



## **MINUTES of REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

**Caucus Room, Belize City Council**

**10:00 a.m.**

**June 13th, 2023**

### **Present:**

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

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt  
Mr. Eluide Miller

**City Administrator**  
**Manager, Office of the Mayor**

### **Absent with Reason:**

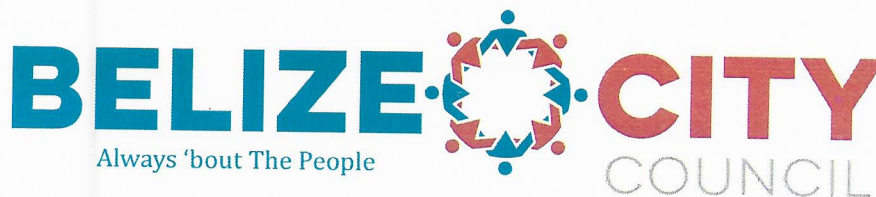
- |                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| 11. Ms. Kaya Cattouse | Councilor |
|-----------------------|-----------|

**Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:11 a.m.**

Mayor Wagner thanked all Council members who attended the meeting and emphasized the importance of carrying out the work of Belize City residents.

Mayor Wagner then emphasized that the current administration has only eight months before the next municipal elections, which is scheduled for early March 2024.

Mayor Wagner stated that the Council has overcome many challenges together, but it is critical for each member to be able to look back and say that they have made significant contributions on behalf of Belize City residents at the end of the municipal term.



## 1.0 Belize National Prayer

Mayor Wagner led all in reciting the Belize National Prayer.

## 2.0 Welcome Address

- 2.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed all members to the meeting once more.
- 2.2 Mayor Wagner emphasized that the current administration has never failed to pay its employees. Even during the gloomy days of the Covid-19 outbreak and in the aftermath of Hurricane Lisa. Mayor Wagner stated that this demonstrates the administration's resilience.

### **COUNCILOR EDMUND KWAN ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 10:15 A.M.**

- 2.3 Mayor Wagner shared a few images of the Gungulung Area in the Lake Independence Constituency before and after considerable upgrades carried out by the Council including the dredging and the lining of the Holy Emmanuel canal and the rehabilitation of adjacent streets.

### **DEPUTY MAYOR ALLAN POLLARD JR. ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 10:18 A.M.**

- 2.4 Mayor Wagner provided an update on the Belize City Council's E-Mobility Pilot Project. Mayor Wagner stated that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has committed to deliver new electric buses to Belize by late November 2023.
- 2.5 Mayor Wagner also stated that the two new compactor trucks being acquired by the Council through the Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Project and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will be in the country by November 2023.





- 2.6 Mayor Wagner then highlighted that the Council recently handing over a fire truck to the National Fire Service of Belize through its partnership with the Embassy of the Republic of China Taiwan. Mayor Wagner stated that this is a testament to Belize's wonderful relationship and friendship with Taiwan. Belize City has a sister city relationship with the City of Kaohsiung; thus, the embassy and the Taiwanese government donated this firetruck to Belize City.
- 2.7 Mayor Wagner went on to highlight the Council's major infrastructure initiatives, despite recent media reports that the Council is facing financial challenges. Mayor Wagner stated that this is not the case, as the Council continues to carry out its mandate while making payroll each pay period. Mayor Wagner warned that these unsubstantiated allegations can cause great issues for the Council given the Municipal Bond.
- 3.0 Ratification of the January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes**
- 3.1 Mayor Wagner asked all members to review the minutes of the May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, regular meeting in the event they did not get to do so beforehand.
- 3.2 Councilor Novelo moved for the minutes of the May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, regular meeting to be accepted. Seconded by Councilor Hamilton.
- 4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes**
- 4.1 (4.1) - The City Administrator stated that the Council met with Mr. Evondale Moody, Acting Director of the Central Building Authority (CBA), and other CBA personnel who expressed their willingness to recertify the Council's building unit. The City Administrator stated that the Council's workers are being retrained, and the only thing that remains is the appointment of a Technical Manager for the unit. The City Administrator then announced that the unit would digitize all essential forms and manage submissions online.
- 4.2 Councilor Hamilton thanked the City Administrator for her diligent work in addressing this situation.



