

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

February 3rd, 2026

10:00 a.m.

Present at the meeting were the following:

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

Absent with Apologies:

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| 11. Mr. Dorian Usher | Councillor |
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Dr. Candice Pitts	City Administrator
Ms. Carissa Casanova	Administrative Manager, Office of the Mayor

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Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:18 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.

2.2 In his remarks, the Mayor encouraged Councillors to reflect on the progress achieved since taking office and to review the manifesto on which they were elected in order to assess the commitments that have been fulfilled.

2.3 The Mayor noted that funding has been secured for the replacement of the Belcan Bridge and the Swing Bridge. He advised that, according to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH), preliminary works are expected to commence in the latter part of 2026 or early 2027. While the projects are being executed by MIDH, he emphasized that the Council has collaborated closely with Central Government and can take pride in its advocacy and partnership in advancing these initiatives.

2.4 The Mayor highlighted the Council's progress toward becoming a smart city, citing the introduction of e-buses and e-taxis as a transformative shift in public transportation since 2018. He advised that the Council is in the process of procuring an additional three (3) buses and expanding the e-taxi fleet by six (6) additional vehicles, with an anticipated timeline of April/May 2026. He further noted that both he and the City Administrator have met with interested entities seeking to advance the e-taxi initiative.

2.5 In reference to youth development, the Mayor stated that Belize City remains the only municipality sustaining a Youth Shadow Council (YSC) program. He further highlighted the introduction and continued success of initiatives such as the Pee Wee Basketball Program and the Youth Summer Blast Program.

2.6 The Mayor reported that the Council's public relations capacity has significantly improved, resulting in strengthened relationships with private sector partners. He cited a recent agreement with Heritage Bank Limited for the rehabilitation of streets in the vicinity of its headquarters on Princess Margaret Drive, including Mercy Lane, Harrison Lawrence Street, and Stewart Krohn Crescent. He emphasized that such partnerships reflect the business community's confidence in the Council's governance and accountability.

2.7 The Mayor underscored the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability, noting that this is the Council that has published all meeting minutes on its official website and that has conducted annual audits consistently. He stated that this level of order and openness is essential for effective municipal governance.

2.8 The Mayor advised that the Council has secured thirteen (13) land titles for parks and playgrounds under its management. He directed the City Administrator to initiate the establishment of a safekeeping vault at a financial institution to securely store the Council's critical documents offsite, thereby strengthening institutional safeguarding.

2.9 The Mayor presented his priorities for the remainder of his term in office. Under the area of Physical Infrastructure, he identified thirty-four (34) streets scheduled for rehabilitation.

2.10 With respect to public transportation, the Mayor reiterated the planned expansion of the e-bus and e-taxi initiative, including the addition of three (3) buses and six (6) taxis. He also noted the installation of a smart bus stop on Albert Street.

2.11 The Mayor further highlighted the planned launch of the Belize City App in conjunction with Digi, as well as the completion of the digitization of the cemeteries. In the area of Institutional Strengthening, he advised that priority is being given to the implementation of a new accounting system and the launch of new offices for the Traffic Department. He explained that following the non-renewal of the lease by the Hope Center, the Council was required to relocate the Student Hub. As the Council had already invested in the existing space, it provided an opportunity to repurpose the location for the Traffic Department.

2.12 Regarding Safety and Traffic Management, the Mayor advised that the installation of traffic lights is being prioritized at the following intersections: Cemetery Road and Magazine Road; Western Avenue and George Price Highway; and Albert Street and Dean Street.

2.13 The Mayor further advised that, for the remainder of his term, priority will be given to the municipal bond offering, the completion of the audited financial statements for the accounting period ending March 31, 2025, and the preparation of the in-house financial statements for the period ending March 31, 2026.

2.14 The Mayor addressed the quinquennial property revaluation process, noting that it is mandated by law and had not been conducted in thirteen (13) years. He emphasized that the exercise is a legal compliance measure and not politically motivated. He explained that property values naturally appreciate over time and that a broader and updated tax base strengthens the City's revenue stream and provides greater security for municipal bond holders. He further noted that the revaluation was previously delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.15 The Mayor shared property tax collection figures for the month of January as follows:

- January 2023: \$5,611,000
- January 2024: \$5,557,000
- January 2025: \$5,199,000
- January 2026: \$7,211,000

He stated that these figures demonstrate the impact of the Council's policy decisions and strengthened revenue administration.

2.16 In closing, the Mayor encouraged Councillors to take pride in their collective accomplishments and to remain focused on decisive leadership in the interest of the City's long-term success. He expressed his hope that his tenure has positively contributed to the advancement of Belize City and reaffirmed his confidence in the Council's strategic direction.

