

**MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

**Caucus Room, Belize City Council**

**May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**10:00 a.m.**

Present at the meeting were the following:

- |                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mr. Bernard Wagner      | <b>Mayor</b>        |
| 2. Mr. Eluide Miller       | <b>Deputy Mayor</b> |
| 3. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr.   | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 4. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 5. Ms. Kaya Cattouse       | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 6. Mr. Edmund Kwan         | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 7. Mr. Evan Thompson       | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 8. Mr. Sherwin Garcia      | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 9. Mr. Malcolm Nunez       | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 10. Mr. Dorian Usher       | <b>Councilor</b>    |
| 11. Mr. Javier Castellanos | <b>Councilor</b>    |

Mr. Albert Vaughan  
Ms. Carissa Casanova

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

Observers:

Ms. Briana Joseph  
Mr. Arthur Butler  
Mr. Danny Madrid

**Youth Shadow Councillor**  
**Youth Shadow Councillor**  
**Order of Distinguished Services**

**Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM.**

**1.0 Belize National Prayer**

1.1 Mayor Wagner led all present in reciting the National Prayer of Belize.

**2.0 Welcome Remarks**

2.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed all present to the meeting and advised the Council that there would be guests present to observe the day's proceedings.

2.2 The City Administrator advised that the Youth Shadow Council (YSC) observers present were Shadow City Administrator, Ms. Briana Joseph, and Shadow Deputy Mayor, Mr. Arthur Butler. Other observers present included members of the Order of Distinguished Services.

**The Observers entered the room at 10:17 AM.**

2.3 Mayor Wagner welcomed the observers and reviewed the day's agenda. He advised that the meeting should run smoothly if the standing orders are followed.

**3.0 Ratification of the April 29, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes**

3.1 (12.4) change from "Council" to "city".

3.2 Deputy Mayor Miller moved to accept the April 29th Regular Council Meeting minutes. Seconded by Councillor Hamilton.

**4.0 Matters arising from the Minutes**

4.1 (6.17) Mayor Wagner conveyed his appreciation for the attendance of two Youth Shadow Council representatives at today's meeting, following concerns previously raised by the group. He expressed his hope that two YSC members will continue to be invited to future sessions to ensure their sustained engagement and to provide them with direct insight into the Council's work.

4.2 (3.35) The Mayor inquired about any updates regarding the formation of a committee to review the proposed garbage collection fees. He underscored the significance of this initiative and acknowledged the persistent challenge of covering the weekly garbage collection expenses, which amount to \$65,000.00.

## 5.0 Updates from the Mayor

5.1 Mayor Wagner reported that GCOM and Blue 21 visited earlier in the month and expressed his appreciation to those who participated. During the visit, meetings were held with key stakeholders including the Prime Minister, Hon. John Briceño, Mrs. Nicole Solano, CEO in the Ministry of Tourism, Youth, Sports & Diaspora Relations, Mr. Evan Tillet, Tourism Director at the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), and representatives from the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (5Cs), the Ministry of Local Government, and the Department of the Environment.

5.2 The feasibility study for the Floating Boardwalk Project is expected to be completed by January 2026 and will assess the feasibility of the proposed project in Belize City. GCOM is currently seeking funding for the project, estimated at €3.5–4 million, which aims to transform the southern foreshore area.

5.3 The Mayor also noted that BTB is pursuing a similar boardwalk project in the Fort George/Baron Bliss Lighthouse area and is in the process of obtaining the required clearances. He affirmed complete support for the BTB project on the city's north side.

5.4 Mayor Wagner advised that a Public Auction was held recently. Beyond collecting revenue, it was an opportunity to encourage a change in mindset around civic responsibility and tax obligations. The legal process under the Property Act empowers the Council to address tax delinquencies. Six residents were delinquent in fulfilling their obligations; the Mayor emphasized the responsibility that accompanies property ownership, suggesting that this message be clearly conveyed to new landowners.

