

**MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

**Caucus Room, Belize City Council**

**April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**10:00 a.m.**

Present at the meeting were the following:

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

Absent with apologies:

- |                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mr. Javier Castellanos | <b>Councilor</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|

Mr. Albert Vaughan  
Ms. Carissa Casanova

**City Administrator**  
**Administrative Manager, Office of the Mayor**

Appearances by:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Mr. Clifford King                        | <b>Director of Local Government</b><br><b>Akwaabaa Representatives</b> |
| 2. Mr. Freddy Mansu, Mr. Kabelo Aloba Awich |  |

**Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:13 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 all present to the meeting. He reviewed the agenda and highlighted the Council's plan for livestreaming upcoming Council meetings.

2.2 The mayor encouraged the Councillors to acquaint themselves with the standing orders and outlined the Council's commitment to live-streaming meetings at least once per quarter, ensuring residents have the opportunity to observe municipal proceedings.

2.3 Councillor Pollard requested that meeting packages, including motions, be delivered by the established deadline to allow for prior review. He emphasized the importance of enforcing the deadline for motion submissions and submissions from the Planning Department.

2.4 Deputy Mayor Miller noted that motions have historically not been distributed before Council meetings, but proposed that this practice could be revised.

2.5 Mayor Wagner agreed that this is something that should be possible moving forward.

**3.0 Presentation by the Director of Local Government**

3.1 Mr. King commenced his presentation by informing the Council that the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) is very pleased with the work and efforts of the Belize City Council and applauded them on their exemplary effort displayed towards good governance.

3.2 It is certainly not an easy task and requires managing all sorts of dynamics, from the social sphere to the political sphere. Mr. King expressed gratitude for the Council's strong team. He noted that despite challenges, MOLG is pleased with the level of compliance and timely reporting received from the Council.



3.3 Mr. King shared that the Ministry remains committed to supporting the Council, while acknowledging that Belize City has taken the lead in many areas, and there isn't much need for their presence here. He urged the Council to maintain its advocacy and lobbying, particularly regarding the residential garbage fees. He explained that implementing this fee requires political will, and suggested that now might be the right time to do so.

3.4 Mr. King also advised that a consulting team from the World Bank is in the country and looking at ways to increase the private sector's involvement in waste management. He explained that it is essential to take a modern look at waste management, as the city creates the most tonnage of garbage in the country. Everything is being sent to the landfill to be burned.

3.5 It is vital to explore options for how waste can be used as an economic tool to generate energy and income to offset the cost of garbage disposal. Strategically, MOLG would want the Belize City Council to take the lead in working with the private sector to address this issue. The consultants have been trying to reach out to the Mayor's Association to discover the collective stance on this issue. He urged the Council to take a closer look and to work on garnering the support of the broader Mayor's Association.

3.6 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that the President of the Mayor's Association, Mayor Rigo Vellos, along with two Councilors responsible for Sanitation, and his town administrator, are participating in a workshop being held today in relation to the matter.

3.7 Mayor Wagner expressed his belief that matters such as these should originate from the national level; He explained that experience has taught him that when they emerge from the local level, they are usually met with resistance. Mayor Wagner further explained that the consultancies should start at the national level so that when the local authorities take them up, there is a mutual understanding and support for the proposed initiatives.

3.8 Mr. King advised that some projects have already been launched and are in the final stages of being prepared through the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Caribbean Development Bank for municipalities.

3.9 One such initiative that Belize City will be benefiting from is the Blue Cities and Beyond Project, which is being funded through the World Bank. It's a long-term project that will be implemented in phases over a period of five (5) years.



3.10 In the project's first phase, Belize City will benefit from infrastructure investments and consultancies that will particularly address the city's drainage issues.

3.11 Mr. King then provided an overview of the project and highlighted key components such as policy development and capacity building. Activities under these components will be the acquisition of cutting-edge technology and equipment, such as drones, GPS, data collection software, and other devices, to strengthen valuation and revenue collection.

3.12 Mr. King acknowledged that the Council may already be aware of these technologies, but the Ministry is seeking to offer its support to enhance the measures already in place.

3.13 Mr. King advised that the Council will need to determine if a quinquennial will be conducted so that the Valuation role can be updated to give a true picture of the revenues that the city should be generating.