3.0 Ratification of the December 3rd, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

3.1 Section 4 was corrected to address the duplication of numbering.

3.2 Item 14.10 was amended to reflect "deferred."

3.3 Item 10.21 was amended from "reduce" to "reduced."

3.4 Item 4.11 was amended from "mayor" to "Mayor."

3.5 Item 10.22 was amended to include the dollar sign (\$).

3.6 Item 10.7 was amended to remove the word "were."

3.7 Deputy Mayor Miller moved for the ratification of the December 2nd, 2025 Regular Council Meeting Minutes. Seconded by Councillor Cattouse.

4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 In reference to Item 6.12, the Mayor inquired about the progress regarding access to restroom facilities for field workers. The City Administrator advised that an update will be provided during her report.

4.2 In reference to Item 4.8, it was noted that the City Planner and City Engineer were tasked with assessing the potential impact of the bridge replacement projects on students and the business community. The City Administrator advised that she will also address this matter during her updates.

5.0 Announcements by the Mayor

5.1 Mayor Wagner commended the Councillors for their active participation in Council activities. He noted that the best team does not always win; rather, it is the team that works together most effectively. He stated that the Council's progress is a reflection of the team's strong chemistry and collective dedication to service.

5.2 The Mayor reflected that, at the outset of the term, the team may not have been perceived as having the strongest dynamic; however, through collaboration and perseverance, it has matured into a cohesive and effective body. He encouraged Councillors to continue building on that foundation and acknowledged their integral role in the Council's achievements to date.

5.3 The Mayor informed the Council that he recently represented Belize City at the Global Gateway Forum in Brussels, Belgium, where he engaged with leaders of the European Union and other stakeholders. He stated that discussions focused on advancing international cooperation and accessing funding for development initiatives through local government structures. He noted that the Global Gateway strategy has demonstrated success in regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and expressed the view that Belize stands to benefit from participation in this framework.

5.4 With respect to the new property valuation roll, the Mayor advised that the exercise is mandated by law and that the applicable rates remain unchanged at two percent (2%) for unoccupied properties and ten percent (10%) for occupied properties. He further noted that the Council undertook public sensitization efforts, including media engagements and publication in the Gazette and local newspapers, in full compliance with statutory requirements.

5.5 The Mayor highlighted the successful execution of the Youth Shadow Council (YSC) Sister City Partnership with Miramar, noting the positive outcomes and opportunities generated through the collaboration.

5.6 The Mayor announced that the official closeout ceremony for the Youth Shadow Council program will be held on Thursday, February 5th, and encouraged the Councillors to attend in support of the initiative.



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5.7 The Mayor further announced that the Council's Budget Presentation to the Ministry of Local Government is scheduled for Friday, February 6th.

6.0 General Updates from the City Administrator

6.1 The City Administrator advised that correspondence was sent to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development & Housing inquiring about its short, medium, and long-term plans for the rehabilitation of the George Price Highway, the approaches to the Chetumal Street Bridge, and the proposed adoption of the highways by the Council.

6.2 The Chief Engineer subsequently wrote to inform the Council that a meeting would be held later in the month to discuss plans for the highway, as well as the replacement of the Belcan and Swing Bridges. The City Administrator further advised that MIDH confirmed that the MOU for the adoption of portions of the Philip Goldson and George Price Highways was never finalized, but could potentially be revisited at a later date.

6.3 With respect to Items 4.6 to 4.9 concerning the impact assessments for the replacement of the Belcan and Swing Bridges, the City Administrator reported that the City Planner has shared details of the preliminary assessment work underway. A comprehensive update will be provided upon completion.

6.4 Regarding the development of the Belize City App in partnership with Digi, the City Administrator reported that the legal counsel raised concerns about the agreement, and wants to ensure that the Council receives appropriate value for its investment. It was noted that, under the draft agreement, Digi would provide the infrastructure; however, there is no explicit provision granting ownership of the application to the Council.

6.5 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that a meeting with Digi was scheduled for 2:30 p.m. that day, with the intention of finalizing terms so that the contract could be concluded by Friday. He noted that the Council has had a mock-up of the application for some time but remains reluctant to proceed without clear contractual protections.

6.6 The City Administrator advised that an eviction notice was issued to the market vendor discussed at the previous Council meeting for non-compliance with the terms of his lease.

6.7 The City Administrator reported that the Market Manager met with tenants to execute lease agreements; however, certain leases were not signed due to outstanding arrears and other unresolved issues. A meeting will be scheduled to address these ongoing concerns.

6.8 Councillor Cattouse noted that similar concerns exist regarding the transfer or informal sale of booths and suggested that this is an opportune time to regularize such arrangements.

6.9 The City Administrator advised that a meeting was held with the Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Economic Transformation to discuss the process for submitting a project proposal to secure funding for the Floating Boardwalk Project. The Ministry expressed its support and indicated its willingness to assist the Council in advancing the project.

6.10 The City Administrator provided an overview of the restructuring of the Sanitation Department, advising that the City has been divided into two (2) operational divisions to improve efficiency and oversight.

6.11 In relation to restroom access for field staff, the City Administrator advised that restaurants have expressed discomfort with providing unrestricted access to their facilities.

