

MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING

Belize City Hall
January 15, 2019

Present:

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| 1. His Worship Bernard Wagner | Mayor |
| 2. Mr. Oscar Arnold | Deputy Mayor |
| 3. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr. | Councilor |
| 4. Mr. Micah Goodin | Councilor |
| 5. Mr. Javier Castellanos | Councilor |
| 6. Ms. Delthrude Hylton | Councilor |
| 7. Mr. Ryan Elijio | Councilor |
| 8. Ms. Aisha Gentle | Councilor |
| 9. Mr. Albert Vaughan | Councilor |
| 10. Mr. Michael Norales | Councilor |
| 11. Dr. Candice Pitts | Councilor |

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

Mr. Rafael Sosa, **Manager**, Office of the Mayor

Attendance by Invitation:

Mr. Robert Cadle and Mr. Javier Tun (Men @ Work Towing Impound Co. Ltd.)

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Mayor Wagner after which everyone recited the Belize National Prayer.

Mayor Wagner appealed to his Councilors to display political and professional maturity. Mayor Wagner urged his Councilors to be “macro thinkers” and not “micro thinkers”. Lastly, the Mayor stated that the Council should be goal-driven and goal-oriented.

1.0 Ratification of November 13, 2018 Minutes

- 1.1 Councilor Gentle moved that the Minutes of the November 13, 2018 Emergency Caucus Meeting be ratified. Councilor Pitts seconded the motion.

2.0 Matters Arising from Minutes

- 2.1 **City Engineer's Contract** – Mayor Wagner informed that he was in possession of the City Engineer's new contract.
- 2.2 **Restructuring of Cemetery Department** – Councilor Vaughan requested an update on the restructuring of the Cemetery Department. The City Administrator informed that interviews for positions, recommended by Councilor Hylton, would soon be conducted.
- 2.3 **HOODLINKS Program** - Councilor Goodin informed that the **HOODLINKS Program** has been formalized and is functional.
- 2.4 **Relocation of House/Homeowner on Ring Road** – Mayor Wagner requested an update on the relocation of the house/homeowner on Ring Road. Councilor Vaughan informed that following a meeting among himself, Councilor Elijio and the City Planner, it was decided that the Council would purchase a Mennonite House for the homeowner that will be placed outside of the reserve area.

3.0 Presentation by Mr. Robert Cadle & Mr. Javier Tun (Men @ Work Towing & Impound Co. Ltd.)

Mayor Wagner invited Mr. Robert Cadle and Mr. Javier Tun to deliver their presentation to the Council.

Mr. Tun introduced “Men @ Work Towing & Impound Co. Ltd”, a towing and impound company owned & operated by himself and Mr. Robert Cadle. Mr. Tun explained that their company will serve to assist the Belize City Council with the towing of derelict vehicles and vehicles parked in “No Parking” zones.

- 3.1 Councilor Gentle shared her concern about the \$100.00 impound fee and the \$10.00/day given the likelihood that some City residents will not be able to afford the

costs given their socioeconomic status.

- 3.2 Councilor Goodin stated that at the end of the day, the salient matter has to do with people breaking the law and that the Council's "3-E Program" is applicable.
- 3.3 Deputy Mayor Arnold asked that everyone listen first to the presentation/proposal before they contemplated/deliberated.
- 3.4 Councilor Elijio sought a clarification of the applicable law in respect of the definition of the term "derelict vehicles".
- 3.5 Referring to the wheel locking charge of \$50.00, Mr. Tun shared that there would be a 50/50 split between the Council and the towing/impound company.
- 3.6 Councilor Vaughan proposed that a committee be set up which would comprise himself, Councilor Norales, Councilor Pollard Jr., Councilor Hylton and the City Administrator. The committee would be charged with reviewing the proposal submitted by Messrs. Tun & Cadle. Councilor Goodin supported Councilor Vaughan's suggestion.
- 3.7 The City Administrator asked Mr. Cadle and Mr. Tun why the Council should engage their company when the possibility may exist for the Council to provide towing/impounding services on its own. Mr. Cadle and Mr. Tun stated that they were simply making a proposal for the Council to consider.

4.0 Mayor's Announcements & Matters

- 4.1 Mayor Wagner informed that a Canadian company contacted the LED Manager, Mr. Hubert Pipersburgh regarding employment opportunities for meat cutters in Alberta, Canada.
- 4.2 Mayor Wagner shared about a free medical camp that is being organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. The free medical camp will be conducted from January 24 – 31, 2019 by a team of medical doctors from Canada. The free medical Camp will take place at 529 Buttonwood Bay Boulevard from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and will be open to all ages.



