



**Minutes of Close Council Meeting
Wednesday, June 25, 2014
City Hall Conference Room**

Present

Mr. Darrell Bradley
Mr. Bernard Pitts Jr.
Mrs. Alifa Elrington Hyde
Mr. Roger Espejo
Mr. Dion Leslie
Mr. Dean Samuels
Mr. Phillip Willoughby
Mr. Alain Gonzalez
Mr. Eric Chang
Mr. Michael Theus
Mr. Kevin Singh

Mayor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor
Councilor

Ms. Candice Miller
Ms. Whitney Waight

City Administrator
Note-taker

Present by invitation

Ms. Rosalie Perez for Mrs. Marilyn Ordonez
Ms. Sharlene Rudon
Mrs. Marilyn Garvin
Mrs. Margaret McKenzie
Mr. Floyd Williams

Director of Finance
Director of Administrations
Chief Internal Auditor
Legal Counsel
City Engineer

MINUTES

Opening

1. Meeting commenced at 10:35am
2. Deputy Mayor BQ Pitts led everyone in prayer
3. The Mayor opened the meeting by welcoming those present and thanking them for their attendance.
4. The Mayor noted that the last Closed Council Meeting (Caucus) was held on March 31, 2014 and he stated that his is unacceptable because it does not allow the Council to properly discharge its oversight function. The Mayor stated that he has repeatedly said that Council Meetings should be scheduled every two (2) weeks. The Mayor stated that that on his recent travels to Canada he noticed the effectiveness of their Council and their operations and he wants the same for this Council.



5. The Mayor asked that Directors be present for all Caucus Meeting to assist with providing information to Councilors regarding any particular matter that comes up during Council meetings. The Mayor also stated that since we have Councilors and Directors in attendance he would want to keep the meetings at a maximum of two (2) hours.

Confirmation of Minutes

6. The Mayor stated that even though there was a meeting held 31 March, 2014, the minutes for that meeting cannot be properly authenticated and therefore cannot be approved.
7. The Mayor noted that effective today, there needs to be a minute book and resolution book in place for future reference if necessary. The Mayor stated that the small reference from the minutes of 31 March, 2014 that is useable, stated that the Mayor was stating then the importance of keeping proper minutes.
8. The Mayor asked that the minute book be produced by Thursday of This week.

Infrastructure

9. The Mayor updated Council regarding infrastructure programs.
10. It was noted that the drainage project funded by Central Government is completed and 21 drains have been installed along newly concreted streets. In regards to the concreting of streets, 102 streets have been completed and there is a list of 34 pending streets currently being worked. This is being funded by the \$10 million grant from Central Government. \$3.4 Million of this amount has been used in the first tranche and \$3.8 million in the second tranche. This means there is roughly around 2.8 million dollars left.
11. The Mayor noted that with the Contractor chosen by Central Government to carry out these street works, namely, CISCO Construction and RJB Construction he finds that their rates are a bit higher but they use the labor intensive method which creates jobs for marginalized youths.
12. The Mayor asked the City Engineer to watch the rates and see that we complete as much of the 34 streets as possible.
13. In regards to drainage, the Mayor asked the City Engineer and Councilor Espejo to look into the drainage project that Councilor Espejo had brought up with Russell Godfrey. The Mayor suggested that they test this project in the area of Magazine Road near the canal.
14. Deputy Mayor Pitts stated that the Council needs to make it a requirement that whenever BWS or any of the contractors are working on a particular street that the material that is dug up is taken to the Council's facility and use for resurfacing additional streets. Deputy Mayor Pitts emphasized that the material belongs to the Council and the Council is to get possession of that material.

15. The Mayor asked Mr. Williams to have report on the collection of material from these infrastructure works for the next meeting.
16. Councilor Gonzalez mentioned that it is noticed that some of the streets done earlier in the project are quickly deteriorating and he wanted to know how is the Council going to address this issue. He pointed out a section of Cemetery Road and Sixth Street.
17. Mrs. Burke indicated that there is a retention clause in the contracts now, therefore contractors can go back and fix the problem or the Council can do the work and deduct from balance owed to them. The Mayor also asked the City Engineer to have report on the quality of work on the various streets for the next meeting.
18. Councilor Gonzales also mentioned the problem of the drop offs, that for some streets onto the adjoining streets the levels are different and it's too high. The contractors need to ensure that it is leveled off. Examples are Vernon and Magazine Roads, Euphrates Avenue and Dean Street and Cinderella Plaza and Freetown Road and Hyde's Lane and New Road. The Mayor asked the City Engineer to liaise and work closely with contractors to ensure that the levels are more properly coordinated.