3.14 Deputy Mayor Miller inquired about the estimated cost of conducting a quinquennial review. In response, Mr. King advised that the expense for Belize City could amount to approximately \$175,000.00, depending on the number of referencers recruited. He further advised conducting the exercise during the summer months so that student interns could be recruited to conduct the work.

3.15 Mr. King further noted that as part of the project, they aim to upgrade the Financial Management Information System. Currently, the Neo platform operates alongside QuickBooks; however, the two software systems are incompatible. Therefore, they plan to develop a unified interface that allows for single-entry data input, enabling real-time updates across the system.

3.16 Mayor Wagner inquired about the project timeline. Mr. King advised that the proposal is being submitted to the Central Executing Unit in the Ministry of Finance by next Tuesday. The Ministry of Finance will complete the final project design, and this phase of the project should be launched by July.

3.17 The Mayor noted that the Council has been calling for updates to the Accounting MIS software as the Municipal Securities Act (MSA) mandates the quarterly publication of balance sheets on the Council's website, which in its current limited state create a significant challenge to the Council in meeting this regulatory requirement of the (MSA).

3.18 Mr. King acknowledged the Council's longstanding commitment to institutional capacity-building and reiterated the importance of leveraging internal expertise to meet statutory obligations.



3.19 The City Administrator inquired whether the Ministry of Local Government (MLOG) could assist in strengthening relations with the National Transport Department, particularly concerning the implementation of parking meters and related matters.

3.20 Mr. King affirmed a commitment to advancing the Local Government sector's transport-related agenda and advised that all official communications with the Transport Department be routed through MLOG, citing a similar approach successfully employed in Benque Viejo del Carmen.

3.21 In reference to the booting of vehicles and the lease agreement for the UNDP-provided buses, Mr. King encouraged the Council to document all outstanding issues formally. The Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) will then liaise with the Department of Transport to facilitate resolution.

3.22 The Mayor also acknowledged the critical role of the MOLG in liaising with the Ministry of Finance (MOF), particularly when the MOF seeks verification or no-objection through the MOLG regarding the Municipal Papers.

3.23 Mayor Wagner requested an update on the status of the Council's general warrant, granting approval of the Council's budget for the fiscal year. Mr. King confirmed that a resubmission was made to the MOF and feedback is anticipated by the end of the week.

3.24 The Council was briefed on forthcoming consultations regarding two key matters. Stakeholder recommendations will be sought on the proposed amalgamation of the three municipal legislations into a unified Municipal Governance Bill, with several suggestions already submitted via the Mayor's Association. Additionally, amendments to the Liquor Licensing Act are currently in progress. It was also noted that the Municipal Boundaries Act has been officially signed.

3.25 In reference to the Blue Cities and Beyond Project, Councilor Pollard noted that some initiatives appear fragmented, as several of the Council's existing activities already align with the outlined reforms, and suggested that the resources be allocated in other areas where support might be needed.

3.26 Mr. King recognized Councillor Pollard's observation and affirmed that the project seeks to enhance existing structures. He recommended consulting the City Administrator and the City Planner to ensure alignment and optimize the impact of these initiatives.

3.27 The Mayor extended his appreciation to Mr. King for sharing the achievements realized under his leadership. He recognized Mr. King as a pioneering figure in the advancement of local governance and commended his continued contributions at both the national and regional levels.

**The Director of Local Government left the meeting at 10:57 AM.**

#### **4.0 Ratification of the March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes**

4.1 Correction to the Attendance List

4.2 Adjustment to 8.7.

4.3 Councilor Garcia moved for the minutes of the March 7<sup>th</sup>, Regular Council Meeting to be accepted. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller.

#### **5.0 Matters arising from the Minutes**

5.1 (4.6) Councillor Cattouse inquired about the installation of a speed bump on Albert Street West. She was advised that a pedestrian crossing was painted, but a speed bump was not installed.

5.2 (4.5) The City Administrator advised that a bus is currently being rented to transport employees, and a box truck is being utilized for the transportation of equipment. A query was raised regarding whether the bus company is up to date with its trade license, which could potentially be used as an offset. The City Administrator committed to investigating this matter further.

5.3 The Council is exploring the purchase of a bus. To date, two or three options have been considered, with one being recommended for acquisition. However, there are still concerns in this area, and the search for a suitable vehicle will continue.