5.5 The Mayor also reported that the recently launched E-ride Taxi program has been very successful, with drivers receiving an overwhelming number of ride requests. Steps are underway to fast-track interviews for new applicants, as other taxi operators wish to join this new era of urban transportation. Mayor Wagner explained that he also spoke about the E-Mobility Project during his recent morning show appearance.

5.6 Additionally, Mayor Wagner announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Change Agent Builders for the establishment of a second student hub location.

5.7 He advised that this partnership would lead to the fulfillment of a manifesto promise and noted that orders had been placed for the purchase of ten computers, and renovations of the space were in progress. The area representative for the Pickstock Constituency, Hon. Anthony Mahler, has requested that the project be completed by June; close to \$100,000 has been allocated for this initiative.

5.8 Mayor Wagner highlighted ongoing diplomatic engagements, including discussions with the French Ambassador and Ambassador Wilfred Moore of the Netherlands, who was based in Guatemala. Both ambassadors expressed interest in the City's floating boardwalk project and were impressed by the progress being made in Belize City.

5.9 The Mayor noted that the floating boardwalk will be the first of its kind in this region and that international interest and support continue to grow, particularly around the City's E-Mobility initiatives.

5.10 Mayor Wagner advised that the CEMO Flood Mitigation Clean-Up was successful, and affirmed that efforts are ongoing to improve drainage infrastructure in flood-prone areas across the city. He noted that the initiative aimed to raise public awareness ahead of the hurricane season while offering vital support to the Works and Sanitation teams.

5.11 He also highlighted the prompt clean-up of a lot on West Street and shared plans to install a play set for neighborhood children. He reiterated his broader vision to transform vacant lots into parks and green spaces wherever possible, making these spaces more useful to the community.

5.12 The Mayor commended the BTB for its greening initiatives across the city.

5.13 Councillor Pollard noted concerns raised by residents about a recent project on the Philip Goldson Highway. He explained that while the highway is being rehabilitated, the medians are being concreted, thus reducing the amount of green space in the city.

5.14 Mayor Wagner acknowledged the concern and assured the Council that beautification efforts will continue throughout the city.

5.15 The Mayor then thanked the Deputy Mayor for representing him at the CLGF Conference, where discussions on Municipal Securities and alternative financing options took place. Mr. Ervin Perez, of Legacy Fund, was commended for his excellent efforts in sharing the Belize City story.

5.16 The Mayor noted that many larger municipalities in the region have yet to explore these financing avenues and are now interested in similar legislative frameworks.

5.17 Reflecting on the impact of COVID-19, the Mayor acknowledged that the Council avoided layoffs by making sacrifices collectively. Staff accepted pay cuts and frozen increments during the pandemic, which have since been restored.

5.18 Mayor Wagner then announced that all retroactive increments will be paid to staff in the current pay period, recognizing them as the backbone of the Council.

5.19 Mayor announced that the “This One’s for the Fathers” event will be held on June 14 at Lord Rhaburn Plaza. Councillors will be receiving a set number of invitations to be distributed to deserving fathers.

5.20 The next edition of the Downtown Super Sale will be scheduled for late June or early July.

5.21 Mayor Wagner concluded by announcing that on June 22nd, he will serve as a guest speaker at a scholarship gala in New York in support of the Anglican Diocese of Belize. He highlighted his personal connection to St. Michael’s College, which later merged with St. Hilda’s College to become Anglican Cathedral College. The Mayor also announced that Councillors Pollard and Cattouse would accompany him.

#### **6.0 Updates from the City Administrator**

6.1 The City Administrator confirmed that outstanding increments are being disbursed to all eligible staff, with a total of \$135,322.44 issued in retroactive payments. He further explained that about 72.6 % of staff were benefitting from this exercise.

6.2 The City Administrator then reported that work is ongoing to address the removal of derelict vehicles across the City. With the current initiative, a total of 23 vehicles have been moved, with a target of 100 being issued to the Public Health & Cemetery Manager.

6.3 The City Administrator noted that the agreement with RT Auto has been finalized and explained that operational progress has been slow due to budget-related delays. In the meantime, another service has been engaged to conduct the removal.