6.12 Councillor Kwan suggested the use of mobile restroom trailers, which can be attached to a pickup truck. He was advised that multiple teams are deployed across the city, which may affect the feasibility of this option.

6.13 Councillor Cattouse suggested identifying parks where small restroom facilities could be constructed.

6.14 Councillor Garcia advised that he has been advocating for the construction of a restroom at Constitution Park and noted that employees may be able to access restroom facilities at Berger Field.

6.15 Additional locations with accessible public restrooms were identified, including the Mahogany Street Marketplace, the Fort George Craft Market, Digi Park, and Ring Road Park. It was agreed that the Administration would collaborate with Councillors to confirm feasible options.

6.16 Concerning restroom facilities at Digi Park, the City Administrator advised that the City Engineer had written to the Belize Water Services regarding issues beyond the Council's control. No response has been received to date, and follow-up will be undertaken.

Mayor Wagner left the meeting.



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6.17 The City Administrator advised that a memorandum was circulated to all departments regarding the End-of-Year Bonus Policy, informing them that the assessment period will commence in January.

6.18 The City Administrator reported that the CEMO Logistics Committee has commenced preliminary preparations for the upcoming hurricane season.

6.19 The City Administrator further reported that payments are being received from Mahogany Street vendors who are bringing their accounts up to date.

6.20 Councillor Hamilton advised that students from the University of Belize and St. John's College have requested that the e-bus schedule be extended until 9:00 p.m., to accommodate students leaving school at 8:30 p.m.

6.21 The City Administrator advised that she will follow up with the E-Transit Projects Manager regarding the provision of late-night e-bus services for students of St. John's College and the University of Belize.

6.22 The Deputy Mayor raised a concern regarding an online property tax payment in which an intended payment of \$100 was processed as the full outstanding balance exceeding \$10,000. The matter, which had previously been before the Court, was being settled through installment payments. The resident contacted the Deputy Mayor seeking reversal of the transaction, after attempts to resolve the issue through the Revenue Manager and Finance Director were unsuccessful.

6.23 Councillor Pollard stated that the erroneous transaction should be reversed as a matter of course, noting that corrective action in such instances should not require Council intervention. He emphasized the importance of administrative discretion and adherence to the Council's core values.

6.24 The City Administrator advised that this was the first time the matter had been formally brought to her attention. She acknowledged that such issues should be resolved administratively at the departmental level to prevent escalation. She further noted that a similar matter carried potential legal implications, as the complainant had reportedly exhausted all avenues within the Council prior to raising the issue further.

Mayor Wagner returned to the meeting.

6.25 Deputy Mayor Miller briefed Mayor Wagner on the discussion, and the Mayor directed that the matter be addressed by the City Administrator.

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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 regarding traffic safety in the vicinity of James Garbutt School on Albert Street West, referencing a recent incident involving a child. She noted that a previous petition resulted in the installation of a painted pedestrian crossing rather than a speed bump. It was suggested that additional signage be placed in the area, identifying it as a school zone and cautioning drivers to reduce their speed.

9.2 Councillor Pollard advised that consideration is being given to installing rumble strips in school zones as a cost-effective alternative to full speed bump construction, with markings to be completed ahead of the upcoming school term.

9.3 Councillor Castellanos suggested engaging the school's management to communicate the Council's intended measures.

10.0 Presentation of Reports from Councillors

10.1 Councillor Kwan reported that the Enforcement Department continues to take a proactive approach to revenue generation. For the month of December 2025, a total of \$595,000.00 was generated from Traffic and Enforcement operations.

10.2 He further reported on the recent Traffic Enforcement Training, which included participation from all municipalities as well as representatives from the Transport Board. The training was described as productive and collaborative.

10.3 Councillor Kwan extended Special recognition to Enforcement Officer, Ms. Shenese Watler, who was acknowledged as a top performer during the training sessions.

10.4 Councillor Kwan also commended the Traffic and Enforcement Managers for hosting a departmental social event this past weekend. Due to the department's heightened workload during the Christmas season, the event was held following the holiday period as an opportunity to recognize the team's hard work and dedication.

10.5 Councillor Nunez apologized for his late arrival and proceeded to provide an update on several youth and staff development initiatives.

10.6 He highlighted the continued growth and impact of the Youth Shadow Council Program, noting that to date, 45 young persons have successfully participated in the program.

10.7 Councillor Nunez commended the Youth Shadow City Administrator, Ms. Briana Joseph for successfully completing a three-month course offered by Galen University in collaboration with the United States Embassy in Belize, describing it as a significant professional achievement that will further strengthen the program.

10.8 Councillor Nunez also commended the achievement of the Programs Manager, Mr. Michael Frtiz who has been selected as a CARICOM Youth Ambassador.

10.9 Councillor Nunez then provided an update on the Youth Mainstream Taskforce, which is focused on coordinating youth development initiatives citywide. The aim of the Taskforce is to maximize outreach and resources while minimizing duplication of efforts among various stakeholders.