5.4 Mayor Wagner advised that he would be providing an update on the upcoming Global Covenant of Mayors (GCOM) and Blue21 visit during his announcements.

#### **6.0 Updates from the Mayor**

6.1 Mayor Wagner advised that the Municipal Papers reprofiling exercise has been ongoing for an extended period of time. He explained that approximately \$26 million in municipal papers are being converted into longer-term investments. An offering of \$46 million is being proposed for the next round of investments, with \$26 million earmarked to reprofile existing obligations, and the remaining \$20 million allocated to defray existing payables and to fund upcoming projects.

6.2 Mayor Wagner further advised that the offerings are expected to go public by June 1st, pending documents such as the preliminary prospectus and a legal opinion from the Council's attorney for the bondholders.



6.3 The Mayor also provided an update in respect to the reprofiling exercise which delays had created a situation where several existing Muni-paper had matured, namely St. Martin's Credit Union, Sagicor, and Holy Redeemer Credit Union. This situation therefore required the Council to rollover those maturing paper under the new MSA for a further period, but with a call-option so as to enable those to be captured under the reprofiling exercise in June. Similarly, the Central Bank of Belize (CBB) Pension Scheme Investment has also reached maturity at the end of December 2024.

6.4 Upon the maturation of the Central Bank Pension Scheme investment, a request was made for a payout from the sinking fund. The Central Bank of Belize, which serves in the role of sinking fund custodian, conveyed some measure of concerns regarding the payout of its investment, even though the pension fund trustees had requested that the investment be rolled over rather than be considered a new investment

6.5 Mayor Wagner explained that, given the concerns of the sinking fund custodian, a decision was made for the CBB Pension Fund investment funds to be returned to them. He further explained that in accordance with the Sinking Fund Custodial agreement signed by the Council and the Central Bank of Belize, the custodian is mandated to execute instructions upon the written request of the Mayor and the City Administrator.

6.6 Mayor Wagner affirmed the strength of the Council's financial product, underscoring a consistent record of timely payments and reliability.

6.7 Councilor Pollard asked if there has been any interest in the upcoming offering. The mayor indicated that the demand is present and expects the investment window to not be open for long.

6.8 Mayor Wagner then announced that the auction process has been initiated for six strategically located properties. He also shared that based on data gathered from the Revenue and Valuation departments, since 2018, this Council has been very active in pursuing via the legal route, outstanding fees owed to them by residents.

6.9 Councillor Pollard requested information on whether there has been an increase in property tax compliance rates since the Council began selling properties whose accounts are in arrears.

6.10 Mayor Wagner noted that this information has not been reported, but further explained that improving the compliance rate is ultimately the desired outcome.

6.11 Mayor Wagner then advised that Blue21's visit is scheduled from May 6th to May 8th. He explained that the floating boardwalk project is active and is expected to gain



further momentum following their visit.

6.12 The Mayor then shared the agenda for their visit and highlighted that a meeting with the Prime Minister was scheduled for the second day of their visit.

6.13 Other meetings are scheduled to take place with stakeholders and financial institutions to explore financing options, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), grants, etc.

6.14 Mayor Wagner shared that the project is anticipated to cost approximately 4 million euros and is set to transform the entire landscape of the Southern Foreshore area. He explained that with the replacement of the Swing Bridge, the area will be significantly enhanced, and tourists will have an alternative area to visit. Mayor Wagner encouraged the councilors to promote and take pride in the project.

6.15 Mayor Wagner notified those present that the Council's request to the Ministry of Finance for consideration to increase the remuneration for the Councilors was not approved. Mayor Wagner advised that he would continue to lobby for the requested adjustments.

6.16 Mayor Wagner shared a design concept for a proposed development of a Marriott Hotel at the foot of the Chetumal Street Bridge.

6.17 Mayor Wagner then advised that the Youth Shadow Councilors have raised concerns regarding a lack of engagement from the Councilors, noting that their term will conclude in four months.

6.18 Councillor Pollard acknowledged the scheduling challenges faced by the Councilors, many of whom hold full-time positions. He emphasized that the Programs Department should take the lead in coordinating meetings and engagements well in advance to facilitate participation. While recognizing that certain activities arise spontaneously, he reiterated that proactive scheduling by the department would enable Councilors to commit more effectively.

