administrator
Manager, Office of the Mayor

Attending Virtually via Zoom:

Ms. Deannie Requeña **Councilor**

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:46 a.m. following the Raising of the Flag Ceremony held in conjunction with the National Women's Commission in commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism.

- 1.0 Mayor Wagner greeted all in attendance and reminded all members of the Council's policy, which prohibits firearms from being brought onto the Council's property.
- 1.1 The City Administrator reiterated that the Council's policy which does not permit for any firearms to be brought unto the Council's premises.



2.0 Ratification of October 27th, 2021 Minutes

- 2.1 The City Administrator requested for the minutes of the meeting dated October 27th, 2021 to reflect that she was on certified sick leave during the time of that meeting for which Ms. Rosalie Perez held over as the Acting City Administrator.
- 2.1 Correction to (3.1). Change “is” to “his”.
- 2.2 Correction to duplicated numbering (4.8).
- 2.3 Correction to (6.4). Changes “do” to “does”.
- 2.4 Correction to (7.4). Replace “four” with “three”.
- 2.5 Correction to (9.6). Highlight that Councilor Micah Goodin seconded the motion.
- 2.6 Correction to (9.10). Correct spelling for “Councilor”.
- 2.7 Councilor Hamilton moved for the ratification of the October 27th, 2021 meeting minutes with corrections. Seconded by Councilor Pipersburgh.

3.0 Matters arising from Minutes

- 3.1 (3.1) The City Administrator shared that several persons were interviewed for the position of Prosecutor and noted that offers were made to three (3) of those interviewees. The City Administrator then noted that one (1) of the interviewees expressed that she would not be able to report to work until January while another countered the compensation package offered by the Council and are in the process of negotiating.
- 3.2 Mayor Wagner reiterated the importance the additional hires for the position of Prosecutor.
- 3.3 The City Administrator shared that the position will be advertised once again in an effort to attract more applicants.



- 3.4 Councilor Goodin questioned when would be the preferred time for the applicant to come in who has expressed that she will be unavailable until January 2022. Councilor Goodin shared that he has made contact with the applicant who expressed that she would be able to report to duty by the end of the October 2021.
- 3.5 The City Administrator indicated that she would have the Human Resources Department do a follow up with the applicant.
- 3.6 (4.8) The City Administrator shared that she received a request from the Works Department for additional equipment needed to effectively maintain the medians and parks and noted that this request is being facilitated.
- 3.7 The City Administrator shared that she has received a request from the Cemetery Department for additional equipment needed to assist the Sanitation Department in the maintenance of the burial ground and noted that this request is being facilitated.
- 3.8 (4.9) The City Administrator asked the Councilors to note exactly where she has failed to follow up on motions passed in Caucus and requested for the comments made by Councilors in the previous meeting to be retracted if they are unable to do so.
- 3.9 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. noted that his sentiments remain and in fairness to the Council he would like for the minutes to reflect those sentiments.
- 3.9 Councilor Castellanos shared that his sentiments shared in the previous meeting were in relation to the request made to provide the Ministry of Local Government with a letter requesting the waiving of property taxes for a group of citizens submitted previously.
- 3.10 The City Administrator shared that she has requested the updated accounts from the Valuations Department in order to proceed with the aforementioned request since the motion was not supported with a proper listing.
- 3.11 Mayor Wagner reiterated the need for motions to be properly structured before being brought to Caucus for resolution.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely of the Mayor, located at the bottom right of the page.



- 3.12 The City Administrator expressed that she will be writing to the Ministry of Local Government indicating her opposition to the remarks made in the previous meeting.
- 3.13 The City Administrator asked for clarification on the matter in relation to the digging of the drain at the Michael Finnegan Market and shared that correspondence was sent to the City Engineer who is responsible to carry out infrastructural works in the city.
- 3.14 (12.10) The City Administrator questioned what due diligence was done on Mr. Daniel Hilton who was granted approval to lease the Pier One location at Digi Park.
- 3.15 Mayor Wagner shared that an external entity was used to carry out the due diligence exercise and noted that Mr. Hilton was cleared.
- 3.16 The City Administrator noted that this is only one aspect of the due diligence required.
- 3.17 Mayor Wagner questioned if the Council's technical staff is doing necessary oversight.
- 3.18 The City Administrator noted that the Council's technical staff is trying their very best to carry out their due diligence and reiterated that they must not be interfered with while carrying their duties.
- 3.20 Mayor Wagner reiterated the sentiments of the City Administrator stating that the technical staff must not be interfered with while carrying out their duties.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, located at the bottom right of the page.