10.10 He reported on the Mengage Program, an initiative designed to mentor at-risk young men across the city. To date, approximately 100 young men have been engaged. Councillor Nunez extended thanks to Mr. Michael Fritz, Rajiv Ramsey, and Asher Torres for their dedication and consistent commitment to the program.

10.11 Additionally, he informed the Council that an open application process was conducted to recruit three youth interns through funding support from UNICEF. The candidates have completed the interview stage and are expected to be onboarded shortly.

10.12 Councillor Nunez spoke on the initiative to rehabilitate and enhance basketball courts across the city, emphasizing that the investment is ultimately an investment in people and community development. He also commended the Deputy Mayor's cycling event held over the weekend, noting the positive role sports play in strengthening community bonds.

10.13 The City Administrator added that the Programs Manager has also begun to explore available gym facilities in the city to assess the feasibility of securing gym memberships for Council staff. She emphasized the importance of prioritizing both the emotional and physical well-being of employees and addressing overall staff wellness.

10.14 The Mayor noted that similar initiatives had previously been implemented but were not sustained.

10.15 In closing, Councillor Nunez congratulated the participants who recently travelled to Miramar as part of the Sister City Exchange Program.



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10.16 Councillor Cattouse began her report with an update on the Student Hub initiative, noting that the primary hub is currently serving an average of 40 students per week. She advised that the second Student Hub at the Hope Center is temporarily non-operational but is expected to resume services shortly.

10.17 Under the Council's collaborative arrangement with UNICEF, funding in the amount of \$10,000.00 was secured to establish a third Student Hub. This expansion is intended to broaden access to services and increase citywide outreach to students.

10.18 Councillor Cattouse further reported on a sub-project under the UNICEF partnership involving the rehabilitation of the Yarborough Community Center. The Council is acting as project administrator for the initiative, utilizing UNICEF funds. The rehabilitated facility will primarily serve youth in the surrounding community, including cadets who utilize the center.

10.19 She also highlighted continued engagement with institutionalized youth, including a visit to the Youth Hostel in December. The initiative was supported through a partnership with the Sports Council, which assisted in providing transportation for the visit.

10.20 Councillor Cattouse advised that the winners of the "Mayor for a Day" initiative are being finalized.

10.21 Councillor Cattouse extended special commendation to Mr. Michael Fritz for his leadership and dedication within the Programs Department.

10.22 She reported ongoing collaboration with the Office of the Special Envoy and the Ministry of Human Development to strengthen programs that support women, children, and youth.

10.23 Councillor Cattouse also announced that the Council is working toward Platinum Certification under the SCFM Program, with a meeting scheduled for the following day. She also highlighted the Sheroes Award Program, through which eleven women will be recognized for outstanding community service and development.

10.24 She referenced the Women in Action Staff Highlight initiative and noted that staff training sessions are ongoing. As part of Women's Month activities, "Go Purple Days" will be observed to show support and solidarity.



10.25 Councillor Cattouse reported on recent changes to the Sanitation Department's organizational structure. The work structure has been divided between the northside and southside of the city to improve operational efficiency. While contractors continue grass-cutting activities, the department will focus on drains, abandoned lots, chipping, and street sweeping. The respective managers have been encouraged to foster friendly competition between both sides of the city to promote improved overall appearance and performance.

10.26 Several internal promotions were also made within the department. The primary operational challenge noted was the rotation and availability of heavy equipment to ensure duties are carried out effectively.

10.27 Mayor Wagner acknowledged the collaborative efforts of Councillors Cattouse, Nunez, and Hamilton, and advised that the concept for the Sheroes Awards was spearheaded by Dr. Pitts during her term as a City Councillor.

10.28 The City Administrator highlighted the Council members responsibility as policymakers while it is the role of the administrative staff to ensure that decisions made in Regular Council Meetings are effectively implemented, noting that policies enacted today may have long-lasting impact.

10.29 Mayor Wagner provided an update on grass-cutting operations, advising that works are expected to commence on the 5th. He further advised that a letter is to be sent to Belize Solid Waste Management to allow access to the transfer station, thereby facilitating the proper disposal of collected waste.

10.30 Councillor Thompson reported on collection revenues at the Michael Finnegan Market, noting receipts of \$2,710.00 for garbage collection and \$7,130.00 collected during wholesale market and regular market days. Despite a strong vendor turnout, there was no significant spike in revenue.

10.31 He indicated that this may suggest possible under-collection or enforcement gaps that require further review. Additionally, delinquent accounts currently stand at over \$32,000.00 in arrears.

10.32 Councillor Garcia reported that on January 1, 2026, Ms. Tanisha Vernon formally signed her lease for the booth at Memorial Park. Since assuming occupancy, she has undertaken painting and cleaning of the space and has requested permission to place three barrels with tents in the area.

10.33 With reference to an incident at Constitution Park, Councillor Garcia advised that the Council may prohibit socializing within the security booth while staff are on duty. However, as the park is a public space, the Council cannot restrict staff members who are off duty from gathering or socializing within the park.