- 4.3 (4.2) – The City Administrator stated that the grader was delivered to the Council by Belize Hub and that the last outstanding part for the grader was installed yesterday. The City Administrator then stated that the supplier will be paid in full after she receives the final report on the new piece of heavy-duty equipment from the Works Manager and the Vehicle Care Coordinator.
- 4.4 (4.8) – The City Administrator stated that Mr. Evondale Moody of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) advised the Council that any upgrades to the Lord Ridge Cemetery would be financially ineffective at this time given the current plans to rehabilitate the entire George Price Highway in the coming months. The City Administrator stated that this would be conveyed in writing to the Council.
- 4.5 Mayor Wagner stated that he has received correspondence from the Ministry regarding the Belcan and Swing Bridges. Mayor Wagner stated that the Belcan Bridge is a higher priority and that funding for the Swing Bridge replacement has been identified.
- 4.6 Mayor Wagner stated that MIDH has urged the Belize Tourism Board to proceed with their project at the foot of the Swing Bridge if it is not a permanent structure.
- 4.7 The Handyman Workshop, according to the City Administrator, began yesterday and is scheduled to end on Friday. The City Administrator stated that the funding that Councilor Castellanos indicated would be provided by multiple businesses has completely fallen through. The City Administrator stated that the Council approved a motion tabled by Councilor Castellanos on the condition that four (4) businesses pay their trade license in advance to facilitate this workshop. The City Administrator stated that the Council did everything possible to secure such prepayments, but to no avail. As a result, the program's money had to come from the Council's operations account.
- 4.8 Councilor Vaughan stated that he believes this must be remedied because Councilor Castellanos presented the motion and must be held accountable.





- 4.9 The City Administrator stated that she was just alerted last Friday that the monies could not be secured from the businesses that Councilor Castellanos had indicated would make prepayments to support the project. The City Administrator further stated that the Local Economic Development (LED) Manager provided proof of her unrelenting efforts to secure these prepayments.
- 4.10 Mayor Wagner commended the LED Manager for ensuring that the Council-approved motion was carried out.
- 4.11 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. stated that this initiative was a good one that the Council should highlight, and that the difficulties in securing the funding committed should not detract from that.
- 4.12 The City Administrator stated that Councilors Castellanos and Novelo visited her office a few weeks ago and insisted on starting a derelict vehicle campaign. The City Administrator stated that the Belize Tourism Board has agreed to help the campaign by funding the expense of removing these vehicles from city streets. As a result, the Public Relations Department distributed campaign notices, and the Public Health Unit went out to give notice to the owners of these abandoned vehicles. However, to date, the Belize Tourism Board has not paid the company, and no formal agreement has been reached.
- 4.13 According to the City Administrator, the recent campaign removed a total of sixty-eight vehicles, resulting in over \$3,000.00 in revenue to the Council, which is not very encouraging from a viability aspect.
- 4.14 Mayor Wagner underscored the importance of resolving the major issue of abandoned vehicles on city streets. Mayor Wagner stated that he informed Mr. Tun, whose business removes the vehicles, that the current cost structure of the campaign is not feasible to the council, especially since it was not budgeted for.
- 4.15 Councilor Novelo stated that he is personally interested in action, and Mr. Tun stated that he did not expect any payments upfront from the Council.
- 4.16 Mayor Wagner proposed that the City Administrator convene a meeting with the Minister of Tourism to discuss the issue of Mr. Tun's daily fee for storing these vehicles once they have been removed from city streets.



## **COUNCILOR REQUEÑA ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 11:02 A.M.**

### **5.0 Announcements by Mayor**

- 5.1 Mayor Wagner stated that the Finance Director, Mr. Amir Carrillo, issued a letter to the Council regarding the Channel 7 News story. Mr. Carrillo stated that he resigned from the Council for personal reasons, adding that it was a difficult decision for him. Mr. Carrillo confirmed that this was a personal decision that had nothing to do with the Council's financial situation. Following the misinformation on the news, Mr. Carrillo felt compelled to notify the Council.
- 5.2 Mayor Wagner also noted that Mr. Carrillo stated that the Council's finances are in good order even though it is the "low season".
- 5.3 Mayor Wagner reiterated the implications of broadcasting such false information. Given the significance of investor confidence, Mayor Wagner stated that this matter must be addressed legally.
- 5.4 Mayor Wagner emphasized that, with municipal elections less than a year away, no professional will accept a six- to eight-month contract for the position of Financial Director due to the Council's decision not to approve any contract that extends beyond the current administration's term of office. As a result, the responsibilities for this position will be divided among the management team of the Council until a new Finance Director is appointed.
- 5.5 Mayor Wagner reiterated that the council's finances are in a very good position given its strategy to maximize savings during what is considered the "high season" for revenue.
- 5.6 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. shared that Mr. Carrillo served the Council well during his tenure as the Council's Finance Director and wished him well in his future endeavors.
- 5.7 Mayor Wagner also emphasized that Mr. Carrillo was an effective financial director, citing his impressive ability to analyze data. Mayor Wagner noted that he wishes Mr. Carrillo all the best in the future.