6.4 The City Administrator then informed the meeting that the Council recently received approval to dispose of unserviceable vehicles and equipment. He noted that some computer equipment had been donated to the ITVET computer technician program, and that efforts were underway to facilitate the sale of the remaining unserviceable vehicles.

6.5 Regarding the challenges currently being experienced in relation to the electric vehicles recently acquired by the Council, the City Administrator reported that a meeting was held with the dealer to address the situation. Both parties have agreed that the vehicles would be returned to the dealer in exchange for diesel vehicles.

6.6 Responsibility for the Philip Goldson Highway will soon be handed over to the Council. Regarding the concreting of the medians, the City Administrator explained that the Council will explore incorporating greenery into the highway’s management and stated that strategies for its upkeep, once the transfer is complete, need to be considered.

6.7 The City Administrator then recommended that the Council consider hosting the Downtown Super Sale during one of the GST-free weekends to maximize potential benefits and community engagement.

6.8 The City Administrator concluded by announcing that he will be on leave from June 14th to June 24th, and that the Director of Administration will be holding over in his absence.

6.9 Mayor Wagner highlighted a development taking place near the Benny's roundabout on the Philip Goldson Highway and expressed concern that it may contribute to drainage and flooding issues when the rains begin, particularly as the reserve and drains have already been covered. He advised the City Administrator that the Council will need to monitor the situation closely.

#### **7.0 Notices**

7.1 No Matters were tabled.

#### **8.0. Questions**

8.1 No matters were tabled.

#### **9.0 Petitions**

9.1 Councillor Cattouse raised concerns about the troubling and increasingly prevalent issue of teenagers and children riding horses through the city streets. While she acknowledged that providing youth with access to horses can offer a sense of responsibility and purpose and help keep them away from negative influences, she noted the harsh reality that many of these animals are being neglected and mistreated.

9.2 Councillor Cattouse explained that horses are poorly cared for, often underfed, malnourished, and in some cases physically injured. Even more concerning, there have been disturbing incidents of teenagers abusing these horses, including footage circulated on social media of animals being mistreated in the context of personal disputes. In one case, a resident contacted her to report a horse carcass and request its removal.

9.3 She emphasized that this cruelty is unfolding in plain sight and asked what steps the Council can take to eradicate and address such abuse on city streets.

9.4 Councillor Cattouse also offered several recommendations for consideration, including activating the Public Health Unit to monitor hotspots, conduct welfare checks, and report instances of abuse; collaborating with the Police Department and Social Services to address the underlying social issues contributing to the behavior; introducing a horse ownership registration system; and launching a public awareness campaign to educate residents on animal welfare, legal responsibilities, and the consequences of animal cruelty.

9.5 Mayor Wagner acknowledged her concern and explained that, while the Council recognizes the importance of being a catalyst for necessary change, this issue does not fall directly within its mandate.

9.6 He encouraged Councillor Cattouse to initiate a stakeholder meeting to foster communication and promote public education through the Council's Public Relations department. Mayor Wagner further emphasized the need to begin the conversation and raise awareness of animal cruelty, noting that change starts at home. He requested that Councillors Cattouse and Usher take the lead on the matter.

9.7 The City Administrator added that he would engage the Public Health Coordinator on the issue and noted the existence of a committee comprising veterinarians and representatives from the Humane Society, which could be invited to meet with Councillor Cattouse. It was further noted that a previous attempt under former Mayor Moya to house the horses at the 4.5 mile compound resulted in an inhumane arrangement, as the animals were not properly accommodated.

9.8 Councillor Hamilton emphasized that the Council cannot shoulder the responsibility on its own, although it has been providing informal support.

9.9 The Deputy Mayor advised on appropriate points of contact, noting that the Director of the Humane Society, Ms. Michelle Rudon, has been receiving threats. Financial constraints have also presented challenges to further involvement.

