

MINUTES of VIRTUAL CAUCUS MEETING

Zoom
Belize City Hall
August 31, 2021

Present:

1. **His Worship Bernard Wagner** Mayor
2. **Mr. Allan Pollard Jr.** Deputy Mayor
3. **Mr. Albert Vaughan** Councilor
4. **Mr. Javier Castellanos** Councilor
5. **Mr. Micah Goodin** Councilor
6. **Ms. Kaya Cattouse** Councilor
7. **Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton** Councilor
8. **Mr. Edmund Kwan** Councilor
9. **Mr. Michael Novelo** Councilor
10. **Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh** Councilor
11. **Ms. Deannie Requeña** Councilor

Ms. Rosalie Perez, **Senior Finance Manager / Acting City Administrator**

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

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:21 a.m.

- 1.0 Mayor Wagner led all in attendance in reciting the Belize National Prayer.
- 2.0 **Ratification of June 17th, 2021 Minutes**
- 2.1 Councilor Hamilton moved for the ratification of the June 17th, 2021 minutes of the meeting. Seconded by Councilor Novelo.

3.0 Matters arising from Minutes

3.1 No matters arising from Minutes.

4.0 Announcements by Mayor

4.1 Mayor Wagner informed all Councilor members that the Council has been experiencing significant financial constraints given that the collection rate has been very low. Due to the pandemic, the collection rate on property taxes is in the neighborhood of 53%.

4.2 Mayor Wagner stated that this has adversely affected the Council's ability to provide the necessary goods and services to Belize City residents, including the collection of garbage. Mayor Wagner noted that this highlights the need for the restructuring of garbage collection regulations, as the Council can no longer afford to foot the \$3 Million bill of garbage collection on an annual basis. Thus, in the upcoming months the Council will work to align itself with the other municipalities by amending the legislation to allow for the Council to charge a fee for the collection of residential garbage.

4.3 Mayor Wagner shared that public consultations will be held in the near future and stated that Councilor Goodin will be playing an integral role in the sensitization of the public as the Councilor responsible for Sanitation.

4.4 Mayor Wagner stated that the collection of a residential garbage fee will offset the cost of garbage collection, allowing for revenues from property taxes to be used on infrastructural improvements and the provision of additional services as outlined by municipal legislation.

4.5 Mayor Wagner highlighted that the Council has maintained a good relationship with Belize Waste Control Ltd over recent years. Nonetheless, the covid-19 pandemic has taught the Council a significant lesson, forcing for tough decisions to be made going forward. Due to the Council's inability to come up to date with its payments, BWC will be scaling back on its services to be Belize City Council.

4.6 Councilor Hamilton expressed her support for the proposed garbage fee structure and recommended that it be rolled out in phases. Councilor Hamilton questioned what would be the short-term solution.

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- 4.7 Mayor Wagner shared that the Council is not able to engage another garbage collection company due to its contractual agreement with BWC. Nonetheless, the Council will be doing its utmost best to fill the gaps left behind by BWC given their reduction in services. Mayor Wagner stated that this is only the solution until November when the Council's revenues are expected to improve. Ultimately, the aim is for the Council to be in a position where it can afford the cost of picking up residential garbage with the support of proper legislation.
- 4.8 Mayor Wagner asked all Council members to join in the annual flag raising ceremony, which is being aired at 6:00 a.m. on National Flag Day, September 1st, 2021. Mayor Wagner highlighted that the Council continues to work with the National Celebrations Commission to commemorate the Belize's 40 years of Independence.
- 4.9 Mayor Wagner noted the Belize City Council's Virtual Carnival Experience and highlighted Councilor Requeña for her efforts in making the event possible. Mayor Wagner shared that viewers can expect to see several artists, bands and dj's perform in the most esteemed event and stated that residents have been asked to submit pictures and video footage from past carnivals, which will be displayed during the virtual experience.
- 4.10 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council would be painting graves at the Lord Ridge Cemetery for Service Day following the George Price Wreath Laying Ceremony on September 19th, 2021
- 4.11 Mayor Wagner shared that he is in receipt of applications for the second cohort of the Belize City Accelerator Program and announced that the Council was able to secure funding from Axiory in the sum of \$30,000.00 BZD. Mayor Wagner expressed that he anticipates this will be a long-standing partnership between both parties as long as the program remains effective, fair and accountable.
- 4.12 Mayor Wagner shared that the goal is to contribute to twenty-five (25) businesses that will also be vetted and trained after presenting a proper business plan.
- 4.13 Mayor Wagner noted that phase three (3) of the retirement program is being rolled out and shared that the Council is looking to make payments due to those who were retired in the first two phases.