- 5.8 Mayor Wagner informed all Council members that there will be a small farewell gathering for Mr. Carrillo immediately following the meeting, and he invited all his colleagues to attend.
- 5.9 Mayor Wagner thanked everyone who attended the inauguration of the traffic and pedestrian crossing lights, as well as the intersection of St. Thomas and St. Joseph Streets.
- 5.10 Mayor Wagner reminded all Council members that the Council's upcoming Lake-I Festival will be held on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and invited all members to attend.
- 5.11 Mayor Wagner also reminded all members of the upcoming Property Tax Clinic being hosted by the Council on June 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 inside the Youth Connect Student Hub located on the lower level of City Hall.
- 5.12 Mayor Wagner concluded by inviting all members to attend the Council's Abandon Properties Forum on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at the Civic Center, where the Council will discuss the current issue of abandoned properties, the legal perspective, the Council's property auctions, and future actions.
- 6.0 General Updates from the City Administrator**
- 6.1 The City Administrator announced that she would be making a brief presentation on general updates.
- 6.2 The City Administrator began her presentation with a quote about leadership, emphasizing that leadership is about raising a person's vision to higher sights and boosting their performance to a higher standard, beyond their usual limitations.
- 6.3 The City Administrator outlined the numerous services that would be available to the public during the Belize City Council's 2023 Property Tax Clinic on June 14th and 15th. Change of ownership, lease cancellation, property mutation/subdivision, property change of use, property registration, and other services will be available. The City Administrator stated that the goal of this two-day initiative is to resolve outstanding property matters.



- 6.4 As the Atlantic Hurricane Season approaches, the City Administrator emphasized the city's improved hurricane preparedness. The City Administrator noted significant improvements in various areas, including procurement and supply management.
- 6.5 The City Administrator announced that a public sensitization session will be held on June 20<sup>th</sup> to explore the issue of abandoned properties and map out a course of action.
- 6.6 The City Administrator then highlighted the Council's ongoing efforts to rehabilitate several parks across the city such as Memorial Park, Digi Park, Lake I Complex Park, Constitution Park, and Battlefield Park.
- 6.7 The City Administrator also stated that the Council is planning to extend the Works and Sanitation Department's heavy duty machinery fleet by purchasing additional dump trucks and other equipment.
- 6.8 The City Administrator provided a brief update on the Council's e-mobility Pilot Project, highlighting a new advancement that includes an extra component for e-taxis to be acquired and piloted under the program.
- 6.9 The City Administrator stated that the Council's infrastructure plan for the year is in full swing, highlighting the completion of Nargusta Street. The City Administrator also stated that drainage and general beautification works are being carried out around the city. The City Administrator also stated that the Council now has a cutting team within each constituency, which should compliment the work of those employees who are part of the Leadership Intervention Unit (LIU) programme. This should result in more effective street and drain maintenance.
- 6.10 The City Administrator stated that the Council is hopeful that it will be able to get a donation of one thousand (1000) school bags from the diaspora to support its back-to-school initiatives, as opposed to the normal contribution of five hundred (500) bags secured in past years.





6.11 The City Administrator highlighted several upcoming family and staff-oriented events including the following:

- Staff Social – Football Fundraiser (Friday, June 16<sup>th</sup>)
  - This One's for the Fathers Event (Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup>)
  - Lake I Community Festival (Saturday, June 24<sup>th</sup>)
  - Adult Swim Classes (June 20<sup>th</sup> – June 29<sup>th</sup>)
  - Summer Innovator Incubator Program (July 3<sup>rd</sup> – July 28<sup>th</sup>)
- Self-Development, Financial Literacy, Yoga, Robotics and Gardening

## 7.0 Notices

7.1 Deputy Mayor Allan Pollard Jr. highlighted that the Pickstock Constituency and the Belize City Council would be hosting a marathon at the newly rehabilitated Berger Field. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. highlighted that the prize structure a flyer will be circulated later today.