9.10 With regard to horse-drawn carriages, it was noted that the Belize Tourism Board is responsible for ensuring operators are appropriately licensed and conducts inspections every three months.

## **10.0 Reports from Councillors**

10.1 Councillor Pollard reported that the Works Department undertook targeted interventions on Berkley Street, King Street, and Dean Street ahead of the rainy season, addressing critical drainage and water runoff concerns under the CEMO initiative.

10.2 He further advised that premix patching was completed or is in progress on Mahogany Street, Neal's Penn Road, Carassow Street, Coney Drive, Albert Street, and the right-hand side of the Swing Bridge. A layer of premix was also applied to transitions from Faber's Road to adjacent streets.

10.3 Upcoming patching and maintenance works are scheduled for Iguana Street, Western Avenue, Caesar Ridge Road, Seagull Street, Jane Usher Boulevard, Waight Street, Kraal Road, and Euphrates Avenue. Many of these locations reflect direct requests from area representatives, particularly within the Collet Division, and field assessments conducted by the Department.

10.4 Drainage cleaning and culvert installations continue across multiple zones to mitigate flooding risks and improve stormwater management. Councillor Pollard noted a potential need for additional 18" residential culverts to sustain the ongoing works.

10.5 He emphasized that manhole cover replacement remains a key safety priority, citing frequent damage to covers, which continue to pose public hazards and account for a substantial portion of infrastructure-related injuries, estimated at approximately 90%.

10.6 In April, 30 concrete manhole covers were produced, followed by 15 in May. Additionally, 8 metal covers were fabricated and installed in high-traffic areas, including Cemetery Road, St. Thomas Street, King Street, Mahogany Street, Amara Avenue, 6th Street, and the Flag Monument Roundabout. The lower production output in May was attributed to the reallocation of human resources to the CEMO campaign and preparatory work for the second Student Hub at the Hope Center.

10.7 Outstanding manhole cover needs have been identified on several streets, including Freetown Road, Mapp Street, North Front Street, Water Lane, East and West Canal, and others.

10.8 Councillor Pollard expressed satisfaction with the recent procurement of a road line painting machine, noting that previous delays were due to tariff disputes.

10.9 He confirmed that the tar truck is operational and expected to meet project demands. The sludge truck was deployed during the CEMO campaign; however, valve issues were detected during its first test run. A full inspection is underway to diagnose existing faults and anticipate potential failures.

10.10 Councillor Pollard concluded by acknowledging that while the Works Compound is currently in satisfactory condition, the department continues to face human resource constraints. He recommended the recruitment of at least six additional crew members,

including skilled personnel for masonry-related tasks.

10.11 Councillor Castellanos reported that the CEMO campaign was highly effective. He further advised that a joint walkthrough of the Civic Center was conducted with representatives from the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH).

10.12 Councillor Castellanos then advised that key inspections of designated hurricane shelters were completed. The keys to the designated shelters have now been appropriately tagged and color-coded for ease of identification.

10.13 School presentations are ongoing as part of the Council's broader public awareness efforts. Councillor Castellanos also noted continued participation in national workshops such as "Early Warning 4 All," along with regular in-house subcommittee meetings.

10.14 The Council is maintaining close coordination with NEMO and the relevant health authorities to support effective public outreach and preparedness efforts.

10.15 Councillor Hamilton reported that, through the Hubert Pipersburgh Diaspora Desk, the team met with Ms. Charlotte Nal of the Ixchel Caribe Foundation. Ms. Nal has extended an invitation to the Council to participate in an upcoming conference that will bring together local and international stakeholders, youth leaders, and changemakers to exchange best practices on civic leadership.

10.16 Councillor Nunez noted that the current cohort of the Youth Shadow Council (YSC) has been divided into two groups to develop proposals for their final project, which will be refined and aligned with the Council's strategic goals. He acknowledged the valuable support of former Youth Shadow Councillors, Tae Medina and Rajiv Ramsey, who have been instrumental in guiding the current cohort. The term of the current cohort concludes on September 30th, with recruitment for the incoming cohort expected to commence by mid-October.