6.19 The City Administrator advised that he would relay this information to the Programs Manager, who would create a schedule.

6.20 The Mayor announced that the Council will need to consider the implementation of a garbage fee. He suggested that the Finance Director, along with Troy Smith, conduct an analysis of the number of property owners in the city. The cost could be added to their property tax bill at the beginning of the year, and would not be exorbitant. In developing or undeveloped areas, he suggested that some relief could be considered. He went on to

8



say that even capturing a portion of the 3.6 million costs would assist the Council in covering garbage removal expenses.

6.21 Councilor Thompson indicated that the collection could potentially cover the entire cost, depending on the fee that is charged.

6.22 Councilor Hamilton emphasized the importance of considering the timing of implementation.

6.23 Councilor Pollard emphasized that significant effort is required in this regard. However, there has to be a collective effort, and the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) must be involved in lobbying for it. The Council should not bear the responsibility alone, as other municipalities are also facing similar challenges; the political implications are more likely to be reduced if it is a collective effort.

6.24 Deputy Mayor Miller stated he would support the initiative and suggested presenting a realistic proposal. Belize City is currently the only municipality without a garbage fee, and aligning with other municipalities would be beneficial.

6.25 Councilor Kwan expressed understanding of the situation at hand but disagreed, citing potential political repercussions. He proposed changing the collection method, such as installing tolls.

6.26 He was advised that tolls are not feasible as the Council does not control the highways.

6.27 Councilor Hamilton voiced her support and recommended conducting consultations. She believes it is in the city's best interest and that lobbying to ministers could lead to approval.

6.28 Councilor Thompson recalled paying a garbage fee when residing in Ladyville and believes it would benefit the city as a whole. He recommended collecting the necessary data and emphasized acting within legal capacities when the legislation is in place.

6.29 Deputy Mayor Miller explained that the reality is that garbage collection costs the Council \$3.6 million annually, necessitating alternative revenue-generating measures to address the issue.

6.30 Mayor Wagner emphasized the importance that governance requires boldness, and knowing when to be bold and when to exercise caution is essential. He stated that without the willingness to take risks or be bold, change will not occur. Focusing solely on preservation rather than transformation will result in stagnation.



6.31 Mayor Wagner explained the importance of effectively communicating the message. Residents will be advised that the Council is not requesting the full 3.6 million but is seeking assistance in covering it. Mayor Wagner also suggested that consideration should be given to the indigent, elderly, and residents in undeveloped areas. As the city expands, efforts should be made to include others. He went on to say that elected officials must prioritize transformation over personal political ambition.

6.32 Councilor Cattouse advocated for bold action in addressing the Belize Waste Control (BWC) contract, stating that the Council has been held hostage in managing garbage in the city. She emphasized that it is time to take decisive steps, as constituents would be burdened with a garbage tax.

6.33 Councilor Pollard emphasized the need for collective discussion to consider all perspectives. He agreed with the need for boldness but also advocated for wisdom, suggesting that the approach should be easily digestible to minimize disruption. He further mentioned that this conversation has been had many times, but each time, it ends in the same place with little progress.

6.34 Councilor Pollard further recommended establishing a committee of four to five members to assess the financial obligations, determine the number of affected residents, and evaluate alternative approaches. While no formal case exists at this stage, obtaining comprehensive data will strengthen the foundation for informed decision-making. Presentations or proposals should be prepared for review to determine the most appropriate course of action, as a Council resolution appears unlikely.

6.35 The City Administrator advised that he would meet with the Valuation Manager and the Finance Manager to conduct a property tax analysis and would present a report at the next Council meeting. Councillors should be informed that the mayor remains committed to advancing discussions on the garbage tax and similar initiatives at the national level. Immediate action is necessary to drive progress.

## **7.0 Updates from the City Administrator**

7.1 The City Administrator advised that a public meeting has been requested by the Port Loyola area representative to address concerns raised by residents regarding the condition of Arlington Drive in anticipation of the rainy season.

7.2 Mayor Wagner expressed some measure of reluctance given that the flooding situation being experienced by the residents in that area has been driven primarily by lack of urban planning and the unsustainable approach of granting lands in swamp areas to residents. He explained that individuals in the community have been creating urban



sprawl by illegally inhabiting areas that have served the city as water catchment.