- 4.3 Mayor Wagner informed that the Mayor & Councilors need to complete their Financial Declarations for submission to the Integrity Commission.
- 4.4 Mayor Wagner informed that he will be leading an official delegation to Taipei, Taiwan to attend the “2019 Smart Cities Summit & Expo” from March 23 – 26, 2019. The official delegation will include Mayor Bernard Wagner, Councilor Delthruide Hylton, Councilor Allan Pollard Jr. and Ms. Carla Patnett, City Planner.
- 4.5 Mayor Wagner informed that the names of persons submitted to the Ministry of Local Government for inclusion on the new Belize District Liquor Licensing Board have been accepted and confirmed. They include the following:

Mr. Adrian Madrid – **Chairman**
Ms. Valerie Woods – **Vice-Chairlady**
Mr. Salvador Awe – **Member**
Mr. Vaughan Gill – **Member**

Mayor Wagner further informed that the Ministry of Local Government will send official letters of appointment to the Belize District Liquor Licensing Board.

- 4.6 Mayor Wagner informed that the roles/functions of the Manager, Office of the Mayor will be reviewed and amended. The Mayor stated that the Manager, Office of the Mayor should assume more of a “political role” than that of an “administrative role”.
- 4.6.1 Councilor Castellanos thanked the Manager, Office of the Mayor for responding timely to his requests.
- 4.6.2 Councilor Pollard Jr. asked for a clarification of the communication channel in light of the review/amendment of the roles/functions of the Manager, Office of the Mayor.
- 4.6.3 Councilor Vaughan supported the new structure described by the Mayor.
- 4.6.4 Councilor Goodin also expressed his support for the new structure and asked about the City Administrator’s Executive Secretary, Mrs. Marcia Joseph. Mayor Wagner explained that Mrs. Joseph is acting temporarily in the capacity until the City Administrator identifies someone to permanently fill the position.

- 4.7 Mayor Wagner referred his Councilors to the Timeline for the Completion (80%) of the Council's Manifesto Commitments.
- 4.7.1 Councilor Pitts informed about the Domestic Violence Conference that is being scheduled for January 30, 2019 at the Swift Hall. Councilor Pitts shared that Councilors Hylton and Gentle would be included on the official program.
- 4.7.2 Deputy Mayor Arnold informed that the Council will hold its first Public Meeting on February 6, 2019 and that the City's PUP Area Representatives & Standard Bearers will be invited. Deputy Mayor Arnold further informed that The Council's PR Dept is producing flyers for the Public Meeting.
- 4.8 Mayor Wagner informed that back in September/October, he had announced that the current Belize City Council had employed a total of fifty-one (51) new persons. Mayor Wagner informed that to date, that number has increased to seventy-three (73) new hires.
- 5.0 Updates from Past Meetings (nothing to report)**
- 6.0 City Administrator's Presentation** - The City Administrator provided a comprehensive report on the Council's finances.

Highlights of Report:

- The City Administrator explained that while the Council's wage bill increased in December, attributed mainly to overtime payments that were incurred with the clean-up campaigns that were carried out in that month, the annual wage bill has decreased by approximately \$200,000.
- The City Administrator shared that the Council's pay scales are not properly aligned and, most likely, are outdated. The Council's appraisal system will be reviewed and retailored to better reflect employee performance. It is recommended that the Christmas Bonus be linked to strategic and operational goals and targets instead of being awarded

automatically. Additionally, the City Administrator recommended that a feasibility study be conducted to determine the viability of the pay scales and remaining on an increment system.

- Councilor Pollard Jr. asked why it is that persons employed at the Traffic Department as Traffic Officers are brought in under Grade II classification. The City Administrator explained that the classification is based on the individuals' qualifications and work experience.
- The City Administrator informed that the following Departments are slated to undergo restructuring: MIS Dept., Special Constable Dept., Sanitation Dept., Cemetery Dept., Offices of the Mayor.
- Mayor Wagner floated the idea of the Council outsourcing sanitation. Mayor Wagner stated that in many parts of the world, the move is toward outsourcing.
- Councilor Norales expressed his support for the Mayor's idea for the Council to outsource sanitation.
- Mayor Wagner tasked the City Administrator with conducting a financial analysis of the Council's Sanitation Department.
- Councilor Vaughan asked why it is that the Sanitation Department operates in the nighttime. Councilor Norales explained that the nighttime operations are mainly focused on the City's garbage hot spots.
- Deputy Mayor shared that he has observed that the Sanitation workers have a lot of downtime.
- The City Administrator shared about the increases that the Council has accrued in its income, i.e. Fees & Services (183%), Property (54%), Traffic (48%), Trade & Liquor (3%).