10.34 Councillor Garcia further advised that brighter lighting has been installed at Memorial Park to enhance safety and visibility.

10.35 Councillor Garcia reported that in January 2026, an inspection of park shutters was conducted by the Assistant City Engineer and the Parks Manager to verify the status of previously outstanding works. The shutters were confirmed as completed with the exception of one booth whose occupant requested that no additional work be carried out, indicating that he had already completed repairs independently.

10.36 Mayor Wagner advised that the occupant should be directed to ensure that the shutters on his booth are painted in a uniform colour consistent with the other booths.

10.37 A walkthrough of the park was conducted on January 28th; Councillor Garcia met with vendors who have outstanding balances, encouraging them to settle their arrears.

10.38 The Mayor commended Councillor Garcia for actively managing his portfolio.

10.39 Councillor Hamilton reported on the recent Youth Exchange Program in Miramar, emphasizing that the initiative reflects the Council's commitment to action-oriented leadership. She underscored that the program was centered on the development of the participating youth, providing them with opportunities to enrich themselves, exchange knowledge, and represent Belize with pride.

10.40 She described the experience as highly successful, particularly in terms of delivery, cultural exchange, and educational exposure. The YSC participants, Sanaa Rowland and Arthur Butler benefited from meaningful development and learning opportunities.

10.41 During the visit, the delegation toured several municipal departments, including the Office of the Mayor, Marketing, Finance, and the Police Department. The youth gained hands-on exposure, including experiences with the SWAT Unit, CSI Unit, and drone operations. They asked insightful questions and proudly represented Belize, particularly in discussions relating to tourism.

10.42 The participants visited a senior center, where they assisted with packing and distributing care packages to the elderly, played games, and spent time engaging with residents.

10.43 They also visited the Universal Technical Institute, where the Dean extended greetings and recalled meeting with the Mayor during his previous visit to Miramar. Additional activities included a cruise and a tugboat tour to observe local wildlife, contributing to a well-rounded and enriching experience.

10.44 Councillor Hamilton advised that a formal presentation will be delivered at the next Council meeting and expressed gratitude to both the Belize City and Miramar teams for their collaboration.

10.45 She further referenced the EU Global Gateway trip, noting that the Mayor advocated strongly for greater inclusion of cities in international development frameworks.

10.46 The Mayor commended Councillor Hamilton for leading the delegation and encouraged continued growth of the initiative. He shared that discussions with the Belizean Ambassador to Taiwan indicated interest from Belize City's Sister City in Taiwan in potentially hosting the next cohort of the YSC Program. He encouraged the youth to utilize this platform to further enhance their leadership skills.

10.47 Councillor Castellanos reported on the recent handing over of laptops under the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) initiative. He also advised that a GIS Summer Program is currently being developed, with the final component being the completion of the budget.

10.48 He noted that the "12-Day Countdown to Christmas" initiative was successfully executed for the fourth consecutive year. The program focuses on assisting underprivileged individuals, and fifteen persons were supported during this past Christmas season.

10.49 Councillor Castellanos also provided an update on the City Emergency Management Organization (CEMO), which is now back on track in preparation for the upcoming hurricane season. He noted that the downtime between seasons is brief, approximately one and a half months, before preparatory work resumes.

10.50 Councillor Castellanos commended the CEMO Liaison Officer, Ms. Melony Dawson, for her efforts in coordinating preparedness activities.

10.51 The Mayor requested that the same citywide clean-up initiative conducted previously should be replicated this year.



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10.52 Deputy Mayor Miller recommended that arrangements be made in advance to secure the vacuum truck from Belize Water Services (BWS) to support drainage and sanitation efforts for the campaign.

10.53 Councillor Pollard reported that a 20 x 20 concrete slab has been constructed at the Works Compound which will be utilized for the in-house fabrication of manhole covers. He noted that the redesigned covers will incorporate additional steel reinforcement to improve durability and reduce incidents of breakage. Producing the covers in-house allows for improved quality control and cost management.

10.54 The Mayor inquired whether discussions had been held with the Council's legal team regarding the possibility of a Statutory Instrument (SI) to increase penalties for vandalism and damage to manholes. He recommended compiling data, including frequency and associated costs, to determine the scale of the issue and to support any legislative recommendations. He further emphasized the need to quantify the total expenditure incurred by the Council for manhole rehabilitation and related litigation.

10.55 Councillor Pollard reported that a meeting was held with the Works Manager, the Enforcement Manager, and the Asst. City Engineer to address the recurring manhole issue, which continues to create unnecessary financial burdens for the Council. It was recommended that the department collaborate with the Public Relations Unit to increase public awareness. He noted that an infomercial has already been produced to help sensitize the public.