Financial Statement

19. The Mayor stated that all present should have two (2) statements before them, the current monthly statement and last year's annual revenue and expenditure report. The Mayor queried if anyone had any questions about the statements.
20. Councilor Hyde said that the matter of the traffic report sent to the Finance Department varies from that sent to her. Ms. Perez stated that it's a possibility that after sending their report to finance they make adjustments after, hence the reason for the difference in the reports. Councilor Hyde noted that she will look into the matter and address this accordingly.
21. Councilor Hyde requested the monthly breakdown of the financial report for social assistance and contributions.
22. The Mayor asked Ms. Perez what is the percentage of collections for property tax as against the total amount billed in this current fiscal period. It was noted that to date the Council has collected approximately 14% of its property taxes outstanding. For the month April/May the Council has collected 1.2 million in comparison to the 1.4 estimated collections. The Mayor inquired about the shortfall and stressed the importance of meeting the projected targets.
23. The Mayor asked Ms. Perez to state to the Council at the next meeting a more accurate collection rate for property taxes.
24. The Mayor pointed out the increase in overall collections from the period ending 2013 to the period ending 2014 Council. Councilor Hyde stated that collections are high, but spending is also high and needs to be monitored.

25. The Mayor emphasized the importance of ensuring that all monthly reports are to be posted on the Council's websites and kept current. The annual report is also to be uploaded to the website.

Independent Audit

26. The Mayor asked the City Administrator to inform the Council what is the status of the independent auditors report to be done by Castillo Sanchez and Burrell. The City Administrator stated that they have been in constant dialogue with CSB and they just can't seem to finish and provide the council with the final draft of the Audit report for 2012/2013. CSB has given the Council three drafts and CSB agrees that the fault is with them and they are trying to finish the audit.

27. The Mayor stressed that the Council needs to receive the report and the Mayor asked the City Administrator to approach other auditing firms to do the current year's audit. The City Administrator indicated that they have contacted Panel Kerr Foster and they have agreed to meet and discuss on July 3, 2014. The Mayor stated that CSB is in default of their contracts since it's been 14 months since they have not provided the audit and that the council is in violation of the Bond Act.

Employee Land Program

28. The Mayor informed that the Council is now in possession of the lease for the property that is to be subdivided for staff. They are working with and waiting for the surveying and subdivision before going ahead and applying for purchase. It's taking a little longer than expected but we are making progress.

29. The Mayor said that it was his intention that all members of staff that has been employed with the council for over a year will be given a lot at the property.

Commercial Centre

30. The Mayor pointed out that the Commercial Centre is in a state of disrepair and the Council needs to proceed with renovating that building and moving the main officers if the council there.

31. The Mayor said that the council should cap the project at \$2 million dollars. \$900,000.00 this amount is expected to come from the Downtown Renovation Project. The Council will discuss this matter at another meeting in a month's time by which they should have received other quotes and bids.

32. The Mayor asked the City Administrator to obtain at least one other quotation, design and build of qualities. This is to be gotten before one month's time and the matter will be raised after the Los Angeles trip.

Heritage Bank

33. The City Administrator stated that Patrick Tillett is working on the narrative for the Heritage Bank facility and it should be completed today. The council is proposing to barrow \$2.5 Million dollars, \$1 million which is to start the Commercial Centre project, then the \$900,000.00 from the downtown



project can assist with the balance. \$750,000 will be used for street upgrades and the remaining \$750,000 will be used to repay council debt.