## 8.0 Questions

8.1 No questions were tabled.

## 9.0 Petitions

9.1 Mayor Wagner shared a petition submitted to him by Linda Vista Terrace on behalf of the residents on University Heights Street requesting that the Council pave five hundred (500) feet of the street which is in the Caribbean Shores Constituency. The petition highlights that the area has attracted many investors including Linda Vista Terrace a nine (9) unit luxury condominium building. The petition was submitted along with a bill of quantities from Fast Construction and Road Development.

9.2 Mayor Wagner highlighted that these works were not accounted for in the Council's current budget.



- 9.3 Councilor Vaughan highlighted the need for the signatures on the petition to be verified.
- 9.4 Mayor Wagner noted that the signatures must be verified, and the Council must inquire to determine to what extent would the community be open to partner with the Council on completing this project.
- 10.0 Presentation of Reports from Councilors**
- 10.1 Councilor Vaughan thanked all Council members for reaching out to him and offering support amid the difficult times his family has been through in recent months. Councilor Vaughan said that the support is appreciated and reminded his colleagues that the current terms is coming to an end.
- 10.2 Councilor Vaughan stated that working with his fellow Council members has been a pleasure and has prepared him for many other things. Councilor Vaughan also commended the mayor on a job well done and for his steadfast leadership.
- 10.3 Councilor Vaughan stated that he met with Councilor Pipersburgh and they both agreed that the basketball court on Sir Sandy Hunter Street must be renovated as well as the former football field redeveloped. While the Department of Transportation is experiencing a scarcity of license plates, Councilor Vaughan says the Council has managed to stay afloat, and he is now proposing an additional order to ensure continuous availability.
- 10.4 Councilor Goodin stated that because he is a full-time student, he has not been doing much political work. Councilor Goodin announced that he had completed his first semester with a GPA of 3.4 and has two years remaining. Councilor Goodin then revealed that he is now interning with the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), analyzing contracts, and negotiating agreements. Councilor Goodin concluded his briefing by congratulating the team on a job well done and emphasizing the importance of working together.
- 10.5 Councilor Vaughan commended Councilor Novelo for the improved maintenance of the cemetery.





- 10.6 Councilor Novelo stated that the additional workers have been working extremely hard to keep the cemetery in good condition. The unit is also rebuilding the water tank at the Mile 13 cemetery, according to Councilor Novelo.
- 10.7 Councilor Vaughan informed the Council that the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) has taken over care of the Yabra Green Football Field and requested that the Council pick up the bags left by the maintenance staff.
- 10.8 The City Administrator stated that this request will be communicated to the Council's sanitation night crew.
- 10.9 Councilor Kwan highlighted that the Belize City Accelerator Program (BCAP) continues to make strides in bringing local entrepreneurs closer to their goals. Councilor Kwan announced plans to introduce two new cohorts in the next few months.
- 10.10 Councilor Requeña shared that she too is focusing on her personal life at the moment and so she does not have many updates at this time. Councilor Requeña thanked Mayor Wagner and the Council for the pantry bags being distributed daily.
- 10.11 Councilor Castellanos touched on the robbery event at the Market, revealing that two security guards were injured. Councilor Castellanos requested that the Council consider adding cameras and a monitor to improve security at the site.
- 10.12 The Market Committee gave its approval to two prospective tenants, according to Councilor Castellanos. They will occupy two booths that are currently available. The verification process included a feasibility test to assess whether these vendors could financially sustain themselves given their business model.
- 10.13 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. announced that the Council has received the new grader, which is fully functional and has the ripper installed. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. emphasized the completion of G Street, Henderson Avenue, and Teacher Street.
- 10.14 Mayor Wagner shared that the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing has committed to carry out the concreting of Penn Road, Lacroix Boulevard and Complex Avenue.