10.56 The Mayor also raised concerns regarding claims brought against the Council, including allegations that sanitation operations have resulted in broken windshields. He stressed the importance of establishing a clear process for investigating and addressing such claims to prevent fraudulent or unsupported cases, while ensuring legitimate claims are handled fairly. He reiterated that the Council must distinguish between negligence and incidents resulting from public inattentiveness, such as pedestrians falling into open manholes.

10.57 The City Administrator suggested exploring whether additional safety measures, such as requiring sanitation workers to utilize protective netting in certain operations, could help mitigate risks.



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10.58 Councillor Pollard expressed appreciation for the timely procurement of a concrete mixer, which is already being used for manhole fabrication and onsite sidewalk casting, including works in the Rock Park area. He noted that this procurement has resulted in significant savings compared to equipment rental. He further indicated that a hitch attachment is required for the Foton truck and advised that a formal request will be submitted for approval.

10.59 Councillor Pollard reported that patching works have commenced following recent light rains, particularly in areas where tar bumps had begun to deteriorate.

10.60 Councillor Pollard also referenced an accident on the Philip Goldson Highway involving a bus that damaged the guardrails earlier that morning.

10.61 Mayor Wagner emphasized the need for accountability, particularly when there is damage to public property involved.

10.62 Councillor Pollard advised that discussions are ongoing with the relevant managers with respect to how the matter will be addressed.

10.63 Councillor Kwan advised that an estimate outlining the cost to repair and replace the damaged fencing should be acquired.

10.64 The City Administrator requested directives on how to address the issue.

10.65 Mayor Wagner directed that the Council should be compensated for the full cost of damages. It was also recommended that consideration be given to installing more durable infrastructure, such as the jersey barriers utilized in front of DK Supermarket.

10.66 Councillor Pollard further reported that road marking and painting works are pending, with the recently acquired equipment now available. Schools will be prioritized to ensure pedestrian ramps and crossings are clearly visible.

10.67 He also noted that the Council is exploring more vehicle-friendly speed bumps, as large bumps compromise recently rehabilitated streets. The goal is to reduce speeding without undermining infrastructure investments, as newly paved streets are often treated as racetracks by motorists.

10.68 An update was provided regarding the vacancy for a mechanic. Councillor Pollard indicated uncertainty as to whether applications had been received.

10.69 The City Administrator advised that a report from the Director of Administration confirmed that a previous application interview minutes were revisited, and the successful candidate will be onboarded.

10.70 Councillor Pollard emphasized the urgency of filling the position to support fleet maintenance. He also advised that the mobilization payment for the construction of the mechanic bay and tool rooms is pending.

10.71 The Mayor thanked Councillor Pollard for his continued efforts and follow through on the need to address outstanding works on Chetumal Street.

10.72 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that a review of the Council's existing payroll system is underway due to ongoing discrepancies and inefficiencies. Following consultations with the Administrative Staff, MIS Manager, and Director of Administration, Intelligent Solutions Ltd. has been recommended as a viable alternative provider.

10.73 Deputy Mayor Miller requested the Council's support to proceed with transitioning to a more efficient system to improve accuracy and overall operational performance.

10.74 He further reported on staffing gaps within the MIS Department, noting that recruitment efforts are being undertaken for the positions of Systems Administrator, Surveillance Officer, and Senior Technician. He emphasized that these roles require a high degree of technical competence and confidentiality given the sensitivity of the information managed.

10.75 In relation to staff development, Deputy Mayor Miller requested support for training to enable additional staff members to operate manual transmission vehicles.

10.76 Deputy Mayor Miller also requested that payment be made for the repair of the Valuation Department printer, which has been non-functional since July of last year. A replacement drum costing approximately \$900.00 is required to restore the unit to working condition.

10.77 Deputy Mayor Miller then reported that there are delays associated with the development of the Council's mobile application and expressed the importance of ensuring continued access and use of the application.

10.78 With respect to revenue, he reported that Traffic collections currently stand at approximately \$530,000.00, with additional sums to be reconciled.

10.79 Deputy Mayor Miller further advised that in December he was invited by the Office of the Special Envoy to speak at a 16 Days of Activism Forum.

10.80 Deputy Mayor Miller noted that the annual Christmas Staff Social was successfully hosted and thanked those involved in organizing the event as a gesture of appreciation for staff. He remarked that while proposed stipend increases for Council members were recently discussed in the media, the Council continues to demonstrate its commitment to staff welfare through tangible initiatives.

10.81 He further reported that a new printer was donated to St. Joseph Primary School through the contribution of Councillor Kwan. During that engagement, the school's management raised concerns regarding the absence of sidewalks along St. Joseph Street. A preliminary estimate for the construction of sidewalks from Baymen Avenue to the school ranges between \$30,000.00 and \$40,000.00. He requested that this matter be taken into consideration in the Council's future infrastructure planning initiatives.

10.82 Deputy Mayor Miller extended thanks to the Council members for their participation during the George Price Day activities, and also expressed gratitude to the Traffic and Sanitation Departments for their support.

10.83 Deputy Mayor Miller also noted his attendance at the opening of the St. John's Credit Union's new facility, describing it as an impressive development.