- Councilor Pollard Jr. informed that Sling Shots Advertising recently increased its cost for manufacturing vehicle license plates. The Councilor asked if the Traffic Department should increase its cost as a result. The City Administrator informed that any increase would first have to be approved by the Ministry of Local Government.
- The City Administrator advised the Council of key expenses incurred over the third quarter which included the Christmas Initiatives (Christmas Tree & Lighting Ceremony, Movie & Popcorn in the Park, Staff Bonuses, Christmas Tokens [ham/turkey, hampers, gift baskets]); Downtown Last Saturday, balloon payments to RJB Construction and Legal Claim from Benson Ramclam; payments towards the overdraft facility and home repairs following the Faber's Road incident. These key expenses impacted the Council's ability to pay other obligations like Belize Waste Control.
- Furthermore, the City Administrator informed that the Council has been paying out and continues to pay out gratuities and vacation grants to employees who were not receiving their gratuities and vacation grants from the previous Council. Some of these employee payments date as far back as three and four years.
- On the matter of improving operating efficiency, the City Administrator indicated that operational expenses reduced by as much as fifty percent for materials & supplies and maintenance. While public utilities also reduced significantly, the numbers are skewed because it does not include billing for the full third quarter.
- Even though there are considerable improvements in reducing outstanding payables, the Council has undertaken several unplanned activities like the Hoodlinks Program, along with the Youth & Sports focus and the Community Support Program.
- The City Administrator shared that the Mayor has given his approval for the implementation of an "Employee Assistance Program" following the Samuel August case. The City Administrator further informed that counseling sessions have already started with one employee.

- Deputy Mayor Arnold asked about confidentiality. The City Administrator informed that counseling sessions are being conducted off Council's premises.

7.0 Current Litigations

- 7.1 The City Administrator provided an update on the current litigations facing the Council, namely the Belize Waste Control Judgment (\$1 MIL) and the Candice Miller Claim (\$0.5 MIL). With respect to the latter, Deputy Mayor Arnold suggested that the Council consider obtaining an additional legal opinion.

8.0 Trade Licenses

- 8.1 The City Administrator informed that the deadline for the payment of Trade Licenses was December 31, 2018. To date, there are several businesses that remain in arrears and the Valuation/Revenue/Compliance Unit has been tasked with following up vigilantly with the businesses.
- 8.2 Deputy Mayor Arnold asked for the total number of businesses in arrears – 274 (Northside), 259 (Southside).

9.0 Upcoming Activities for Youth & Sports (Fitness Program/Interoffice Softball/Weekend Street League) – Councilor Micah Goodin

- 9.1 Councilor Goodin presented the budget for the Council's Fitness Program and stated that the Sports Coordinator would be vigilant in managing the program.
- 9.2 Councilor Vaughan stressed the need for the Council to get value for money.
- 9.3 Councilor Gentle suggested that the Fitness Program be implemented across the City.
- 9.4 Councilor Elijio recommended that a survey be developed and conducted among City Residents to evaluate their interest in the Fitness Program.
- 9.5 Councilor Pitts expressed her support for the Fitness Program and asked if other exercises, such as Yoga and Aerobics, would be included.



- 9.6 Deputy Mayor Arnold expressed his support for the Fitness Program and recommended periodic reviews of the program to evaluate its success or lack thereof.
- 9.7 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of the budget for the Council's Fitness Program. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor – **MOTION PASSED**
- 9.8 Councilor Pollard Jr. shared that the previous City Council had carried out sporting activities/events only around election time.
- 9.9 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of the budgets for the Weekend Street League and the Interoffice Softball Competition respectively. **ALL** Councilors voted in favor of both budgets – **MOTION PASSED**.
- 9.10 Councilor Goodin presented a proposed framework for the Youth Shadow Council. Councilor Vaughan suggested that a committee be formed to review the proposed framework and to make recommendations. It was suggested that the review committee comprise the following members: Councilor Pitts, Councilor Hylton, Councilor Pollard Jr.
- 10.0 Burial Waivers (Councilor Delthrude Hylton)**
- 10.1 Councilor Hylton stated that the Council is losing revenue whenever sizable burial waivers are granted.
- 10.2 Councilor Vaughan shared that when he refers persons for burial waivers, he does so for persons who simply cannot afford to pay the burial costs.
- 10.3 Councilor Elijio stated that he supports the granting of burial waivers for marginalized Belizeans and that employees of the Council should be given discounts.
- 10.4 Councilor Hylton stated that the Cemetery Supervisor needs to be more vigilant when it comes to the construction of tombs.
- 10.5 Councilor Gentle shared that she considers burial waivers as a form of Social Assistance.
- 10.6 Deputy Mayor Arnold stated that the Council should focus on recovering the cost of materials.