7.3 Mayor Wagner clarified that the Council is responsible for the maintenance and repair of streets, rather than their initial planning and construction, and does not have the resources to solve this matter. The issue of drainage, therefore, remains unresolved, as there is no direct connection to the sea. Given these circumstances, a government-led solution is required.

7.4 The City Administrator then advised that the Council has seen a series of resignations over the past three months. Concerns have arisen regarding employee retention, prompting discussions among directors on strategies to support young professionals while ensuring continuity within the workforce.

7.5 The City Administrator announced that the handing over of the Pumping Station is scheduled for May 15<sup>th</sup>, with relevant preparations underway. Additionally, the launch date for the E-Taxi initiative has been set for May 14<sup>th</sup>, marking a key milestone in the Council's public transportation efforts.

7.6 The City Administrator explained that the Council received a proposal regarding the cutting and bushing of the city. He stated that concerns have consistently been raised about the perceived lack of value for money in the work being executed. Meetings were held with the enforcement department to address the same concern, and steps are being taken to implement the discussed solutions. He wondered if the same should be done in all departments.

7.7 The City Administrator then noted that April 15<sup>th</sup> marked one year since he first assumed office. He expressed gratitude to the management team, recognizing their invaluable support over the past year.

7.8 Councilor Thompson extended his appreciation for the City Administrator's dedication and contributions.

7.9 Councilor Hamilton expressed gratitude for the City Administrator's support and reflected on his experiences as a Councillor. She also highlighted concerns regarding accountability within the cutting team, urging managers to either assign work effectively or ensure proper oversight.

7.10 Deputy Mayor Miller congratulated City Administrator Vaughan on his tenure, emphasizing their strong working relationship and extending best wishes for the next two years.

## **8.0 Notices**

8.1 Councillor Cattouse provided an update regarding the issuance of liquor licenses, specifically for Thirsty Thursday and Buccaneer (in Ladyville). It was noted that ongoing concerns have been raised regarding inadequate soundproofing measures and persistent complaints from residents regarding noise pollution.

8.2 Given the recurring nature of these concerns, recommendations have been put forward to establish a defined time frame within which affected establishments must implement proper soundproofing solutions to ensure compliance with regulatory and community standards.

## **9.0. Questions**

9.1 Councillor Cattouse asked the Council if anything could be done regarding the installation of license plates issued by the Council, noting misalignment due to the distance of the holes installed on the plates.

9.2 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that he would request a review by the management team, affirming that there were no issues with his vehicle and recommending engagement with suppliers.

9.3 Councillor Cattouse inquired whether an individual could purchase a property if they paid for it before the auction. She was advised that the law requires a public auction to take place.

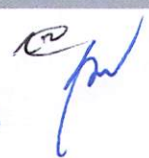
## **10.0 Petitions**

10.1 No matters were tabled.

## **11.0 Reports from Councillors**

11.1 Councillor Garcia reported on the observed deterioration of the exercise equipment at Memorial Park and Digi Park. It was noted that the equipment has suffered significant degradation due to prolonged exposure to the salt air. He explained that immediate action is needed to ensure safety for members of the public who use these machines.

11.2 Councillor Garcia advised that lighting improvements are planned for both Memorial Park and Digi Park. The Council will cover the cost of minor enhancements to Memorial Park, while funds from Digi's adoption of Digi Park have been earmarked for essential repairs to that facility. He also noted that the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Anthony





Mahler, along with the Belize Tourism Board, has committed to assisting with the repairs to the roof of the stage at Memorial Park.

11.3 Developments continue for Lopez Mateus Park, Blue Aviation, and Ring Road Park. The primary concern raised regarding Ring Road Park is inadequate drainage, which the Sanitation Department will assess. Atlantic Bank has expressed interest in adopting all three parks as part of its corporate social responsibility efforts.

11.4 Challenges persist in the collection of vendor fees, and efforts are ongoing to address the issue.

11.5 The City Administrator has requested that directors compile and submit a list of delinquent vendors. The next step is to submit the listing to the Municipal Court to ensure compliance with their rental agreements.

11.6 The Mayor requested a comprehensive report regarding the condition of the office at Digi Park. He observed that it was in a state of disrepair and asked if there were any plans to address the space.