- 4.14 Mayor Wagner shared that the Acting MIS Manager, Mr. Richard Gibson as well as the Internal Legal Counsel, Mr. Chris Banner tendered their resignation. Wagner expressed his disappointment in Mr. Gibson as only two (2) days notice was given despite being knowledgeable of the importance of the MIS Department and its current stance. Mayor Wagner announced that the post would be advertised in the coming weeks in an effort to find a viable Manager for the MIS Department.
- 4.14.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. asked if any reason were given for the resignations.
- 4.14.2 Mayor Wagner shared that Mr. Banner received an offer to work in the Attorney General's Office and commended him for his contributions to the Council during his time of employment.
- 4.15 Mayor Wagner shared that the Council's vaccination efforts continue and noted that the Human Resources Department is asking for all vaccination cards to be submitted in order to have a clear idea of what percentage of the staff is partially or fully vaccinated.
- 4.16 Mayor Wagner shared that six (6) employees recently tested positive for Covid-19 and noted that the Cashier Area at City Hall and the Town Planning Department is being sanitized. In the meantime, Cashier services are being undertaken at the Traffic Department.
- 4.17 Mayor Wagner stated that the "3Es" campaign must be better utilized in order to adequately educate, engage and enforce the community as it relates to the contravention of town planning regulations and asked Councilor Requeña to take the lead on this initiative.
- 4.18 Mayor Wagner highlighted that the second cohort of the Youth Shadow Council has been announced and stated that he is very pleased with the selection process and encouraged all members to present themselves in a professional manner at all times.
- 4.19 Mayor Wagner shared that Tuesday and Saturday market days are suspended until the Ministry of Health and Wellness are able to get the covid-19 situation under control. Mayor Wagner shared that he has been receiving many complaints as it relates to the operations of the market.

- 4.20 Councilor Castellanos stated that the newly formed Committee will be doing its utmost best to address the concerns brought forward by those at the market and shared that the Minister of Agriculture had visited the market to explore possible ways in which the Ministry can assist in improving the market.
- 4.21 Mayor Wagner noted that West Street park still remains unopened and asked Councilor Novelo to make an effort to get it reopened. Mayor Wagner also asked Councilor Novelo to look at possible improvements that can be made to the Memorial Park.
- 4.22 Mayor Wagner shared that works have been completed on Apollo Street and Henderson Avenue. Mayor Wagner asked Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. to consult with residents in the area as they are now requesting for chip and seal work to be done.
- 4.23 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. commended the works that have been complete and stated that a contact person must be designated to carry out necessary tradeoffs of street works done on Dungeon Drive.
- 4.24 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared that Mr. Ron from Teichroeb & Sons expressed interest in training members of the Works Department on how to best utilize the tar truck.

5.0 Presentation: September Celebrations – Ms. Rosalie Perez

- 5.1 Ms. Perez shared a graphic outlining donation received from the National Celebrations Commission and shared five (5) Belize City Council events and their respective budgets for the September Celebrations.
- 5.2 Ms. Perez shared that no budget has been submitted as yet for Service Day as the Public Relations Department is still working to secure donations.

6.0 Notices

- 6.1 No notices were tabled.