10.17 Councillor Nunez then reported that the Council's Summer Incubator Programme is aiming to host 250 youth and noted that the budget for the PeeWee Basketball camp is being finalized.

10.18 Councillor Nunez then congratulated the Council's softball team on an undefeated season and shared that the team had merged with Holy Redeemer Credit Union's team for the season. He emphasized the importance of fostering camaraderie and teamwork among staff through sports.

10.19 He also advocated for the return of the Wellness Ride to Belize City and shared that the Council is currently engaging with representatives from the Ministry of Health to coordinate upcoming community health fairs.

10.20 Regarding the summer basketball activities, Mayor Wagner instructed that they be scheduled on an indoor or covered court to mitigate exposure to extreme heat.

10.21 Councillor Cattouse reported that the Sanitation team continues daily operations, which include digging, chipping, and cutting. She noted that the department's management recently participated in the Organic Waste Management Network Workshop.

10.22 Councillor Cattouse thanked the Councillors for their participation in the CEMO Mitigation Campaign and emphasized the importance of preparing for the rainy season. She acknowledged that while flooding is inevitable, the Council's role is to ensure that water subsides promptly. Areas addressed included Pound Yard, King Street, Dean Street, Freetown, and Berkeley Streets.

10.23 Councillor Cattouse expressed concern regarding the deteriorating condition of Council equipment, noting frequent repairs and questioning the effectiveness of current maintenance practices. She emphasized that prolonged equipment downtime results in decreased productivity, as employees are unable to perform their duties. In response, she proposed the development of a comprehensive strategy to improve care and accountability, along with the introduction of new incentives and enhanced employee engagement measures.

10.24 Councillor Cattouse also reported on the establishment of a new Student Hub in the Pickstock Constituency, which will offer tutoring and homework support to secondary school students. Interviews for the Student Hub Officer were scheduled for 27th May.

10.25 Additionally, she noted the success of last year's Basic Math and English programme for Standard 5 and 6 students and explained that the Council would be offering the program again this year.

10.26 At the conclusion of her report, Councillor Cattouse congratulated Youth Shadow Councillors, Sanaa Rowland and Arthur Butler, for participating in the recent Cancer Walk.

10.27 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that the stoplight at the intersection of Dame Minita Gordon Drive and King Street has been operating efficiently since its installation. Positive feedback has been received from both pedestrians and motorists in the area.

10.28 Plans are underway for the installation of a similar stoplight system at the intersection of Vernon St. and East Collet Canal. The stoplight will reduce the need for enforcement officers to be posted at this location in extreme weather conditions and is a significant step forward in the Council's "Smart City" initiative.

10.29 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that the Traffic Department generated \$561,000 in revenue in May, staying within its financial target of \$500,000-600,000 monthly.

10.30 He conveyed the manager's request for departmental upgrades and highlighted ongoing initiatives to enhance the working environment, including exterior painting, interior enhancements, and the replacement of signage.

10.31 Deputy Mayor Miller acknowledged Mayor Wagner's recommendation regarding the procurement of secure cash tills for cashier stations. He reported that the provider had only one unit available in-country and confirmed that the Council is currently awaiting delivery of the remaining units.

10.32 He reported that a proposal to upgrade the photo room and its equipment will be presented at the upcoming Council meeting. Deputy Mayor Miller noted that, as the Driver's License printer has already been upgraded, it is appropriate that the photo room equipment be similarly enhanced to improve the quality of printed images.

10.33 Regarding updates from the Local Economic Development (LED) Unit, Deputy Mayor Miller advised that the Belize City Accelerator Program (BCAP) is now poised to facilitate a new cohort of up to 20 businesses, that are either scaling up or new.

10.34 Deputy Mayor Miller also reported that the LED Manager visited five past BCAP participants who are still operational.

10.35 The MIS Department was able to assist in procuring and installing the new driver's license printer in April. The printer comes with added security features in an effort to maintain the integrity of licenses issued by the Council.