4.0 Announcements by Mayor

- 4.1 Mayor Wagner reiterated the importance of adhering to the policy shared earlier, which does not allowed for firearms to be brought unto the Council's premises'.
- 4.2 Mayor Wagner reiterated the importance of confidentiality, noting that he has been made aware that several news medias are in possession of meeting material shared ahead of the meeting.
- 4.3 Mayor Wagner shared that the Council had its first Trade License Reform Virtual Public Consultation on November 16th, 2021 and announced that three more sessions will be held ahead of its application, which is set for April 2022 for new Trade License applicants.
 - 4.3.1 Mayor Wagner reminded all that the new regime will only be applicable to new applicants in 2022 and highlighted that the reform will have some implications on the constitution of the Trade Licensing Board.
- 4.4 Mayor Wagner thanked Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr., Councilor Hamilton and Councilor Vaughan for their participation in the CBA negotiations and informed the Council that progress has been made over the course of the past few meetings. Mayor Wagner reiterated the importance of getting a signed CBA completed in the near future.
- 4.5 Mayor Wagner noted that the Council must be able to find new revenue streams as discussed previously due to the expanded services demanded of the Council by residents. Mayor Wagner highlighted the three revenue streams discussed previously, which include parking meters, e-Transit network and the residential garbage fee structure.
- 4.6 Mayor Wagner noted that the Council is very close to securing the provisional permission needed from the Ministry of Transport to launch Betta Park Solution's Pilot Project in the Digi Park area.
- 4.7 Councilor Vaughan noted the need for the drafting of the contract with Betta Park Solutions for the Parking Meter Pilot Project.



4.8 Mayor Wagner shared that the Council is engaged with both Betta Park Solutions and Parking Solutions Ltd. who will be doing separate pilot projects. Mayor Wagner stated that this would allow for the Council to do a comparative analysis at the completion of the pilot project to determine the best model and location of parking meters in the Belize City.

4.9 Mayor Wagner noted that he met with the United Nations Development Programme along with Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. and shared that Major Lloyd Jones (ret.) is working on completing a road map which will outline the necessary organizational adjustments, route planning, financial modeling and infrastructural assessments to be done ahead of the arrival of the electric buses which are expected to be in country by the third quarter of 2020.

4.10 Councilor Vaughan shared that he has met with Major Lloyd Jones (ret.) to discuss future collaboration.

5.0 Notices

5.1 No notices were tabled.

6.0 Questions

6.1 No questions were tabled.

7.0 Presentation: Financial Report / Updates – Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt, City Administrator

7.1 The City Administrator shared that the Council is required submit its declaration of property tax rates and incentives as well as its board recommendations within the scope of the legislation each year and shared the proposed declaration for Belize City.



- 7.2 The City Administrator shared that the Council is proposing to keep the standard 25% discount for senior citizens as well as the 15% discount for prepayment on current property taxes (2022-2023) for those who pay in the month of January 2022 and 10% discount for prepayment on current property taxes (2022-2023) for those who pay in the month of February 2022.
- 7.3 The City Administrator noted that no change is being recommended to the Trade Licensing Board since the Trade License Reform is expected to come into effect April 2022.
- 7.4 The City Administrator noted that no change is being recommended to the Liquor Licensing Board as it is operating well.
- 7.5 The City Administrator shared the recommendation to have Mr. Troy Gabb and Major Lloyd Jones (ret.) serve on the Valuations Appeal Board.
- 7.6 The City Administrator shared the mandate of the Council as well as the Councilors as defined in the legislation and highlighted that Portfolio Committees should be formed and the minutes of meeting of those committees should be shared with the Council. This was originally shared by the Ministry of Local Government during the orientation for the Council.
- 7.7 The City Administrator shared an overview of the Council's current financial position highlighting weekly obligations of the Council, current arrears and upcoming payables.
- 7.8 The City Administrator notified the Council that (44.2%) of the Council's staff is fully vaccinated while another (23.4%) are partially vaccinated with the present staff count being (385) employees.
- 7.9 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. questioned what regulations does the Council have in place as it relates to vaccinations.
- 7.10 The City Administrator indicated that several educational campaigns were held to provide employees with all the necessary information needed to make an informed decision. However, no employee is being forced to be vaccinated.