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7.0 Petitions

- 7.1 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared a petition sent by nurses at the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital for assistance in obtaining new lockers for the General Surgical Ward.
- 7.2 Mayor Wagner expressed his support for the Council to assist the nurses at the KMHM and highlighted their contribution to the ongoing pandemic as front line workers.
- 7.3 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed his support for the Council to assist with the aforementioned request.

8.0 Questions

- 8.1 Councilor Requeña requested that Councilors be given frequent updates as it relates to the amount of positive cases amongst the Belize City Council's staff.
- 8.2 Mayor Wagner assured all Councilors that daily updates would be given as information becomes available.
- 8.3 Councilor Hamilton shared that the Council has received two requests for the rental of booths at the Memorial Park and stated that both applicants have been asked to present a formal business plan.
- 8.4 Mayor Wagner noted that the Revenue Department can be contacted to go through the usual process and stated that the Council should encourage the establishment of new businesses in the Memorial Park.
- 8.5 Councilor Requeña referenced a petition made by residents for the construction of a bump on Flamboyant Street and asked for an update.
- 8.6 Councilor Vaughan requested for the Councilor responsible for Works, Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. to follow up on this request.

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8.7 Councilor Kwan shared an estimate submitted for equipment's being requested by a group of residents who are a part of the crime prevention project of which the Belize City Council is a partner.

8.8 Mayor Wagner stated that better intervention must be made with kids of the city and shared that he is desirous of strengthening these programs for kids in order to help build stronger family units, which will have a more significant impact in minimizing their involvement in crime.

9.0 Presentation of Reports from Councilors

9.1 Councilor Goodin highlighted efforts being made the bridge the gap as it relates to garbage collection.

9.2 Councilor Hamilton noted that the Framework and TOR has been received for the Diaspora appointments and shared that these will be brought to the next Caucus meeting for approval.

9.3 Councilor Pipersburgh thanked Mayor Wagner for his leadership and for agreeing to hire two (2) more Prosecutors for the Municipal Court, as it will allow the Department to be more effective and efficient in the provision of services.

9.4 Mayor Wagner noted the need for additional staffing as the phasing out of retirees are being rolled out.


10.0 Motions by Councilors

10.1 Councilor Novelo shared a proposal received from Ms. Kimberly Searle highlighting renovation and expansion of existing booth at the Memorial Park. Councilor Novelo noted that the renovations would be done at no cost to the Council.

10.2 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed concerns over the three (3) proposed structures outlined in the proposal.

- 10.3 Councilor Novelo seconded Deputy Mayor Jr.'s sentiments and stated that the additional kiosk can be used to give another resident who is interested in a business space.
- 10.4 Councilor Novelo moved a motion to approve a lease of one structure and one kiosk for a period of three (3) years. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 10.5 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. presented a proposal for the Belize City Beach Project, which aims to establish a beach in front of the seawall near the Memorial Park area. This would serve as a source of revenue for the Council.
- 10.6 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. stated that it is important for the municipality to do its part in ensuring it maintains the standard of the region in offering these kinds of spaces for city residents as the existing infrastructure and water in the area is not safe for residents as there is some level of sewage that is now leaking into the area. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared that this will mark the start of a significant undertaking that will ultimately require external funding.
- 10.7 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared a proposal from Belize Business Consultants to engage their services to prepare the necessary plans and business case for the Belize City Beach Infrastructure Project and highlighted the technicality of the design.
- 10.8 Mayor Wagner noted that he has always expressed the importance of the Belize City Beach where residents of the city can spend time with their families in a suitable environment that has a mixture of being a developed area and still having access to swimming areas.
- 10.9 Mayor Wagner expressed his full support for this type of project and highlighted the need for consultations with residents in the area.
- 10.10 Councilor Kwan expressed his full support for the project and inquired if there is an estimated total cost for the project.
- 10.11 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. stated that the total cost would be concluded after consultations are completed with relevant stakeholders.