Cemetery upgrade

34. The Mayor informed the council that the Mile 13 Mile Cemetery Eternal Garden Memorial is being renovated. The Council is proposing to borrow \$100,000.00 from Atlantic bank to cover the cost of the upgrade at \$63,000.00 and the garbage facility at Michael Finnegan Market at \$30,000.00.
35. Councillor Leslie also suggested to construct a shed and restroom facilities at the Cemetery house corner Partridge Street. He pointed out that the present structure, which was recently built, is used by the public and the staff who return from work sometimes dirty do not have a place where they can rest and shower. The shed would enable this. The Mayor said this is a good idea.
36. The Mayor suggested that Councilors take a tour of the various locations, namely the Commercial Centre and the cemetery to see the working conditions of our staff and the need to make improvements. This should be done within the next 2 weeks.
37. Council Theus indicated that greater pride needs to be taken regarding the 13 miles cemetery, as it relates to building of tombs in a uniform manner along with constructing multiple graves which would cut down on cost for having teams sent up there on a per funeral basis to construct tombs. The Cemetery needs a structured manner in which and where burial plots are to be positioned.

Atlantic Bank

38. The Mayor moved a motion for the Council to approve and authorize the borrowing of \$100,000 from Atlantic Bank for cemetery upgrades and for the construction of the garbage facility at the market. The Mayor asked Council to also authorize him to conclude negotiations and then to affix the seal on the various loan instruments.
39. The motion was moved and the Council by unanimous consent voted to borrow the loan.

Functions

40. The Mayor emphasized the importance of keeping clear divisions between the political functions of the Council and the administrative functions to be performed by administrative staff. The Councilors should not get involved in administrative matters. The Council as an elected body is to deal with strategic management, finance, oversight and legislation, while the administrative staff should deal with the day to day management of the council affairs.
41. The Mayor emphasized the administrative structure of the Council. This structure is headed by the City Administrator and she oversees the directors who in turn oversee the managers who have their junior staff for their various departments. The City Administrator should meet with the directors bi-weekly and then report to the Council on pending matters.

CARILED

42. The Mayor stated that since he has been working very closely with CARILED he sees the importance of economic development to the advancement of the city. The Mayor proposed that the Council create a special department for economic development with not more than three staff. This department can look at things like the downtown development and development along the waterfront. The Mayor also stated that the Council needed a legal affairs department to be under Ms. McKenzie. The actual structure will require further discussion but a Council resolution is needed to approve the creation of these units and to assign staff.
43. The Mayor moved a motion to create a department of economic development and a legal affairs department. This was debated briefly and the Councilors voted unanimously to create the two departments. The Mayor indicated that this will be brought back to Council for specific discussions regarding the actual structure.

Los Angeles Trip

44. The Council has been invited to visit Los Angeles and Las Vegas from the honorary consulate of Belize in Los Angeles. The purpose of the trip is to meet with members of the Belize Diaspora and to meet with Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles. The Mayor stated that the trip is budgeted to cost \$25,000.00 and he is asking the Council to pay 25% of this amount and the Council will raise the remaining 75% from donations or other fundraising activities.
45. The Mayor asked for a motion of the Council to approve the trip and approve the 25% contribution towards the trip expenses and then the remaining amount would be raised by way of donations and contributions. The Mayor made a motion and the Council debated and then unanimously approved the allocation of the 25%.

Public Meeting

46. The Mayor stated that it has been an inordinately long time since the Council has held its regular monthly public meeting. The Mayor reminded the Council that public meetings are to be held once every six weeks and the last public meeting was in April 2013, over fourteen months ago.
47. The Mayor asked for a public meeting to be held in Battlefield Park starting at 6:30 p.m. on 12 August, 2014. The Mayor asked that Ms. Rudon and the public relations staff commence advertising.

Sanitation

48. The Mayor stated that in January, 2015 BML's contract expires and the Council needs to start discussing how they will transition into a new system where residents are asked to clean in front of their yard. The Mayor spoke of the need for a public relations campaign and adequate enforcement. The Council approved the creation of a sub-committee made up of three Councilors, Councilors

Leslie, Hyde and Willoughby, along with members of senior management, Mrs. McKenzie and Mrs. Ordonez. This sub-committee will be tasked to look at the various elements of the new regime.

49. The Council debated the issue of the renewal and the Mayor pointed out that the Council cannot afford to pay for the BML contract and that we are not getting value for money.

Belize Aquarium Proposal

50. Councilor Espejo stated that there is a curator from New York who is interested in an aquarium project here in Belize. He was suggesting that a proposal be developed, as it could be beneficial, especially in the tourism sector. The Mayor indicated that the Council is interested generally, but would require specifics including costing and what the council would be required to do.