- 7.11 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. recommended for the Council to establish a target percentage for vaccinated employees with a definitive timeline.
- 7.12 Councilor Vaughan highlighted efforts undertaken by HRCU to encourage staff members to get their full vaccinations and urged the Council to consider similar incentives for its staff to increase employee vaccinations.

8.0 Petitions

- 8.1 Councilor Novelo highlighted a petition from Oceana to align the Belize City Council with other partners to minimize the use of single use plastics via a commitment letter.
- 8.2 Mayor Wagner expressed his support for the initiative and noted that the Council can designate specific areas across its locations for the disposal of recyclable materials.
- 8.3 The City Administrator shared that the Council had made efforts to achieve this objective in the past by purchasing environmentally friendly items and noted that some of the items need to be replenished.
- 8.4 Mayor Wagner suggested that the City Administrator discuss with the Oceana group to see how the Council can better promote the initiative in the most cost effective manner.
- 8.5 Councilor Cattouse shared a request for donation submitted by the Cesar Ridge Football Club in support of their Semi Pro Football Club. Councilor Cattouse appealed for the Council to do all it can to support given that the Cesar Ridge Football Club is the only team representing Belize City.
- 8.6 Mayor Wagner expressed that the Council was exploring the possibility of sponsoring a Semi Pro Football Club before the onset of the covid-19 pandemic. Mayor Wagner stated that the Council would not be able to support at this time but the motion can be revisited at a future date.



- 8.7 Councilor Novelo highlighted a petition from the Leadership Intervention Unit (LIU), which was formed at the earlier part of 2021 with a view to apply a humanistic approach to combating crime in Belize City. Councilor Novelo noted that it is the intention of the LIU to hire just over 200 young men to assist in the maintenance of the city. Councilor Novelo shared that the Ministry of Home Affairs will be partnering on the initiative by providing the necessary funding and petitioned for the Council to assist in facilitating the payments to all workers hired on behalf of the Ministry.
- 8.8 Mayor Wagner questioned if the Ministry of Home Affairs will be sending a correspondence to the Council highlighting the transfer of the necessary funds to compensate those taking part in the initiative.
- 8.9 Councilor Novelo shared that it is the intention of the LIU to sign a memorandum of understanding in conjunction with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Council.
- 8.10 The City Administrator expressed her concern given that the spoils generated from the cleaning of properties and drains will need to be cleared which will require additional resources from the Council.
- 8.11 Councilor Goodin expressed his support for the initiative given that the additional manpower is needed to effectively maintain the city. Councilor Goodin shared that he met with the Minister of Infrastructural Development who expressed his support for the initiative and contributed the equipment needed to carry out the project.
- 8.12 The City Administrator reiterated her concerns surrounding the project noting that the spoils generated would result in complaints from disgruntled residents. The City Administrator suggested for trucks to be rented by the LIU to offer additional support in order for the spoils generated to be removed given that the Council's Sanitation Department does not have sufficient manpower and equipment to cover the project.
- 8.13 Mayor Wagner expressed that the proposed project is a good opportunity for the Council to secure additional support and manpower but noted that the project must be coordinated properly. Mayor Wagner asked that Councilor Goodin and Councilor Novelo take the lead on the proposed project.



