

**MINUTES of CAUCUS MEETING**

Belize City Hall  
May 7, 2020

**Present:**

- |                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. His Worship Bernard Wagner | Mayor        |
| 2. Mr. Michael Norales        | Deputy Mayor |
| 3. Mr. Oscar Arnold           | 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. Allan Pollard Jr.     | Councilor    |
| 11. Dr. Candice Pitts         | Councilor    |

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt, City Administrator

Mr. Rafael Sosa, Manager, Office of the Mayor

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Mayor Wagner after which he led his Councilors in reciting the Belize National Prayer.

Mayor Wagner started off by recognizing and commending Deputy Mayor Norales, Councilor Arnold and Councilor Hylton for all the work they had done in coordinating the preparation and distribution of food pantries to residents.

Mayor Wagner stated that the Council should be very proud of all the efforts it has expended during the COVID-19 Crisis, particularly as they relate to providing relief to the residents of the City.

**1.0 Ratification of March 11, 2020 Minutes**

1.1 Councilor Gentle moved for the Minutes to be accepted as is. Councilor Goodin seconded.

**2.0 Matters arising from Minutes**

2.1 Mayor Wagner asked for an update on the defamation lawsuit that has been taken out against WAVE Radio and Mr. Alberto August.

2.2 The City Administrator reported that no response has been received from either party.

**3.0 Mayor's Update on Performance of Municipal Bond**

3.1 Mayor Wagner stated that the Municipal Bond is performing well notwithstanding the current economic and investment climate. Mayor Wagner stated that the Municipal Bond has realized a total of subscription of \$6,750,000 from various Bondholders.

3.2 Mayor Wagner stated that the Council still intends to reach the \$10 MIL threshold. Mayor Wagner further stated that based on the Bond Covenant, the Council had to pay down \$4 MIL in debts.

3.3 Mayor Wagner stated that the "Series II" of the Municipal Paper will be issued and the potential investors have already been identified.

3.4 Mayor Wagner shared that, to date, deductions totaling \$471,000 were made.

3.5 Mayor Wagner stated that, to date. The Council has reduced its debt obligations by \$3 MIL plus and that the Council is close to becoming current with its payments to Belize Waste Control Limited. Mayor Wagner also shared that the Council has paid its loan obligation to Atlantic Bank Limited and RJB Construction Company Limit and other related parties.

3.6 Mayor Wagner informed of the decision to pay bondholders, under the previous Council, interest only in 2022. Mayor Wagner further informed that those bondholders will, then, be invited to place their principal payments under the new Municipal Bond. Mayor Wagner explained that this action would free up the Tourism Head Tax as well as the Government of Belize Subvention.

**4.0 Prioritization of Projects/Programs to be Funded by Proceeds of Municipal Bond**

4.1 Deputy Mayor Norales informed of the proposed purchase of two dump trucks (2006 MACK), one garbage compactor truck and one street sweeper truck. Deputy Mayor Norales shared that the two dump trucks would be procured for the Sanitation Department and Works Department respectively.

4.1.1 Deputy Mayor Norales stated that the two dump trucks and the garbage compactor truck are the priority equipment.

4.1.2 Councilor Goodin stated that he feels that the cost of the dump trucks is high given the fact that they already have a life of fourteen years. Councilor Goodin asked if a comparative price analysis was conducted. Mayor Wagner suggested to Deputy Mayor Norales that a comparative price analysis be conducted before a final decision could be made.

4.2 Councilor Arnold asked if Logwood Street could be added to the list of streets that will be rehabilitated.

- 4.3 Mayor Wagner informed that the Development Finance Corporation (**DFC**) is prepared to consider the funding of the Ring Road Park Project and the Downtown Bus Stop Project. Mayor Wagner stated that the Council will proceed with both projects.
- 4.4 Councilor Vaughan asked if the streets repairs/rehabilitation could be added to the list of projects for the DFC's consideration.
- 4.5 Councilor Goodin expressed the importance of establishing a timeline for the completion of the projects.
- 4.6 Councilor Pitts stated that the Urban Gardening Project has become even more critical in light of the COVID-19 Crisis. Councilor Arnold stated that vacant lots should be identified quickly in each Constituency. Councilor Arnold stated that the Council could start off initially with a \$1500.00 investment per urban garden. Councilor Arnold further stated that the Standard Bearers/Area Representatives could, perhaps, make a contribution of \$1000.00. Mayor Wagner reiterated the urgency for the Council to get the Urban Gardening Project done as it is a pending Manifesto Commitment.
- 4.7 Councilor Goodin shared that before the COVID-19 Crisis, he had met with several residents and Standard Bearers and discussed the construction of basketball courts in their Constituencies.
- 4.8 Councilor Pollard Jr. requested that the installation of traffic light systems at the intersections of St. Joseph Street/St. Thomas Street and Chetumal Street/Albert Hoy Street be included as a priority project.
- 4.9 Councilor Hylton requested that the expansion of the Eternal Garden Cemetery be included as a priority project. Mayor Wagner asked Councilor Hylton to conduct a comparative price analysis.

