

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

March 19th, 2024

10:00 a.m.

Present at the meeting were the following:

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

Ms. Sharlene Rudon
Ms. Carissa Casanova

Acting City Administrator
Administrative Manager, Office of the
Mayor

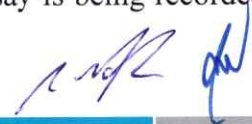
Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:16 AM.

1.0 Belize National Prayer

- 1.1 Mayor Wagner led all who were present in reciting the National Prayer of Belize.
- 1.2 Mayor Wagner then invited all present to join him in a moment of silence to honor the life of City Administrator, Stephanie Lindo.

2.0 Welcome Remarks

- 2.1 Mayor Wagner welcomed the newly elected members of the Belize City Council to the team. He advised the Councillors that they have been elected by the people for the next three years, and are therefore seen as leaders in their community.
- 2.2 Mayor Wagner further expressed that the residents of Belize City believe in the value system and the electoral process which is why thousands of residents went out to cast their ballot in their favor.
- 2.3 Mayor Wagner further advised the Councillors to ensure that they take what the voters have given them and treat it with respect. He reminded them that it is an honor to be elected and that they must never forget that they are servants of the people across all 10 constituencies in the city.
- 2.4 Mayor Wagner encouraged the Councillors to ensure that any shortcoming which they may have observed within the previous council, does not occur under their leadership. He noted that they have history to look back upon and learn from.
- 2.5 The Mayor further explained that Council meetings are where they debate and conduct the business of the people. He noted that sometimes they will succeed, and sometimes they may have to regroup and come back to address a matter.
- 2.6 Mayor Wagner advised the Councillors to respect the decision of the collective body and added that the minutes will reflect what happens in the meetings. He noted that the minutes will be posted to the Council's website within 1-2 months of each meeting, and as such, each Councillor will be held accountable.
- 2.7 Mayor Wagner further cautioned that what the Councillors say is being recorded and is a testament to their leadership.



2.8 The Mayor concluded his remarks by expressing his excitement in having a dynamic team, though he noted that he would have liked to see more women, however, they will move forward, and welcome the voice of the people.

3.0 Ratification of the January 31st, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

3.1 Councillor Pollard noted that he was absent from the last caucus meeting of the previous administration, as was former Councillor, Requena.

3.2 (6.5) Change the statement to read, “she requested a speed bump”.

4.0 General Updates from the City Administrator

4.1 Acting City Administrator, Ms. Sharlene Rudon, updated the Council on the progress of the Smart Parking Facility project.

4.2 Ms. Rudon indicated that the vendor booths have all been leased, however, there is a delay in the electrical connection which the works department is working to address.

4.3 Ms. Rudon further advised that in discussions with the City Engineer, Mr. Floyd Williams, he indicated that he would be contacting Belize Electricity Limited to look into the option of using LED lights at both the parking facility and the Battlefield Park.

4.4 Ms. Rudon added that there has also been a delay in the delivery of the automatic barrier gate. This item was procured from Mr. Marlon Skeen, who has indicated that the disruption at the Port of Belize has caused the delay.

4.5 Councillor Castellanos asked if there was an expected timeline for delivery, he further suggested that if one was not issued, then an expected timeline for delivery can be requested which the vendor would be held to.

4.6 Mayor Wagner then advised that two-thirds of the payment for the automated barrier has already been made.

4.7 Mayor Wagner then explained that a Property Tax flat rate for Senior Citizens is a matter of priority that the Council will have to be proactive in pursuing. The Mayor added that he has spoken to the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the matter and he has expressed his support.

4.8 Mayor Wagner further advised that the matter will be tabled at the Mayor’s Association.



4.9 The Acting City Administrator then advised the Council of the pending Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). She indicated that the only remaining matter to finalize is the reference to the General Administrative Rule (GAR). The Christian Worker's Union (CWU) is not in agreement with the Council's proposal to keep any references to the GAR, which governs the employment of all Council employees.

4.10 Mayor Wagner further advised the Councillors that the CBA is an overarching document, while the GAR is an internal document that deals with the finer details of the organization.

4.11 Councillor Castellanos inquired if the CBA works in conjunction with the labor law.

4.12 Councillor Pollard explained that the GAR is more specific to the Council and goes more in-depth; there are issues that the CBA does not address which are addressed by the GAR. He added that not all Council employees are members of the union.

4.13 The Councillors were then informed that an Organizational Overview has been prepared in order to familiarize themselves with the various departments of the Council. The document includes the roles of each of the departments, along with their goals and challenges for the year.

4.14 It was noted that the objectives of the department should also tie in with the Council's manifesto, and how available resources will be used to reach those goals.

4.15 Mayor Wagner then expressed his disappointment in the way the maintenance of the city is currently being managed and described a plan to divide the city into grids to address this issue.

4.16 Using GIS technology, the number of miles of drains and streets will be determined in order to divide the work equitably and address all the issues in each area.

4.17 Mayor Wagner explained that a well-rounded team would be dispatched to address all the issues in one particular area. When a section of the grid is not addressed, the team assigned to that section can be held accountable.

4.18 The Mayor further explained that the achievement of the Council's key performance indicators (KPIs) should also depend on the number of bad reports received in relation to the grid system. He further added that coordinators and managers are failing the Council as he has observed, on numerous occasions, employees just sitting under the taxi stand during working hours.



4.19 Hours of work for the Operational Support Staff's morning shift is 6 AM- 11 AM, while the Works Department is 8-12. Mayor Wagner further explained that this is an issue with the supervisors and coordinators which needs to be addressed.

4.20 The Mayor then stated that he is concerned about the amount of money being spent on maintaining the city without any tangible results being yielded, especially from the cleaning and cutting teams. He added that the cleaning crew project needs to be results-driven.

4.21 Mayor Wagner notified the Councillors that he will have a discussion with the respective area representatives to discuss the teams and how they can be addressed and held accountable for the work they do.

4.22 Councillor Pollard stated that the condition of the city's maintenance is not for a lack of effort, he explained that the Council has spent a record amount of funds in terms of trying to alleviate these issues.

4.23 He added that Councillors are on the ground, and all the complaints being received are coming from cutting and drainage. The complaints are all coming from places that have cleaning crews assigned to the area.

4.24 Councillor Pollard then explained that he had to speak to the crew assigned to Faber's Road, and added that while campaigning, he could not defend the state of the area especially since they are areas that have cutting crews.

4.25 Councillor Pollard further expressed that the grid system is an excellent start and recommended that the LIU and cutting teams be added to the grid. He added that managers have to start coordinating more with these groups as they have no oversight, and we can't expect the police to do so.

4.26 Councillor Pollard noted that the cleaning crew program is not a bad idea, but the Council is currently not getting value for money. He added that the social component is awesome and that some teams work.

4.27 Councillor Pollard added that when the LIU, CYDP, and City Council crews are all in the same specific area, they wait to see which group is going to do the work first. This is especially true in areas where there is not a good supervisor pushing them to do the work.



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4.28 Mayor Wagner added that he was disappointed in a Coordinator who blatantly stated that they don't clean drains in certain areas because the residents who live there didn't vote for the Council. He further stated that supervisors are to ensure that people are putting in their hours.

4.29 Councillor Miller explained that he has seen first-hand several instances when the drains are overgrown and he would have to call the manager to address the grass growing on the medians.

4.30 Councillor Miller then advised that the Council needs to ensure that it gets better value for money and suggested that to get better results, some cleaning crews may need to be shaved off since some are working and some aren't.

4.31 Councillor Cattouse added her support for the implementation of the grid system by GIS and stated that it was ideal. She further added that scheduling maintenance is an issue, and mentioned that Beltex Crescent is just one of many streets that has no drains at all.

4.32 Mayor Wagner advised that the Council's GIS Specialist has moved on, so the work may need to be outsourced.

4.33 Councillor Castellanos then observed that some cleaning crews only cut the grass, while he has instructed his cleaning crew to pack up the grass and pick up any garbage that is left. He noted that in one particular area, the grass was cut and bagged, but the trash remained. He further suggested that the teams need to be shown how to do the work properly.

4.34 Councillor Garcia noted that some of the cleaning crews can't traverse certain areas, as the individuals who have been hired are street figures. To achieve its objectives, the Council will have to hire people who want to and can do the work.

4.35 Councillor Pollard agreed that the work is limited because of the individuals involved, he explained that the LIU is looking at the crime rate, then asked, who is in charge of reporting on the City Council end?

4.36 Councillor Pollard further added that the Sanitation Department is tracking itself and doesn't have any set targets.

4.37 Councillor Pollard then stated that the Council does not have enough training or workshops for its staff. He added that for the coordinator to pass a comment as he did means they aren't educated enough on the values of the Council.



4.38 Councillor Pollard suggested that quarterly trainings be held, and recommended that the Belize Waste Control be brought in to facilitate the training especially as it relates to scheduling.

4.39 Our programs weren't supposed to address the LIU element, but people in the constituency who truly want to work.

4.40 Councillor Castellanos added that the supervisors, coordinators, and managers of each department must know the Council's manifesto so that they can work to accomplish it. He requested that training be held to sensitize the employees identified with the manifesto.

4.41 Councillor Nunez added that quarterly plans for the respective cleaning crews should be implemented to identify areas that need to be strengthened and to implement a rotation system.

4.42 Councillor Garcia then noted that some cleaning crews have tools and others don't, and either way, they still aren't doing the job.

4.43 Councillor Cattouse advised that a requirement of the program should be that those participating can work in any area of the city. If they cannot, then they cannot be a part of the initiative.

4.44 Ms. Rudon informed the Mayor and Councillors that in interviews for prospective Council employees, applicants are made aware that they might be required to work in any area of the city, and asked if they are able to do so. She further informed them that this is a standard interview question.

5. Notices

5.1 Mayor Wagner then commended the cleaning crew team being managed by Councillor Thompson, for the work they have been putting in to maintain the drains in their assigned area.

6. Questions

6.1 No questions were tabled.

7.0 Request for leave to move the adjournment of the Council on definite matter of urgent public importance.

7.1 No matters were tabled.



8.0 Motions by Mayor

8.1 Mayor Wagner introduced a motion to approve the redistribution of Tranche 1, 2, and 4 of the 2023 Series VI Municipal Paper.

8.2 Mayor Wagner explained that investments from three (3) entities in the municipal papers will be maturing. Two of the larger investors have agreed to roll over their principal investment for another year. Mayor Wagner further explained that the rate of return for these investments would increase from 3.75% to 4.5%.

8.3 When asked what the reason for the increase in interest was, Mayor Wagner advised that it was an incentive being offered to the investors so that their investment remains with the Council.

8.4 The Mayor further explained that this is a way for the Council to stay more competitive. Everyone is looking for a good rate of return on their money. If the Council's interest rate stays the same, people are more likely to take their money where they will get a greater return. **MOTION PASSED.**

9.0 New Business

9.1 Mayor Wagner moved for the floor to be opened for nominations for Deputy Mayor.



9.2 Councillor Castellanos nominated Councilor Pollard and explained that he believes in continuity.

9.3 Councilor Kwan nominated Councillor Cattouse for the post of Deputy Mayor.

9.4 After confirming that there were no other nominations, Mayor Wagner opened the floor for voting.

9.5 Councillor Castellanos again expressed his support for Councillor Pollard. He explained that he has known Councillor Pollard since 2018, and believes Councillor Pollard to be educated, well-spoken, and a good representative of the Council. Councillor Castellanos further added that he believes Councillor Pollard is a good candidate to continue in this role.

9.6 Councillor Sherwin Garcia explained that this was a hard decision, however, he has decided to vote in favour of Councillor Allan Pollard Jr. Councillor Garcia further explained that Councillor Pollard should be able to do three terms in the capacity of Deputy Mayor as well.

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9.7 Councillor Stephanie Hamilton stated that this was a difficult decision, and expressed her support by voting in favour of Councillor Pollard. She further explained that Councillor Pollard has contributed greatly to the Council over the last three years.

9.8 Councillor Evan Thompson stated that Councillor Pollard demonstrated a great deal of maturity in stepping down from offering himself for mayoral position, and thus, he is supporting Councillor Pollard.

9.9 Councillor Malcolm Nunez voted in favour of Councillor Allan Pollard Jr.

9.10 Councillor Dorian Usher voted in favour of Councillor Allan Pollard Jr.

9.11 Councillor Edmund Kwan voted in favour of Councillor Kaya Cattouse and further explained that he believes it is time to give a female a chance to hold the post.