- 10.12 Councilor Novelo expressed his support for the project as the city is asking for more recreational spaces.
- 10.13 Councilor Hamilton expressed her support for the project.
- 10.14 Councilor Vaughan expressed his support for the project.
- 10.15 Mayor Wagner moved a motion to approve the Belize City Beach concept and the proposal by Belize Business Consultants to engage their services to prepare the necessary plans and business case for the Belize City Beach Infrastructure Project as tabled by Deputy Mayor Allan Pollard Jr. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 10.16 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. moved a motion to approve a quotation presented for materials needed to complete street works on Aloe Vera Street Extension, Belize City. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 10.17 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. moved a motion to approve quotations presented for materials needed to complete street works on Golanche Street, Belize City. **NEEDS FURTHER DELIBERATION.**
- 10.18 Mayor Wagner recommended that the estimates be certified by the City Engineer and suggested that the necessary data be gathered with the assistance of the Valuation Department to determine how many residents the street would serve as well as the compliance rate of residents within the immediate area.
- 10.19 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. moved a motion to approve a quotation presented for materials needed to complete street works on Joy Avenue, Belize City. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. noted that this area is in a poor condition and is now a dead end. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 10.20 Councilor Vaughan suggested that an internal and external estimate be provided when presenting street works matters.

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11.0 New Business

Dreamlight Studio Contract Extension

- 11.1 Mayor Wagner presented a proposed contract extension for Dreamlight Studio and expressed his support for the extension.
- 11.2 Councilor Novelo seconded the sentiments expressed by Mayor Wagner.
- 11.3 Mayor Wagner moved a motion to approve an extension of Dreamlight Studio's contract through September 1, 2021 to August 31, 2024. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

- 12.1 A request from Ms. Shermadine Hewlett to approve the expansion of existing structure on the Freetown Reserve measuring 8' x 10' to an additional 8' x 10' to facilitate customers who will be dining in. **MOTION APPROVED with the condition that the existing structure be changed to wooden siding walls and the expansion should be wooden siding walls as well.**
- 12.2 A request from Mr. Lincoln Patterson to approve the construction of a structure in the Alley Way that measures 80'- 6" x 18'- 0" in front of #46 Prince Street to vend snacks and vegetables measuring 6'- 0" x 10'- 0". **MOTION PASSED.**
- 12.3 A request from Ms. Rosa Echeverria to approve the construction of a wooden canopy with metal roof located in the B.T.L Park at Booth K5 measuring 15'- 0" width 25'- 0" length and 12'- 0" height which will serve as a shelter to customers as well as room to adhere to the Covid-19 regulations. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 12.4 A request from Mr. Edward Broaster for the Council to provide the Ministry of Infrastructure Development with a **no objection letter** for the adoption of a roundabout in front of the Northern Estate. **MOTION PASSED.**
- 12.5 A request from Ms. Gwen Flowers of Gwen's Kitchen for approval to construct an extension to existing structure located on Coney Drive, Belize City. **MOTION DENIED.**

12.6 A request from Mr. Julian Bain for approval to construct a wooden structure to vend food located on Freetown Road Reserve measuring 8'- 0" x 8'- 0". **MOTION DENIED.**

12.7 A request from Mr. Slade Small for approval to construct a wooden structure located in front of Parcel #45 Buttonwood Bay Boulevard for the purpose of vending food. **MOTION DENIED.**

12.8 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. voiced concerns over new stalls popping up along Coney Drive and Chetumal Street, as both these areas are zones with significant development.

12.9 Ms. Patnett noted that a standard would be established for these types of structures going forward.

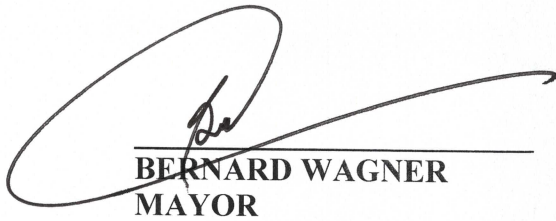
13.0 Other Business

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 1:58 p.m.

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BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR




ROSALIE PEREZ
SENIOR FINANCE MANAGER
ACTING CITY ADMINISTRATOR