Horse and Carriage

51. Councilor Espejo stated that the Council needs to be more vigilant with the horse and carriage operators. He noted several instances where these operators were in violation of the policies.
52. Councilor Hyde noted that there has been enforcement and one operator was brought up for discipline and had his trade license removed. She also stated that not all the horses being complained of belong to the operators. Some of these horses that cause nuisance belong to private citizens. Nonetheless, the Council does need to be more vigilant.

House of Culture Downtown Project

53. Councilor Espejo gave an update to the Council regarding the implementation of this project. He said that the Mayor appointed him to sit on the steering committee and the project is expected to be underway soon. He stated that there is a request from the steering committee for the Council to take part in the project and they would want to meet with staff and senior leadership.

Flood Mitigation Project

54. Councilor Espejo gave an update on the Flood Mitigation project. Councilor Espejo sits on the steering committee for this project as well.
55. The Mayor commented that these two projects are taking too long to implement. The Flood Mitigation Project has taken three years and works have still not commenced on the canal under Cinderella Plaza. This is causing a problem for the Council because we want to complete concreting Cinderella Plaza and Baymen Avenue but the Flood Mitigation people have us on pause because they are to install a canal under this area and we need to wait for them. The Mayor said that the delay is unreasonable and that Councilor Espejo should communicate our position to the steering committee.

Building Permits & Construction Permit Fees

56. Councilor Espejo stated that there is significant development and construction happening in the city and the building permit fees are too high and may need to be revisited. Councilor Hyde stated that the fees are part of a statutory instrument and we would need the Central Government to do this. She also pointed out that the fees are based on square footage and are reasonable in her mind.

Belama Phase 4

57. Is being upgraded by the flood mitigation project and the Council needs to ensure that property tax is being collected in that area.

Any Other Matters

Lease reserve (Ms. Jerez)

58. Mrs. Burke brought the request from Ms. Angele Jerez who is requesting to lease a portion of the street reserve in front of her property. Mrs. Burke read the no objection recommendation from the City Planner and the Council voted unanimously against the recommendation.

Councilor Alain Gonzalez, Summer Camp

59. Councilor Gonzalez made mention of his summer camp and he requested Council's support for his budget. The Mayor stated that he is supporting this provided the finances can allow this.

Independence Day

60. Councilor Hyde stated that Independence Day falls on a Sunday and there is a dispute as to when to celebrate the day and host the ceremony and celebration bram. The Council divided on the issue and a vote was held. Six Councilors voted in favor of having everything on Sunday. The concern was that the churches would be against interfering with Sunday services and school children may not attend. It may also be inappropriate for the bram on this day.

Code of Conduct

61. Councilor Hyde and Mrs. Mckenzie indicated that in the Municipal Court department has a practice of giving employees a more detailed job description and code of conduct in comparison to the one or two pages given by the human resource department. They stated that the detailed job description and code of conduct is more beneficial to employees as it actually assists them in knowing what is expected of them. Councilor Hyde suggested that this be adopted throughout the Council. The Council agreed and tasked Councilor Hyde to develop and implement.

Deputy Mayor

Summer Camp

62. The Deputy Mayor noted that he does his annual Summer Camp and it has been successful and he normally seeks sponsorship from the business community and assistance from the Council.

Welcome Sign

63. The Deputy Mayor stated that he is supporting the installation of two new welcome signs at the entrance to the city done in various different languages: Kriol, Spanish and Garifuna. Initially Mr. Berges was approached for a costing to do such a sign and the cost was approximately \$19,000.00, after discussions the cost is now at \$14,000.00. It was also recommended that street material be used in this project to help defray some of the cost for the base.

64. Councilor Chang asked that Chinese be included since there is a strong Chinese population.

Soft Ball Association

65. The Deputy Mayor stated that the Soft Ball Season is here and as President of the Association he is asking the Council for a donation of \$1000.00 towards a tournament to be called the Belize City Council Soft Ball Tournament. Mayor directed Deputy Pitts to write the Council requesting the sponsorship.

There were no other matters.

The next sitting of the Council is scheduled for July 9, 2014.

Councilor Chang moved to adjourn seconded by Council Gonzalez

Meeting was adjourned at 1:10pm

Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of this Council Meeting was approved by Resolution of the Council dated () July, 2014

DARRELL BRADLEY, Mayor

CANDICE BURKE, City Administrator