10.84 He noted that the National Celebrations Commission (NCC) has been activated earlier than usual, beginning in February, to allow for improved planning as Belize prepares to celebrate its 45th year of Independence. He encouraged participation from the Mayor and the Public Relations team in upcoming meetings.

10.85 In closing, Deputy Mayor Miller noted that he hosted a cycling event in support of the Weekend Warriors Cycling Club, he thanked the Councillors for their participation contributions to the event's success.

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

11.1 No matters were tabled.

12.0 Motions by Mayor & Councillors

12.1 Councillor Cattouse moved a motion for the Council to approve the appointment of Mr. Leroy Young as Sanitation Manager (Southside) under a fixed-term employment contract for a period of two (2) years. The motion was seconded by Councillor Garcia. **MOTION APPROVED.**



12.2 Councillor Cattouse moved a motion for the Council to approve a two (2) year employment contract between the Council and Mr. Julio Contreras, Maintenance Worker in the Sanitation Department, who has surpassed the age of retirement. The motion was seconded by Councillor Castellanos. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.3 Councillor Kwan moved a motion for the Council to approve a two (2) year employment contract between the Council and Mr. Keith Anderson, Summons Server in the Municipal Court Department, who has surpassed the age of retirement. The motion was seconded by Councillor Garcia. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.4 Councillor Kwan, on behalf of Councillor Usher, moved a motion for the Council to approve the cost of \$750.00 for Urn Wall boxes at the Lord Ridge Cemetery. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller.

12.5 Councillor Pollard inquired whether the proposed \$750.00 fee was a one-time payment and whether a maintenance fee would apply. The Mayor indicated that the City Administrator would provide clarification regarding the cost structure.

12.6 In the absence of Councillor Usher, the City Administrator relayed concerns from the Cemetery Manager, Mrs. Joseph, noting that the \$750.00 fee is a one-time payment and that the boxes are not reusable. With only 108 spaces available, concerns were raised regarding long-term capacity.

12.7 Councillors Garcia and Kwan suggested constructing an additional urn wall once the initial 108 spaces are sold. It was noted that construction costs are approximately \$10,000.00 and, at \$750.00 per space, the revenue generated could fund additional walls.

12.8 Councillor Kwan further recommended considering a policy to allow multiple urns within the same box, subject to a reopening fee where applicable.

12.9 The Mayor proposed reviewing the introduction of an annual maintenance fee.

12.10 Deputy Mayor Miller raised concerns regarding non-compliance and suggested implementing an additional fee for placing an urn in an existing space, as well as reconsidering the granting of waivers for urn placements. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.11 Deputy Mayor Miller, on behalf of Councillor Usher, moved a motion for the Council to approve the naming of the Urn Wall in honor of the late City Administrator, Stephanie Lindo. The motion was seconded by Councillor Hamilton. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.12 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the ratification of Resolution No. 123 of 2025, which authorized the establishment of a new operating account with Heritage Bank Ltd. to segregate special project remittances related to Government Assistance and Grant-Funded Initiatives. The resolution was approved via round-robin on December 22, 2025. The motion was seconded by Councillor Kwan. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.13 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the ratification of Resolution No. 124 of 2025, which provides for the standardization of application forms within the Market Department to enhance documentation and strengthen the administration of market operations. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.14 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the ratification of Resolution No. 125 of 2025, which authorizes the extension of the rental agreement for booths 101, 103, and 105 at City Hall by Headway Investments (Old River Bar & Grill) for a period of five (5) years. The motion was seconded by Councillor Cattouse. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.15 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the ratification of Resolution No. 1 of 2026, which approved the Belize City Council's Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2026/2027.

12.16 The Administration undertook a comprehensive planning and budgeting process, considering the Council's policy directives, strategic priorities, anticipated revenue streams, and projected operating and capital expenditures. The approved estimates include recurrent revenue of \$37,522,343.03; Municipal Paper proceeds of \$16,000,000.00; recurrent expenditure of \$37,862,693.00; and allocations of \$15,659,650.00 for debt servicing, capital asset purchases, and infrastructure investment. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.17 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the ratification of Resolution No. 2 of 2026, which approved an amendment to the designation of the Belize City Council 2025 Series II Municipal Securities. The Council determined that it was in the best interest of the City to amend the designation to reflect an updated issuance year, without altering the substantive terms, conditions, security, or authorizations previously approved. The motion was seconded by Councillor Cattouse. **MOTION APPROVED.**



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12.18 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the acceptance of the Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal years ending March 31, 2023 and March 31, 2024, together with the Independent Auditor's Report. In keeping with principles of good governance, transparency, and statutory compliance, the Council engaged the professional services of HLB Belize to conduct independent audits for the respective fiscal periods. The motion was seconded by Councillor Kwan.

12.19 The Mayor advised that the audited financial statements are available on the Council's website and that Councillors may schedule a meeting with the City Administrator for a detailed review.