- 8.14 Councilor Vaughan expressed that properly planning must be done and encouraged all Councilors to include the Mayor and City Administrator when engaging with the respective Ministries on major projects that require the Council's support.
- 8.15 Councilor Novelo noted that the city is in dire need of the additional manpower the project will provide and stated that the Council will be engaged in order to carry out the program in the most effective manner.
- 8.16 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed his support for the initiative.
- 8.17 Mayor Wagner shared a petition signed and submitted by residents/businesses in the downtown area requesting for the Council to reconsider its decision to rename "Regent Street" to "Dr. Dame Minita Gordon Drive". Mayor Wagner noted that he met with those who submitted the petition along with Councilor Vaughan who chairs the Street Naming Committee and expressed that the Committee will be reviewing the petition. Mayor Wagner highlighted the need for proper public consultations to be done in relation to these matters.
- 8.18 Councilor Vaughan expressed that it is the intention of the Street Naming Committee to do the required public consultations in the future and noted that he has requested for the City Administrator to strengthen the Committee by including a technical person. Councilor Vaughan stated that the Committee would be making a recommendation on the matter at the next meeting of the Caucus.
- 8.19 The City Administrator announced that the City Planner and the Valuations Manager would be sitting on the Street Naming Committee going forward.



9.0 Presentation of Reports from Councilors

- 9.1 Councilor Novelo shared that the Cemetery Department is preparing for the standardization of burial fees to be implemented. Councilor Novelo noted that the Public Health Unit now has a new Supervisor and shared that he is looking forward to seeing some improvements as a result. Councilor Novelo also highlighted that a team is being formed to maintain the cemetery grounds, medians, as well as parks and playgrounds in order to take some of the strain off the Sanitation Department.
- 9.2 Mayor Wagner noted the Pesticides Control Board could be engaged to see how they can assist with the maintenance of the cemetery in a more effective and efficient manner.
- 9.3 Councilor Cattouse highlighted that the work she has been doing through her respective portfolios has brought the Council much recognition over the past months. Councilor Cattouse then shared a community ride and a glow parade being organized with the partnership of several entities at no cost to the Council. Councilor Cattouse noted that the Council would be only be requested to provide traffic support for the two aforementioned initiatives.
- 9.4 Councilor Goodin congratulated Councilor Cattouse on the Half Marathon held in the past week and thanked all Councilors for the multiple cleanup campaigns being held across the city.
- 9.5 Councilor Vaughan highlighted the two Parking Meter Pilot Projects being organized and shared that he met with the Dollar Van Association who are interested in signing a MOU with the Council. Councilor Vaughan noted that he made the recommendation for improvements to be made in the operations of these dollar vans before exploring the signing of an MOU. Councilor Vaughan then congratulated Councilor Pipersburgh for the 16 Days of Activism initiative and all Councilors for the work being done across their respective portfolios.
- 9.6 Councilor Kwan shared that workshops are being arranged in collaboration with Beltraide for BCAP participants.



- 9.7 Councilor Hamilton highlighted the Gastronomy Corridor Project for Mahogany Street and shared that the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is interested in partnering with the Council to provide technical support.
- 9.8 Councilor Castellanos shared that he met with the owner of a property located at the corner of Central American Boulevard and Faber's Road who is interested in establishing a market at the location. Councilor Castellanos shared that it is the intention of the Market Committee to vet applicants in an effort to promote sustainability within the market going forward.
- 9.9 Mayor Wagner asked if the members of the Market Committee have been declared to the City Administrator.
- 9.10 Councilor Castellanos noted that the letter declaring the members of the Market Committee would be sent to the City Administrator following the next meeting of the Committee.
- 9.11 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. noted the efforts of the Works Department to address the many requests from the public and highlighted work being done by the Ministry of Infrastructural Development in Lake Independence Area.
- 9.11.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. announced that a follow-up meeting is scheduled with the property owner who is blocking residents from accessing his property near the Krooman Lagoon area and noted that he expects to come back with some resolution at the next meeting of the Council.
- 9.11.2 The City Administrator asked if any technical persons from the Council have been invited to the meeting with the property owner.
- 9.11.3 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. requested for the City Administrator to have the City Planner, Ms. Carla Patnett attends the meeting as a technical representative of the Council.