11.7 Councillor Garcia advised that there are no immediate plans. However, renovations to the park are pending funding from Digi. Plans include the replacement of shutters and benches as part of the park refurbishment.

11.8 Councillor Cattouse reported that preparations for the upcoming hurricane season have been ongoing since December. The Sanitation team has prioritized digging drains and clearing outlets to facilitate rapid water runoff once the rainy season begins.

11.9 Executive elections for the Child Advisor Body are scheduled prior to the summer of 2025. Additionally, the Programs Department is conducting an assessment of the 2024/2025 Sustainable and Child-Friendly Municipalities (SCFM) work plan.

11.10 Councillor Cattouse advised that she, the Programs Manager, and Councillor Nunez will participate in the upcoming International Social Work Conference hosted by the University of Belize.

11.11 Development of the Student Hub at City Hall continues; the department has requested that the space be painted and that general upgrades occur. The hub currently serves 38 active students. Additionally, two high school students have recently completed community service through this program.

11.12 UNICEF has earmarked \$14,000 BZD to support Council-led initiatives that the Programs Department is spearheading. Upcoming summer activities will focus on youth



engagement, academic reinforcement, and foundational life skills development.

11.13 The City Emergency Management Organization's (CEMO) Special Needs Committee is scheduled to meet on May 14th in preparation for the hurricane season. Shelter management training is being coordinated so that the Council's shelter managers can be equipped with the necessary skills to effectively support individuals with special needs.

11.14 The Autism Awareness Walk took place on April 26th, with several Council members participating in the walk. The Council provided support for the event by preparing gift baskets that were offered as raffle prizes, while the Enforcement Department facilitated a traffic escort to ensure the smooth and safe progression of the walk.

11.15 Mayor Wagner asked Councillor Cattouse to identify the areas where drains were being dug. She advised that they were all over the city and working in the Racoon St. area the day prior.

11.16 Mayor Wagner advised that the works need to be captured on the Council's social media pages, and highlighted especially as we approach the Hurricane Season.

11.17 Councillor Thompson reported that since the implementation of the garbage collection fee in March, a total of \$10,190 BZD has been collected at the Michael Finnegan Market. The fees are collected on Market Days only.

11.18 Councilor Hamilton shared that a delegation from the Council visited Taiwan to attend the Digital and Green Transformation Summit. Key presentations included two by the mayor on green mobility, highlighting Belize City's adoption of the E-bus initiative, and another on cross-border collaboration in the context of smart cities. Presentations also covered the floating boardwalk initiative. Delegates engaged in expos covering risk and disaster management and traffic management systems.

11.19 A highlight of the trip was the revitalization of the sister-city relationship with Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Discussions emphasized collaboration on E-bikes and E-buses, with plans to seek approval for their introduction in Belize City. The mayor reiterated the strategic goal of positioning Belize City as a premier tourist destination.

11.20 On April 5th, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor participated in a meeting with representatives from the Belize Tourism Board to discuss strategic partnerships for the effective management of the Fort George Tourism Zone. The discussions focused on key areas, including sanitation, traffic management, and beautification initiatives.





11.21 Councillor Pollard provided a report on ongoing infrastructure works. He noted that manhole replacements and the installation of bus stops for the e-buses are underway.

11.22 In respect to drainage efforts, Councillor Pollard noted that the Works Department has been actively clearing drains in collaboration with the Sanitation team, particularly along King Street, as part of preparations for the upcoming hurricane season.

11.23 Councillor Pollard advised that the Works Manager has recommended the procurement of specialized equipment designed for accessing hard-to-reach areas when cleaning drains.

11.24 The Works Department has noted a shortage of 3/8 stones required for pre-mix and is requesting additional supplies to accelerate the rehabilitation of concrete streets discussed in previous Council meetings.

11.25 Councillor Pollard commended the City Administrator for the ongoing enhancements to the 4 ½ mile compound, including yard filling and the installation of an additional bathroom to provide a more suitable working environment for the team.

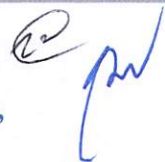
11.26 The City Administrator reported that an incident involving an individual who sustained injuries due to a faulty manhole had been brought to the Council's attention several months ago. He expressed concern and disappointment upon learning that the issue remains unresolved and that the manhole continues to pose a significant safety hazard to the public.