9.12 Councillor Eluide Miller voted in favour of Councillor Cattouse.

9.13 Mayor Wagner provided Councillor Cattouse with an opportunity to express her thoughts on the outcome.

9.14 Councillor Cattouse expressed her disappointment in the outcome, particularly in Councillor Hamilton, who for the second time voted in favour of another candidate. She further added that the public will be made aware of where they stand as a Council with females and giving new people an opportunity to serve.

9.15 Councillor Cattouse stated that she truly appreciated the support of Councillors Kwan and Miller, and added that this is the second time they have tried to elect a female Deputy Mayor, and this is the second time that they have failed.

9.16 Councillor Cattouse concluded by stating that she holds no ill feelings, but that the issue needed to be pointed out.

9.17 Mayor Wagner then acknowledged that Councillor Allan Pollard had been elected as the Deputy Mayor, and provided him with an opportunity to express his thoughts on the outcome.

9.18 Deputy Mayor Pollard thanked his colleagues for supporting him, and stated that their vote demonstrated their confidence in his leadership. Despite the outcome, the Councillors must work together as unity has to trump all, and they have to accept the call to action.



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9.19 Deputy Mayor Pollard explained that he respects Councillor Miller and Councillor Kwan's decision, but believed that Councillor Cattouse could have been more sober in her address as it sets a bad tone moving forward.

9.20 Deputy Pollard advised that in politics everybody has their time, and things can't be taken personally, especially in this business. He further explained that politics is fluid and that things and people change. He added that as hurt as we and our supporters may be, we have to understand that our one job is to serve in whatever capacity we are chosen to serve in.

9.21 Deputy Pollard then added that his acceptance of this position is not to take away an opportunity from someone else, especially a woman.

9.22 Deputy Pollard then reassured the Council that he intends to keep everything on track, especially with the passing of the City Administrator.



9.23 Deputy Pollard stated that today turned out how he wanted it to and that people had the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns and vote their conscience. He further added that not all motions will pass, but that all Councillors will need to lean on each other as residents will be calling on them regardless of their respective portfolios.

9.24 Deputy Pollard concluded his address by stating that the number of votes each Councillor received does not matter as they were all elected.

9.25 Mayor Wagner then addressed the Councillors by stating that they are all looking forward to serving and given the fact that we are in Women's Month, they have to continue to advocate for women and the inclusion of women.

9.26 Mayor Wagner further explained that he not only has local but also regional and international obligations to ensure the progress of women in politics. He explained that as a member of the Caribbean Local Government Forum, and the UN Special Advisory Group, it is a part of their mandate to ensure equitable participation of women in politics.

9.27 Mayor Wagner acknowledged that Allan Pollard Jr. will serve as the Deputy Mayor, and advised the Councillors that they have to ensure that they continue to empower women in our workplaces as it has been proven that they are some of the best leaders in the world.

 
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9.28 Mayor Wagner concluded by stating that he respects the decision made by the Councillors along with their right to self-determination. He then welcomed Councillor Allan Pollard back to the position of Deputy Mayor.

10.0 Submissions from the Building Unit – Ms. Carla Patnett, City Planner

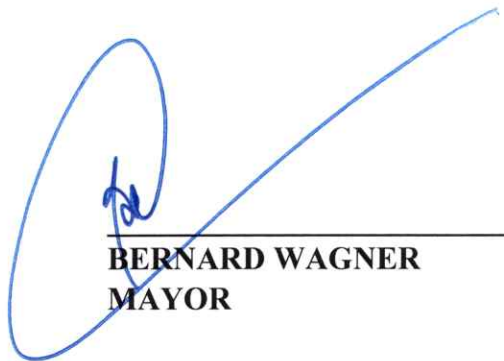
10.1 No matters were tabled.

11.0 Other Matters

11.1 Mayor Wagner confirmed that any appointments of Councillors to various boards will remain the same.

12.0 Adjournment


12.1 Councilor Hamilton moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councillor Kwan. The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 p.m.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



ALBERT VAUGHAN
CITY ADMINISTRATOR



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