10.0 Motions by Councilors

Councilor Requeña disconnected from the virtual connection due to an unstable Wi-Fi connection.

- 10.1 Councilor Vaughan moved a motion for the Council to approve the issuance of a Christmas Bonus to all employees of the Council as a measure of expressing gratitude for the hard work and dedication shown by the Council's employees throughout the year. **MOTION PASSED.** Councilor Goodin and Councilor Novelo abstained from voting.
- 10.2 Councilor Goodin and Councilor Novelo expressed that they would abstain from voting on the motion, as they were desirous of having the proposed bonus adjusted.
- 10.3 Councilor Vaughan thanked Councilor Goodin and Councilor Novelo for their input and reiterated that the Council's staff is deserving of the proposed bonus given their level of commitment throughout the year.
- 10.4 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed his support for the issuance of the Christmas Bonus to the Council's staff given their patience and unwavering commitment despite the vast effects of the pandemic.
- 10.5 The City Administrator shared that the Christmas Bonus to staff was budgeted for and encouraged the Council to support the motion given that the sum of the proposed bonus would be the most affordable ever given by the Council and almost four hundred (400) families would be impacted.
- 10.6 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve a contribution of \$10,000 towards the Albert Division Cleanup Campaign set to begin December 6th, 2021. This campaign will see the hiring of ten (10) young men from the Albert Division for a period of ten (10) weeks. Mayor Wagner shared that the proposed initiative would be in partnership with a local businessman who will match the Council's contribution. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 10.7 Councilor Goodin expressed his support for the initiative and commended the partnership of the business community.



10.8 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed his support for the Albert Division Cleanup Campaign.

10.9 Councilor Hamilton commended the proposed project and noted that the residents of the Albert Division will certainly be grateful for the job creation.

10.10 Mayor Wagner shared that he met with representatives from the Belize Solid Waste Management Authority who intends on levying a charge on the dumping on waste materials.

10.11 Mayor Wagner noted that within the Caribbean, the Government allocates funding to offset the cost incurred by the municipality for the collecting of garbage. Mayor Wagner expressed that the Council can no longer fully fund the collection of residential garbage and highlighted the need for consultations with residents to be held in this regard.

11.0 New Business

11.1 No new business was tabled.

12.0 Submissions from City Planning Unit – Mr. Melvin Meyers

12.1 A request from Mr. Jose Carrera and Ms. Delfina Cowo to approve the demolishing of a portion of a median on Western Avenue approximately measuring 40' – 0' to allow for easier access to Red Bell Street with their dump trucks. **MOTION DENIED.** The Council recommends that Mr. Carrera and Ms. Cowo identify a more appropriate location to park their trucks given the density of the Red Bell Street area.

12.2 A request from Mr. Michael Lewis to occupy the reserve at the corner of Iguana Street and Central American Boulevard 13' – 0' x 10' – 0' for the purpose of vending barbecue. **MOTION PASSED.**



12.3 A request from Ms. Sarah Beck of Tony's B.B.Q. to erect signage to promote her barbeque business on top of existing structure. **MOTION DENIED.** The City Administrator noted that at the time when Tony's B.B.Q. first erected its structure, Ms. Beck was made aware that the Council would not approve any additional signage on top of the structure in the future given existing concerns.

12.3.1 Councilor Vaughan reiterated the point made by the City Administrator, noting that the principals of Tony's B.B.Q. were made aware that no new signage would be approved for the aforementioned business.

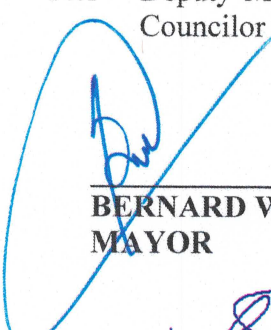
12.4 A request from the Divine Mercy Church to approve the closure of a portion of September Drive from the access point of Independence Avenue. **MOTION DEFERRED.**

13.0 Other Business

13.1 No other business was tabled.

14.0 Adjournment

14.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councilor Novelo. The meeting was adjourned at 2:19 p.m.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR



