

## **Belize City Council Meeting**

### **Minutes of Closed Council Meeting –28th May, 2012 10:00 am**

#### **Conference Room, City Hall**

#### **Members Present:**

Mayor Darrell Bradley

Councilor Roger Espejo

Councilor Kevin Singh

Councilor Bernard Pitts Jr (arrived 12:05pm)

Councilor Michael Theus

Councilor Alain Gonzalez

Councilor Dean Samuels (arrived 10:40am)

Councilor Phillip Willoughby

Councilor Eric Chang

Deputy Mayor Dion Leslie

#### **Members absent:**

Councilor Alifa Hyde (maternity leave)

#### **Others Present:**

Mrs. Candice Burke, City Administrator

Mr. Cordel Gonzalez, Administrative Officer

The Mayor chaired the meeting and called it to order at 10:27 AM. Councilor Gonzalez said the opening prayer.

#### **Adoption of Minutes**

The adoption of the Closed Council Meeting Minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2012 was done by Councilor Theus and seconded by Councilor Espejo.

## **1. Mayor Darrell Bradley**

### **i. Bond Update**

The Mayor updated the Council on the new proposal for the Bond. Legacy Fund proposes to be the manager and selling agent in Belize City Council's initial public offering of a blend of General Obligation<sup>1</sup> and Revenue bonds<sup>2</sup> of total principal value of \$20,000,000 and coupon rate (interest rate) in the range of 6-8%. An initial distribution can be represented in the following structure: 40% of the issue as a general obligation bond and the remaining 60% as a revenue bond. The proceeds of this offering will be used to pay off Belize City Council's banking overdraft and term facilities and for the provisioning of long term financing to support the Belize City Council's (BCC) infrastructural and revenue generation projects. Furthermore, there are the proposed financial costs of 1% of the face value and \$50,000 retainer fee, but the retainer fee is deducted from the percentage charge once the issue is completed. Also the retainer fee of \$50,000.00 is to be paid over a 5 month period (\$10,000.00 per month). The management fee has been proposed at 1% of the face value of the bond issue and accounts for the institutional, marketing, legal and infrastructural design construct inherent in the bond issue process which is not readily present in Belize but will have to be developed as the Bond Team progresses with the launch. The Mayor is to get the Bond in three installments: 1<sup>st</sup> Installment of \$8 million to clear all existing loan facilities and paving/upgrade of city streets, 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment of \$8 million for upgrading of neighborhood streets in Lake Independence and Belama phase 1-4 and 3<sup>rd</sup> installment of \$4 million for a project of the Northern Highway from Belize City to Haulover.

### **ii. Financial Update**

The Mayor, once again reiterated that the Council's finances are in order but went over the budget for last month due to double payments to Belize Maintenance Limited (BML) and for the purchase of 4 Council vehicles.

Mr. Bradley also made mention of the \$1.2 million loan facility gotten from Heritage Bank and how it was used. The Council paid off Scotia Bank \$263,000.00; purchased a Virbrator Roller and Backhoe which was approximately \$216,000.00 and the estimated balance \$721,000.00 was used for streets upgrade.

The Mayor promised that all councilors will be sent a monthly email of the Council's financial report. It is important that councilors are properly informed so that the Council can make wise decisions on how monies will be spent.

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1. A General Obligation Bond is one where the interest and principal payments of the bond is supported by the full taxing authority of the municipality;

<sup>2</sup> A Revenue Bond repays the interest and principal payments through the revenue created by the particular project undertaken.

### **iii. 100 days plan update**

The Mayor said that the auditors are presently in our offices performing an audit and there will be an Audit Committee meeting on Friday June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. Also he stated that most projects are being accomplished for the 100 days plan.

### **iv. Revenue Generation- Charge**

It is stated in the law that the Council has primary charge over property. So for all those with property tax in arrears greater than \$5000.00 the Council can proceed and charge the property and if tax is still not collected the Council can sell the property to collect the tax outstanding. And for any property that is mortgaged with the bank then the banks will have to pay the property tax and in turn add the property tax to the customer mortgage.

### **v. Kamilah Cardona**

The Council raised some concerns as to whether Ms. Cardona can handle the post as City Engineer and if her age won't be a deterrent factor to her staff. The Mayor proposed to have Ms. Cardona placed on a 1 year contract with no probation and if she performs well her contract will be extended. All in favor of Ms. Kamilah Cardona appointment as the City Engineer: MAYOR, AG, MT, KS, RE, DS, PW, DL, EC. Absent: BP

### **vi. Benjamin Mendoza**

The Mayor suggested to the Council to give Mr. Mendoza the post as City Planner but to be placed on probation. All in favor of Mr. Benjamin Mendoza appointment as the City Planner: MAYOR, AG, MT, KS, RE, DS, PW, DL, EC. Absent: BP

## **2. Councilor Roger Espejo**

### **i. Economic Development Update**

Mr. Espejo reported that there isn't much to discuss when it relates to economic development. Just a couple future initiative such a Parking Deck Study to be conducted by Mr. Shaun Finnetty and as soon as the study is completed Mr. Espejo will update the Council. Likewise, Slingshot Company has proposed an electronic billboard to be placed on the overhead pass by the Pallotti roundabout. There was a no objection vote.

## **ii. Tourism Update**

Councilor Espejo informed the Council that the Head Tax receipts have been received but payments for approximately five months are still outstanding. Mr. Espejo is lobbying to try to increase the head tax per tourist amount entering Belize City. There is a meeting schedule for Friday June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 with Mr. Valdemar Andrade to see what can be done.

## **iii. Pound yard Reserve Resolved**

Councilor Espejo stated that Mr. Charlie, owner of Belizean Chinese Fry Chicken, can be moved up the sidewalk inside the fence of the Pound yard private property. This discussion raised a lot of controversy so it will be deferred to a later date. Mr. Espejo invited the Mayor and all councilors to physically visit and tour the site to become acquainted with the problem which is being resolved.

## **iv. GOB Downtown Street Subsidy**

The Government of Belize is still honoring the pledge to assist the Council in the upgrading of streets between Albert and Regent Streets. Mr. Espejo will contact GOB to make the necessary arrangements. Mr. Espejo also mentioned that he would contact Belize Bank to inquire if their offer to subsidize the upgrading of the street behind their downtown headquarters was still on the table. The Council had no objection to this.

## **v. Liquor License Extensions**

Recently there was a murder outside of one of Belize City night club over the past weekend and in that light Councilor Espejo touched on the subject of liquor license extension. The normal time goes up to 2am and the extension allows for an additional hour or two hours. But as mentioned by the Mayor the law states that no extension should be granted to any establishment that is not soundproof. There was a vote to ban extensions on non- sound proof establishments throughout the city. The vote was unanimously in favor of the ban to be effected immediately.

## **vi. Enforcement Strengthening**

Councilor Espejo asked if the Council can be more vigilant when it comes to public drinking and noise pollution.

He mentioned that he feels Mr. Selbert Butler, supervisor for the Special Constable Unit, is being under paid because he is always willing to help no matter what time or what day he is called for duty. Mr. Espejo proposed that the HR department do an employee appraisal of Mr. Selbert Butler with the view to implement a salary increase for his additional effort in terms of additional working hours which the City Administrator highlighted. The council had no objection to this.

### **vii. Fuel Purchase Convenience**

Councilor Espejo asked if the Council would consider utilizing the Texaco Service Station located near the roundabout by the Western Highway as a fuel provider for the Council. The City Administrator reminded Mr. Espejo that they have just recently decided on a fuel provider and do not see it necessary to switch at this point. Mr. Espejo highlighted that it was much more of a convenience to purchase fuel from the proposed service station because of its location and proximity to the works department. Mr. Espejo declared that he would discuss with the proprietor of the Texaco service station and get an idea of what discounts can be gotten and/or if the discounts presently enjoyed by BCC can be matched. The council had no objection to this.

### **3. Councilor Bernard Pitts Jr.**

#### **i. Email Servers**

Councilor Pitts started by saying that testing have been done with the new web-based email servers and that it is working fine.

#### **ii. Municipal Court Server**

Councilor Pitts noted that because of excessive leaking of the commercial center building flood water cause the servers at Municipal Court to go down. Mr. Norman Benjamin was able to get the servers up and running.

#### **iii. Traffic Server**

Councilor Pitts reiterated that we need two servers so that we can start backing our system properly so that no information goes missing at any time. The estimate of the servers is approximately \$46,000.00 as quoted by Fultec. Mr. Pitts is trying to get some more quotes; he noted that the servers are very cheap online. He would prefer to order them online.

#### **iv. IT Audit**

Councilor Pitts said that he wants to commence an exercise where an audit of the entire network that is here in Belize City Council properties so proper record keeping is done and proper evaluation of the technological equipment. Councilor Pitts mention that the Council needs to take an audit of all work stations which includes every CPU, monitor, printer etc.

### **4. Councilor Alain Gonzalez**

#### **i. Honduras Trip Update**

Councilor Gonzalez commented that he went to Honduras on May 9-18, 2012 to attend a meeting of three countries which are Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The meeting was geared towards involving Belize in a Commonwealth of Municipalities when it relates to

land management and capacity building. One concern of the meeting was financing; they proposed that each respective country donate a fee. The fee will be 0.5% of the annual total revenues for that specific country. Another meeting is scheduled for sometime in June or July, 2012.

#### **ii. Review Section 24 of Trade License Act**

Councilor Gonzalez pointed out that Trade License fee is causing a lot of controversy in the business community. There are a lot of irregularities so the need to stick the law across the board. He is asking for the Council to find some proper way of regulating the fee to be fair to business community. It was suggested that Council do classification of business also set categories and sub categories according to size of the business. A concept paper or some legislation to reduce the percentage use to calculate fee was also recommended.

#### **iii. Application Fee for Trade License**

Councilor Gonzalez proposed that the Council should start charging a fee for special meetings and a fee for the application process for Trade License. These proposals were discussed and no conclusion was reached.

#### **iv. After School Program**

Councilor Gonzalez mentioned that he wants to conduct a summer camp for primary school kids at the Standard IV and V level. The camp will offer different classes such as tutoring classes, computer classes, arts & craft classes and sports. Councilor Gonzalez was advised to collaborate with Councilor Pitts because he will be having a summer camp as well during the summer.

### **5. Councilor Phillip Willoughby**

#### **i. Security Update**

Councilor Willoughby stated that he will talk about it outside of the Caucus Meeting with the Mayor.

### **6. Councilor Kevin Singh**

#### **i. Valuation of Market Stall**

Councilor Singh mentioned that the valuation process is not completed as yet. He will update the Council at the next meeting.

### **Other Important Matters**

- Mrs. Rosario Nunez is requesting the Council's approval to construct a panades shop in a swampy area at 9885 Curl Thompson Blvd. The Planning department has no objection to the request. The council voted in favor of the project. MAYOR, AG, BP, MT, KS, RE, DS, PW, DL, EC. Absent: AH
- Councilors are asked to provide a bank account number to process their salary and stipends because the Council will cease from writing checks.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2:20p.m. It was moved by Mayor Bradley seconded by all.

All were in favor that the Closed Council Meeting be adjourned.