11.27 Councillor Nunez reported that the current cohort of the Youth Shadow Council has successfully completed their Project Management training, facilitated by the Administrative Manager. The Shadow Councillors have now been tasked with developing a proposal for their final project, to be submitted by the end of May. Additionally, a committee will be appointed to oversee the selection of Shadow Councillors who will be eligible to participate in the upcoming exchange visit to Miramar, Florida.

11.28 The Programs Department is also preparing for a faster transition into the next cohort of Youth Shadow Councillors.

11.29 Councillor Usher advised on the expansion of the Eternal Garden Cemetery. He advised that it should be completed by the end of May, and also noted plans for addressing the road leading to the cemetery.

11.30 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that revenue generated by the Traffic Department for the month of March 2025 exceeded \$500,000. The department continues to maintain its primary financial target of generating between \$500,000 and \$600,000 monthly.





11.31 The driver's license printer has been successfully upgraded, addressing several technical challenges experienced with the previous system. Enhanced security measures have been introduced, including new holographic features. There are options to customize the designs to reflect Belize City-specific designs; however, implementation will proceed incrementally due to the associated costs.=

11.32 Councillor Thompson inquired about the possibility of incorporating the Social Security Number on driver's licenses to enhance their function as a recognized form of identification.

11.33 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that driver's licenses from Belize City are the only internationally recognized licenses abroad.

11.34 It was reported that a falsified driver's license bearing an expiration date of 2085 had circulated in the media. This was confirmed to be a mischievous act, conducted through the use of Photoshop, and not an official error.

11.35 A lateral transfer has been approved, resulting in the reassignment of personnel between departments. The Executive Secretary from the Planning Department has been transferred to the Traffic Department, while the Administrative Officer from the Traffic Department has been reassigned to the Planning Department.

11.36 The Records Room remains a top priority, with efforts underway to reduce the backlog. Currently, they are only two years behind, which is an improvement. The department plans to engage student interns during the summer months to support this initiative. A request has been submitted for improvements to the department's building, including painting and updated signage, to establish a permanent and functional workspace.

11.37 The most recent Traffic Management Committee meeting was held on March 14th. These meetings are scheduled to occur quarterly going forward.

11.38 Deputy Mayor Miller also reported on the Belize City Accelerator Program (BCAP), noting a meeting with the LED Manager to discuss scaling up operations and supporting a new cohort. An application for grant funding has been submitted to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and feedback is pending.

11.39 The LED Manager has been tasked with contacting a minimum of 25 businesses monthly. A report on this outreach effort is expected following the close of April. The goal is to ensure continued engagement and partnership with the local business community.



11.40 The Downtown Super Sale is scheduled for June 14th and will be held under a Father's Day Edition theme.

11.41 Deputy Mayor Miller commended the Mayor and the Public Relations Team for their consistent work on the monthly newsletter, which was highlighted during the Ministry of Local Government's Annual Review Meeting. The newsletter has been instrumental in showcasing transparency and sustained communication with the public.

11.42 The Council's support and participation in recent community events were acknowledged, including the Autism Walk and the Hot Cross Bun Festival.

11.43 The National Celebrations Commission's (NCC) Theme Competition is now open, with a submission deadline of May 9th. Deputy Mayor Miller encouraged all members to promote participation within their respective networks.

11.44 Deputy Mayor Miller commended Councilors Cattouse and Nunez for their active involvement in Child Stimulation Month activities, which included hosting student groups and conducting school visits. Councilors Cattouse, Usher, and Thompson also delivered treat packages to the Welcome Resource Center as part of the Programs Department's Easter initiative.

11.45 Deputy Mayor Miller thanked Council members for their participation in the Yuremein Project Dinner and advised that the Council was formally recognized for its ongoing support of the project.

11.46 Deputy Mayor Miller extended congratulations to the Council representatives who recently participated in delegations to London and Taiwan.

11.47 Deputy Mayor Miller noted that during the Ministry of Local Government's Annual Review Session, the Belize City Council was recognized as a leading municipality in several categories, including timely submission of meeting minutes, GIS integration, maintaining the lowest emolument-to-revenue ratio, and overall transparency.