10.36 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that the development of the Belize City Council App is underway, with a projected launch date of April 2026. The Council is collaborating with Telepin and Digi to utilize existing infrastructure.

10.37 The MIS department continues to address challenges with the current payroll system and has acquired a new high-performance server to improve data management. Devices are being prepared for deployment.

10.38 The Deputy Mayor advised that he has been working with Councillor Usher, the Cemetery team, and TBSL to map the cemetery using GIS technology. The project, led by GIS Specialist Mr. Vasni Pech, aims to document approximately 60,000 graves. Data entry will be supported by TBSL personnel and summer interns, as many records date back to the 1960s.

10.39 In partnership with Champion Security, the MIS Department now has access to a mobile app that sends real-time alerts when the building alarm is triggered.

10.40 Mayor Wagner noted that he has lost access to the Council's camera system on his mobile device and asked that it be reinstalled.

10.41 Deputy Mayor Miller also congratulated the HRCU/BCC softball team on their undefeated season.

10.42 The Deputy then advised that he and Councillor Nunez had the opportunity to visit Ebenezer Primary School to deliver a presentation on boys' mental health.

10.43 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that he had the privilege of representing the Mayor and Council at the "Unlocking Local Finance" Seminar. He highlighted that the current administration is regarded as one of the most capable municipal governments in Belize City's history and is highly respected across the region. The seminar featured participants from around the world, many of whom looked to Belize City as a model for accessing municipal financing.

10.44 In closing, Deputy Mayor Miller noted that he and Councillor Garcia participated in a clean-up initiative with St. Joseph Church. He shared that the group extended an invitation for him to join their Church Council, which he accepted. He emphasized that this engagement serves as a meaningful way for the Council to remain connected with the church and explore future opportunities for collaboration.

10.45 He further informed the Council that he recently completed the first year of his Master's programme at the University of the West Indies, achieving a GPA of 4.0. He encouraged fellow Councillors to invest in their personal and professional development.

### **11.0 Motions by Mayor & Councilors**

11.1 Councillor Castellanos moved a motion for the Council to approve the implementation of an Exemplary Citizen Award Shield, aimed at recognizing outstanding civic contributions by residents. Seconded by Councillor Nunez.

11.2 Deputy Mayor Miller commended Councillor Castellanos for the initiative and expressed willingness to assist in developing the framework, including the selection process and criteria. He emphasized the importance of a public awareness campaign to support the award.

11.3 Councillor Cattouse inquired about the selection process and whether a structure had already been drafted.

11.4 Councillor Hamilton supported the concept of formally recognizing civic responsibility and recommended establishing a clear framework to guide nominations and selections.

11.5 Councillor Thompson also expressed support for the initiative and suggested incorporating a competition element, encouraging residents to engage in community clean-up efforts with photo submissions.

11.6 Mayor Wagner endorsed the motion and acknowledged the contributions of the Councillors. He emphasized the importance of ensuring the award has a meaningful impact and strengthens civic pride. He further requested that the framework include provisions for integrating property tax rebates for honorees, subject to approval from the Ministry of Local Government.

11.7 Councillor Castellanos confirmed agreement with the inclusion of these considerations. **MOTION PASSED**, subject to the development of a formal framework and the inclusion of a property tax rebate component.

11.8 Councillor Cattouse moved a motion to approve an Employment Contract between the Council and Mr. Phillip Neal. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller. **MOTION PASSED**.

11.9 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of an Employment Contract between the Council and the Chief Internal Auditor, Mr. Alex Ysaguirre. In presenting the motion, the Mayor underscored the critical importance of the Internal Auditor's role within the organization and provided a summary of Mr. Ysaguirre's most recent performance appraisal outcomes. Seconded by Councillor Nunez. **MOTION PASSED**.

## 12.0 New Business

12.1 Mayor Wagner advised the Council that correspondence was received from the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) regarding the Swing Bridge Replacement Project, which is progressing steadily. The project is being funded by the Government of Japan, with MIDH overseeing its construction.