**11.0 Request for leave to move the adjournment of the Council on definite matter of urgent public concern.**

11.1 No matters were tabled.

**12.0 Motions by Councilors**

12.1 Councilor Castellanos moved a motion to approve a lease between the Belize City Council and Churro King to occupy the reserve in front of Nazarene High School. Seconded by Councilor Novelo. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.2 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Belize City Council to approve a lease agreement for Mr. Andre Pitts for a period of three (3) years for one booth at City Hall for the purpose of establishing a restaurant. Seconded by Councilor Requeña. **MOTION APPROVED.**

**13.0 New Business**

13.1 Councilor Vaughan shared the Indian Community in Belize has built a statue of Mahatma Gandhi, the world renowned Indian anti-colonial nationalist. Councilor Vaughan shared that this has been handed over to the National Institute of Culture and History who is actively working to identify a suitable location to place the statue.

13.2 Councilor Vaughan expressed his support for the proposal to place it either on the median on Marine Parade Boulevard or in Mule Park. Councilor Vaughan then stated that the Council would have to consult Bowen and Bowen Ltd. because the Council has final authority over the reserve.

13.3 On behalf of the Freetown Constituency, Councilor Vaughan thanked the Council for the traffic and pedestrian crossing lights installed at the intersection of St. Thomas and St. Joseph Streets.





- 13.4 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. stated that the National Sports Council (NSC) Board of Directors just convened and that they are eager to make changes to the facilities under their jurisdiction. As a result, the MCC Grounds will be rehabilitated. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. recommended the NSC to include the Council in this attempt since it is critical that the city is involved in this process to ensure that this facility can be utilized by the entire community.
- 13.5 The City Administrator advised that the NSC hold a consultation with residents to determine how they want the rehabilitated MCC Grounds to look.
- 13.6 Councilor Vaughan shared a request being made for the Council to bring back the Mayor's Award for the Annual Holy Saturday Cross Country Cycling Classic.
- 14.0 Submissions from the Building Unit – Ms. Chelsea Perera, Assistant City Planner**
- 14.1 A request by Mr. Kenny White to expand existing booth on Mahogany Street reserve measuring 12'-0" x 12'-0" for him to be able to diversify the services offered in clothing, beauty, and salon supplies. The Planning Department has no objections to this request. **MOTION APPROVED.**
- 14.2 A request by the Belize City Council's Street Naming Committee to rename the street from Ferrel Lane to the Belize City Swing Bridge as Regent Street and the portion of the street from Albert Street to Ferrel Lane as Dame Minita Gordon Drive. **MOTION DENIED.**
- 14.3 A request by Tropical Blend to vend alcoholic beverages from a mobile bar measuring 10'-0" x 6'-0" on cruise ship days and weekends, Friday, and Saturdays from 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. **MOTION APPROVED.**
- 14.4 A request by Ms. Marion Estrada for approval to vend fast food on the Cemetery Road reserve, formerly First Stop Café and now Liz Spicy Kitchen. The Planning Department has no objections to this request. **MOTION APPROVED.**
- 14.5 A request by the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) to place a way-finding sign measuring 4' x 8' in the Battlefield Park in downtown Belize City. **MOTION APPROVED.**



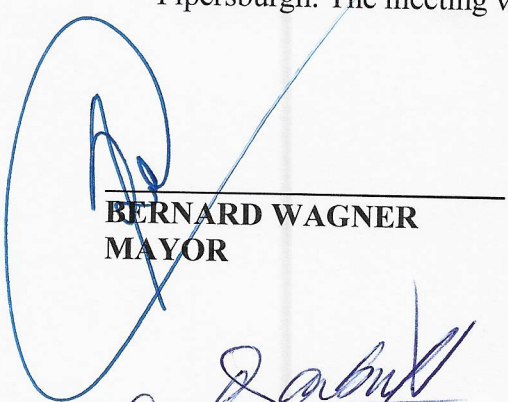
- 14.6 A request by Mr. Jose Rivas to construct a 10' x 18' structure for the purpose of vending tacos and fruit juices at the western approach of the Pound Yard Bridge. The Planning Department has objections to this request. **MOTION DENIED.**

#### 15.0 Other Business

- 15.1 Councilor Vaughan conveyed condolences to Councilor Requeña, whose uncle died a few weeks ago. Councilor Vaughan mentioned that her uncle used to be his driver and that he was a good man.

#### 16.0 Adjournment

- 16.1 Councilor Novelo moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councilor Pipersburgh. The meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

  
 BERNARD WAGNER  
 MAYOR

  
 MRS. STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT  
 CITY ADMINISTRATOR