- 10.7 Councilor Vaughan stated that burial waivers should be left to the discretion of the Mayor. Councilor Pitts agreed with Councilor Vaughan's position.
- 10.8 The City Administrator recommended that a maximum waiver of fifty percent (50%) be approved for tombing at Lord Ridge Cemetery. As for Eternal Garden, the City Administrator recommended waivers be restricted to ground spaces.
- 10.9 Mayor Wagner stated that burial waivers will need to be considered in moderation.
- 11.0 Proposed Traffic Plan (Councilor Allan Pollard Jr.)**
- 11.1 Councilor Pollard Jr. informed that the Traffic Department is currently undergoing an operational restructuring.
- 11.2 There are currently thirty-four (34) Traffic Enforcement Officers who are deployed across three zones in the City and work on a shift system. Councilor Pollard Jr. shared that one of the proposed changes is to divide the City into smaller zones and to use the City's ten Electoral Constituencies as those zones.
- 11.3 Councilor Pollard Jr. shared that the Traffic Department needs to urgently identify a suitable location where its new fleet of vehicles, recently acquired from Caribbean Motors Ltd., can be parked safely & securely.
- 11.4 The City Administrator informed that trackers have been installed on the new fleet of pickup trucks and motorcycles.
- 11.5 Councilor Pollard Jr. shared that the Traffic Department's Inspection Section, located on Johnson Street, is unsuitable, especially when it rains. Councilor Pollard Jr. informed that the Department has identified a vacant property located at the corner of Vernon Street & Youth for the Future Drive. Councilor Pollard Jr. further informed that the property owner is prepared/willing to lease the property at \$1200.00/mth.
- 11.6 Councilor Vaughan expressed his support for the proposed Traffic Plan and recommended that the Council considers leasing the vacant property with a view to eventually owning said property.
- 11.7 Deputy Mayor Arnold stated that the proposed Traffic Plan presents the ideal set of circumstances as it will allow for the generation of additional revenue for the Council. The Deputy Mayor shared that the proposed Traffic Plan should be viewed

as a wise investment by the Council.

11.8 Mayor Wagner applauded Councilor Pollard Jr. and the Traffic Manager for a well thought out and well put together plan. Mayor Wagner stated that the Traffic Department has been and continues to be a disappointment. The Mayor stressed the need for the Council to have a one stop location when it comes to Traffic Administration.

12.0 Council Sponsored ICJ Event (Councilor Allan Pollard Jr.)

12.1 Councilor Pollard Jr. opined that the ICJ issue is too important an issue and, as such, the Council should plan & organize something around the issue. Councilor Pollard Jr. suggested a forum.

12.2 Mayor Wagner shared that the Mayors Association of Belize will be holding an ICJ event.

12.3 Councilor Gentle shared that the Council should engage the Junior Colleges in the City.

12.4 Councilor Pitts expressed her support for Councilor Pollard's idea. Councilor Pitts insisted, however, that the Council would have to be creative. Councilor Pitts asked if the Council would present a universal front and take the position similar to the position taken by the Party Leader with respect to the ICJ issue.

12.5 Councilor Norales suggested that a meeting be convened with the Party Leader before the Council formulates a position.

12.6 Councilor Vaughan stated that the Council should await the final position of the Party.

12.7 Deputy Mayor Arnold stated that should the Council decide to undertake any event around the ICJ issue, it would have to be an event that is different from all the events that have taken place so far.

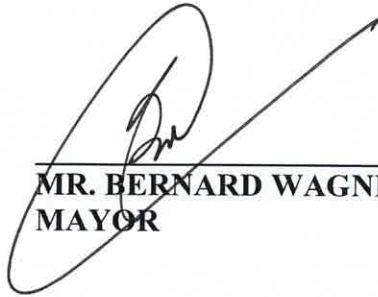
12.8 Mayor Wagner opined that it should be left to the Councilors to make their own individual decisions with respect to the ICJ issue.



13.0 Appointment of Building Unit Manager (Councilor Ryan Elijo)

- 13.1 Councilor Elijo informed that the contract for the current Building Unit Manager is nearing its end.
- 13.2 Councilor Elijo asked if the Council would review requests submitted to the Local Building Unit. Mayor Wagner informed Councilor Elijo that given the fact that the item was not included on the meeting agenda, the requests would be voted on via round-robin.

Everyone moved for the meeting to be adjourned.



MR. BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



MRS. STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