12.2 The Mayor reminded Councillors that he had previously expressed reservations about approving the construction of any permanent structures near the bridge site, given the anticipated replacement of the bridge. He informed the Council that the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) is now requesting the removal of the Belize Tourism Board booth, the concrete structure located on the North Side, and the signage associated with the water taxi service.

12.3 In preparation for foundational works, including sea bed drilling, MIDH indicated that a pier must be constructed to facilitate machinery access on both the north and south sides of the river. The matter has been referred to the Planning Unit, with the understanding that the affected occupants, namely the Belize Tourism Board, Churro King, and Ocean Ferry, will need to be relocated.

12.4 The City Administrator inquired who would bear the cost of removal and relocation, to which the Mayor responded that MIDH had indicated that they would cover these expenses. He also suggested that the Council propose suitable temporary placement options for the booth belonging to the Belize Tourism Board.

12.5 Mayor Wagner advised the Council that the Magistrate Court Bill was recently presented in the House of Representatives. He outlined several areas of concern, particularly regarding provisions giving the Magistrate Court authority over matters related to the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act, the Liquor Licensing Act, and the Trade Licensing Act. Section 11 of the Bill also mandates that all revenues collected through the Municipal Court should be paid into the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

12.6 Mayor Wagner noted that this is contrary to Section 20 of the Belize City Council Act, which speaks to the establishment of a Belize City Fund “into which shall be deposited or credited...all monies payable in any manner under or pursuant to this Act or regulations made thereunder or otherwise.”

12.7 The Mayor shared that these issues were raised with the Attorney General, who noted the concerns and indicated that the Bill would be revisited.

12.8 Councillor Kwan questioned whether the Bill only applied to municipalities without a Municipal Court and expressed concern that current Council staff could potentially be absorbed into the national system.

12.9 Councillor Castellanos emphasized that rather than expanding municipal jurisdiction, the Bill appeared to reduce the Council’s autonomy.

12.10 Mayor Wagner recalled that the pursuit of municipal autonomy and decentralization was initiated under former Mayors Coye and Nunez, following recommendations outlined in a World Bank report. The report proposed a phased approach to decentralization, which subsequently granted Belize City authority over traffic management, trade licensing, property taxation, and municipal court operations. He noted that several other municipalities also expressed interest in attaining similar levels of autonomy. However, the current Bill appears to diverge from that trajectory, signaling a shift away from the established decentralization framework.

12.11 Following the Council's discussion on the draft Magistrate's Court Bill, Mayor Wagner advised that the streets identified as priorities for rehabilitation include Mercy Lane, Queen Helmut Street, Johnson Street, Caesar Ridge Road (extending to Yarborough Bridge), Neal's Pen Road East (leading to Fairweather Street), Arlington Drive, Amandala Drive, Zericote Street, Santa Barbara Street, Pelican Street (from Central American Boulevard to Lake View Street), Iguana Street (from Central American Boulevard to Lake View Street), Antelope Street, a section of Mahogany Street (commencing at the Police Station), Carissa Street, Peter Ashton Street, Ayuso Street, Wilfred Peters Street, as well as three additional streets within the Belama Phase 2 area, among others.

### **13.0 Submissions from the Building Unit**

13.1 A request from the Belize Tourism Board for a letter of no-objection for the "Fort George Rehabilitation Boardwalk Project", which consists of the installation of piles, construction of a new seawall and boardwalk 320 ft. long, construction of a platform in front of the lighthouse, landscaping, and lighting. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.2 A request from Mr. Daniel Arguelles on behalf of the Fort George Hotel & Spa for a letter of no-objection for the construction of a six-storey commercial structure for the main use of hotel rooms, a bar area, and other amenities, including a swimming pool at Parcel Nos. 931, 1152, 1154, 1153, Belize City. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.3 A request submitted by Ms. Marlene Flores Ailyani on behalf of Suma Limited for the provision of a letter of no-objection concerning the proposed construction of a two-storey residential duplex building. The development includes a wooden deck that will extend eight feet beyond the property boundary over a portion of the Bella Vista Canal, located at Parcel No. 8, Bella Vista, Belize City. **MOTION PASSED** granted that the characteristics (length, width, depth) of the deck, which extends out over the canal, strictly adhere to the recommended guidelines of the Belize Port Authority.