**5.0 Renewal of Contract for Ranger Security & Courier Services**

- 5.1 The City Administrator informed that the contract with Ranger Security & Courier Services costs the Council \$1 MIL annually at an approximate monthly cost of \$80,000. The City Administrator further informed that the contract will expire on **May 11, 2020**.
- 5.1.1 Mayor Wagner stated that he personally has no issues with Ranger Security.
- 5.1.2 Councilor Pollard Jr. expressed his displeasure with the performance of Ranger Security Officers posted at the Traffic Department. Councilor Pollard Jr. stated that there needs to be improvement in the services provided. Councilor Pollard Jr. remarked that the contract with Ranger Security & Courier Services was not signed in good faith by the previous Council. Councilor Pollard Jr. recommended that the current Council renegotiate the new contract on its terms.
- 5.1.3 Councilor Vaughan inquired about the length of the new contract. Mayor Wagner informed that the contract will be for a period of three years.
- 5.1.4 Councilor Vaughan stated that the security services provided by the company at the Works Department need to be improved.
- 5.1.5 Councilor Elijo recommended that the provision of security services be put out to tender. The City Administrator informed that a proposal was submitted by another security services provider.
- 5.1.6 Councilor Hylton expressed concern about the salaries that the employees of Ranger Security currently earn.
- 5.1.7 Councilor Arnold stated that he was not comfortable supporting a contract that was put together by the previous Council.
- 5.1.8 Mayor Wagner suggested that a committee of Councilors be formed that would review the contract with Ranger Security and make relevant recommendations. Mayor Wagner also suggested that the committee meet with Mr. Hiram Longworth, Owner of Ranger Security to identify weaknesses and areas of improvement.

5.1.9 It was decided that the committee would comprise the following members: Deputy Mayor Norales, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Goodin and Councilor Elijo.

**6.0 Repair Works to Belize City Swing Bridge**

**N.B.** The City Administrator was asked to exit the meeting room while the matter of the repairs to the Belize Swing Bridge was being discussed.

6.1 Mayor Wagner referred to a report prepared and submitted by Mr. Carlton Young, Principal Engineer, Young's Engineering Consultancy Limited which indicated that the structural integrity of the Belize City Swing Bridge is sixty percent (60%) compromised.

6.1.1 Mayor Wagner informed that repair works for the second phase would cost some \$300,000.

6.1.2 Councilor Vaughan urged his fellow Councilors to take a careful read of the report prepared and submitted by Mr. Carlton Young. Councilor Vaughan suggested that the Council should invite Mr. Young to make a presentation based on his report.

6.1.3 Councilor Vaughan also suggested that the Council send Mr. Carlton Young's report to the Ministry of Works along with a second request for the Ministry of Work's Chief Engineer to submit his own assessment report.

6.1.4 Councilor Arnold stated that the Council needs to request a report from the City Engineer in order to determine whether or not the Council got value for money for the first set of repairs that were done to the Swing Bridge.

6.1.5 It was decided that a second phase of repair works to the Swing Bridge would be considered at a later date.

**7.0 City Administrator's Presentation**

Total Staff: 460+  
Currently in office: 230  
working remotely: 20

**Salaries:**

April: half pay/full  
salaries owed: \$350,000

**Cost Saving Measures:**

**Moratorium:** Salary Advances & Loans  
Increments/Salary Adjustments  
Creation/Filling of New Posts  
Payment in Lieu of Vacation  
New/periodic allowances and entitlements (vacation grants,  
responsibility allowance, etc.  
non-essential workshops, seminars, local & foreign travel  
non-essential purchases of materials & supplies

**Total 2020 Increment** (estimated at \$267,316.80)

**Allowances:** \$182,299

Telephone: \$49,500 (50%)  
Availability: \$70,200  
Vehicle: \$35,100  
Motorcycle: \$2800

**Potential Savings:** \$858,281

**2020 Retirement:**

- 60 persons reaching retirement age
- Limited replacement

**N.B.** The Council discussed the matter of retirement and agreed to discuss the matter further and to make a final decision at a later date.

**Total Payout:** \$597,641

Monthly Pension: \$6,412

Notice Pay: \$132,811

New Monthly Pension: \$31,000

Severance: \$54,574

Gratuity: \$410,255

**Estimated Savings:** \$900,000/yr.

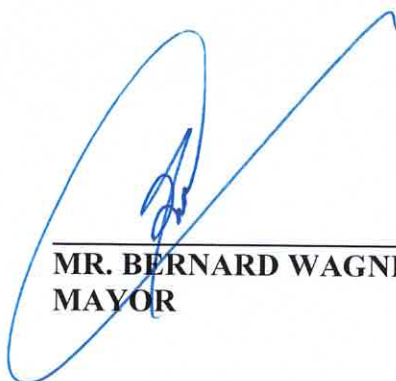
- The monthly wage bill currently stands at \$700,000 - \$800,000.

**8.0 Adjournment**

8.1 Councilor Pollard Jr. moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Councilor Hylton Hylton seconded.

8.2 The meeting concluded at 1:07 p.m.





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**MR. BERNARD WAGNER**  
**MAYOR**



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**MRS. STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT**  
**CITY ADMINISTRATOR**

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