11.48 In closing, Deputy Mayor Miller publicly acknowledged and commended Councilor Cattouse for her candidacy in the recent National Elections. Her courage and willingness to serve in this capacity reflect the strength and resilience of the Council, and she continues to have their full support.

## **12.0 Motions by Mayor & Councilors**

12.1 Deputy Mayor Miller moved a motion for the approval of an employment contract between the Council and Ms. Radiance Tablada. Seconded by Councilor Garcia. MOTION PASSED.

12.2 Deputy Mayor Miller moved a motion for the approval of an employment contract between the Council and Mr. Jason Barrera. Seconded by Councilor Hamilton. MOTION PASSED.

12.3 Deputy Mayor Miller moved a motion for the approval of a proposal for the establishment of a Youth Connect Student Hub at the Hope Center, through the signing of a memorandum of understanding with Hon. Anthony Mahler and the Pickstock Constituency, with a budget of \$94,359.95. Seconded by Councilor Garcia.

12.4 Councilor Nunez noted that the expansion of the Student Hub Network is a manifesto promise and advised that seeing it come to fruition is beneficial to the City.

12.5 Councilor Kwan requested clarity regarding the installation of screens for the windows of the Hope Center.

12.6 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that plastic screens will be used to accommodate the installation and use of Air Conditioning units. MOTION PASSED.

12.7 Councilor Garcia moved a motion for the rental of Booth #6 at the Memorial Park to Ms. Marjeli Alvarado for the purpose of selling healthy juices and smoothies. Seconded by Councilor Kwan.

12.8 Mayor Wagner advised that the relevant departments should be monitoring tenants to ensure that they do not fall behind on their payments. Councilor Garcia assured the mayor that this would be done. MOTION PASSED.

12.9 Councilor Garcia moved a motion for the Council to approve the renaming of Triangle Park to GS-COM Triangle Park. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller.

12.10 Deputy Mayor Miller inquired whether the park had previously had an official name. He was advised that the park was officially known as Triangle Park.

12.11 Councilor Kwan inquired whether the park would be rehabilitated or simply have the name changed. Councilor Garcia advised that GS-COM has already been maintaining the park, and that Council had previously approved the adoption of the park by the business. MOTION PASSED.



12.12 Deputy Mayor Miller, on behalf of Councilor Castellanos, moved a motion for the Council to approve the Belize City Council's participation in the Making Cities Resilient 2030 Initiative. Seconded by Councilor Garcia.

12.13 Mayor Wagner inquired about any fees associated with participation in the initiative and was informed that there were no costs involved. MOTION PASSED.

12.14 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the rollover and the issuance of the Series VII Municipal Papers. Seconded by Councilor Kwan. MOTION PASSED.

### **13.0 New Business**

13.1 Mr. Kabelo Awich, a representative from Akwaabaa, presented a product designed to complement the e-bus system—durable, low-maintenance, eco-friendly bus sheds that align with Belize City's green and smart-city initiatives. Mr. Awich stated that the bus sheds include built-in security features such as surveillance cameras and asserted that they are fully accessible for persons with disabilities and include integrated advertisement mechanisms to facilitate revenue generation.

13.2 Mr. Awich stated that the sheds are engineered for a minimum lifespan of 20 years, the structures are hurricane-resistant and constructed from non-metal materials, eliminating concerns about rust. They also feature a solar-powered system with panels mounted on the roof.

13.3 In response to Councilor Hamilton's inquiry regarding a warranty, it was confirmed that Akwaabaa will guarantee the products. Should the Council enter into a formal partnership, Akwaabaa would assume responsibility for ongoing maintenance.

13.4 In response to Councilor Kwan's query, it was clarified that the price of \$60,000.00 for a 30' shed and \$40,000.00 for a 15' shed is inclusive of installation; however, under a partnership model, installation would be conducted by the Council.

13.5 Councilor Thompson inquired about potential revenue streams, to which it was confirmed that revenue would be generated through the sheds' advertisement capabilities.

13.6 The Mayor requested that technical specifications be shared to facilitate due diligence and noted that the Council would provide feedback following internal review.

**Mr. Awich and Mr. Mansu left the meeting.**

**14.0 Adjournment**

14.1 Councillor Garcia moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller.

The meeting concluded at 1:47 pm.



BERNARD WAGNER  
MAYOR



ALBERT VAUGHAN  
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