13.4 A request from Mr. Carlo Arguelles on behalf of Four Point Condos for the provision of a letter of no-objection regarding the proposed development of the Four Points Project, located at Parcels No. 1716 – No. 1724, Independence Blvd. The proposed project consists of the Four Points Hotel by Marriott, a multi-story residential condo building, a multi-story office building with rental spaces, a small administration building, two Restaurant Buildings, six single commercial units, a boardwalk along the riverside, and a security hut for the condos. **MOTION PASSED** with recommendations from the Planning Department for the 20-foot public reserve remains as a public waterfront access easement, where blue/green development, such as linear parks, should be coordinated to elevate the value of all properties along the Creek's edge. No parking should be allowed in the public reserve between the right-of-way and the building entrance along Lake Independence Boulevard.

13.5 A request from Ms. Virginia Ruano to enter into an agreement with the Belize City Council for the leasing of the structure located at 25 West Collett Canal for the purpose of operating a Butcher Shop. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.6 A request by Mr. Akeem Briceno for the Council's consideration of a waiver of the lease fee for Booth No. 14 at the Mahogany Street Reserve. The Planning Department expressed its objection to the proposed waiver. However, following Council deliberations, the request was approved. **MOTION PASSED.**

13.7 A request by Ms. Mayra Canek for permission to sell fruits and vegetables from 5:30 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Sunday on a portion of the reserve adjacent to parcel No. 005, George Price Highway. The Planning Department expressed its objection to the request, citing the reserve's designation for highway expansion, flood drainage, and beautification.

13.8 Councillor Kwan noted the presence of multiple vendors in the area and recommended temporary approval until the commencement of the highway rehabilitation.

13.9 Councillor Cattouse observed that the structure was not visually appealing and encouraged efforts to improve its aesthetics. She questioned why a booth was not being recommended instead.

13.10 Councillor Castellanos recommended that the structure be mobile to allow for easy relocation.

13.11 Deputy Mayor Miller suggested that, should this request be denied, the other vendor in the area should also be removed.

13.12 The City Planner expressed agreement with the Deputy and emphasized the importance of addressing all vendors along the reserve.

13.13 Councillor Pollard advocated for giving consideration to small businesses, noting that not all individuals possess the resources or know-how to establish formal enterprises. He observed that the structure did not present a significant obstruction, while other vendors in the area contributed more noticeably to traffic disruption. He remarked on the ease with which high-value projects are approved and recommended temporary approval until construction begins, noting previous instances of approval.

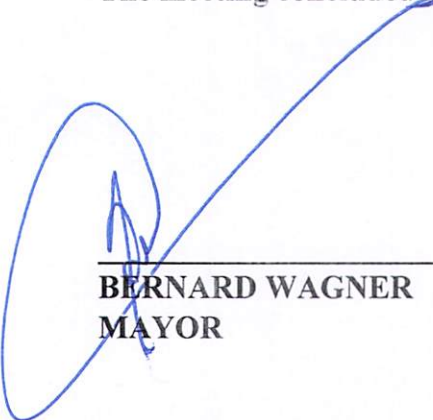
**14.0 Any Other Business**

14.1 Councillor Garcia informed the Council that Mr. Paul Garnett had submitted a request for permission to operate an ATV/Go-Kart ride at Digi Park. He advised that both he and the management of the Parks and Playgrounds Department do not support the request. Nonetheless, he wished to formally bring the matter to the Council's attention for awareness and record.

**15.0 Adjournment**

15.1 Councillor Cattouse moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councillor Hamilton.

**The meeting concluded at 1:07 pm.**

  
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**BERNARD WAGNER**  
**MAYOR**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**ALBERT VAUGHAN**  
**CITY ADMINISTRATOR**