12.20 Deputy Mayor Miller inquired whether any matters of concern were identified in the audit, and the Mayor confirmed that no significant issues were reported. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.21 The Mayor further advised that HLB Belize has been engaged to complete the audit for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, and will be re-engaged for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026. In accordance with the Municipal Securities Act, audits are to be completed within six (6) months following the close of the fiscal year.

13.0 New Business

13.1 The Mayor informed the Council that the Hope Center building has recently become available for rent and presented a proposal for its use as the new Traffic Department Office.

13.2 Councillor Pollard expressed support for securing an interim solution but advocated for the long-term objective of constructing a Council-owned facility. While he acknowledged the justification for the space based on square footage and operational timelines, he raised concerns regarding the proposed annual rental adjustment.

13.3 He noted that an annual increase of 7% was excessive and inconsistent with prevailing inflation rates.

13.4 Councillor Pollard further emphasized that the Council would be undertaking significant improvements to the property, thereby increasing its value, and questioned the fairness of such adjustments under those circumstances.

13.5 Additionally, he underscored the urgent need for roof repairs, stating that any renovations undertaken by the Council would be at risk if the leaking roof is not first addressed.


C-P.

13.6 He maintained that, at a proposed monthly rate between \$6,000.00 and \$7,000.00, the property owner should, at minimum, ensure the roof is properly repaired and waterproofed. Given the projected investment of approximately \$400,000.00, he concluded that the terms require substantial improvement.

13.7 Councillor Castellanos remarked that with an investment of an additional few hundred thousand dollars, the Council could potentially construct its own building. The Mayor responded that the Council currently does not have suitable space available for such a development.

13.8 Councillor Nunez inquired whether any formal feasibility study had been conducted regarding the use of existing Council-owned properties. He also sought clarification on the Hope Center's reason for vacating the building and was advised that ongoing issues with the leaking roof have posed operational challenges.

13.9 Councillor Kwan expressed general support for the location but cautioned that the planned replacement of the Belcan Bridge would result in heavy machinery operating in the vicinity, potentially causing congestion during the initial two years of occupancy. He recommended negotiating a reduced fixed rental rate, proposing \$6,000.00 per month with no upward adjustment.

13.10 Deputy Mayor Miller supported a fixed monthly rental of \$6,000.00 and recommended eliminating the annual increase.

13.11 Councillor Pollard suggested exploring an offset arrangement through property tax concessions.

13.12 Councillor Cattouse stated that the matter warrants further negotiations. She proposed a fixed monthly rate of \$6,000.00, no annual adjustment, no property tax waiver, and that the property owner be required to repair the roof.

13.13 Councillor Nunez reiterated concerns regarding the magnitude of the Council's investment without corresponding rental relief.

13.14 Mayor Wagner advised that he would return to the property owner to renegotiate the proposed terms as recommended by the Councillors.

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14.0 Submissions from the Building Unit

14.1 A request was received from the Financial Services Commission seeking the Council's approval for the issuance of a letter of no objection to facilitate the implementation of controlled restrictions on vehicular access to Simeon Young Street.

14.2 It was recommended that a public consultation be conducted with residents of the area prior to any approval. The recommendation was accepted.

14.3 In response to queries regarding the proposed street closure, it was noted that the request is based on security concerns following a recent shooting in the area. **MOTION DEFERRED.**

14.4 A request from Mr. Francis Usher for the provision of a no objection letter to the Central Building Authority for the Construction of a two-storey apartment complex located at Parcel No. 4731 Kim Simplis Barrow Ave., West Landivar. **MOTION APPROVED.**

14.5 A request from Mr. Clifton Arnold and the Cinderella Plaza Taxi Association for the provision of a letter of no objection for the demolition of the Cinderella Plaza Taxi Booth and beautification of the area. **MOTION APPROVED.**

14.6 A request was received from Mr. Felix Sanchez Jr., proprietor of Architect Barbershop, for the issuance of a letter of no objection to facilitate the removal and replacement of a 13'x40'timber booth on the Freetown Reserve. **MOTION APPROVED.**

15.0 Any Other Business

15.1 Mayor Wagner informed the Council of a matter concerning the Enforcement Coordinator, Mr. Travis Flowers, who was placed on interdiction following an incident after which he was criminally charged with the attempted murder of another Council employee.

15.2 The Mayor reminded members that the Council had previously approved an Interdiction Policy which provides that any employee who remains on interdiction for a period exceeding six (6) months shall be separated from the service of the Council.

15.3 Council members agreed that the policy must be upheld.

15.4 Councillor Pollard advised that, prior to implementation, confirmation be obtained to ensure that the policy is fully compliant with applicable labour laws.


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15.5 Regarding the Belize City App Development, Deputy Mayor Miller advised that the legal counsel was unable to attend the meeting but that the Council's position was communicated accordingly.

15.6 There were no objections to the proposed ten (10) year access guarantee; however, it was recommended that legal counsel incorporate the Council's required amendments and return the revised agreement to the developer.

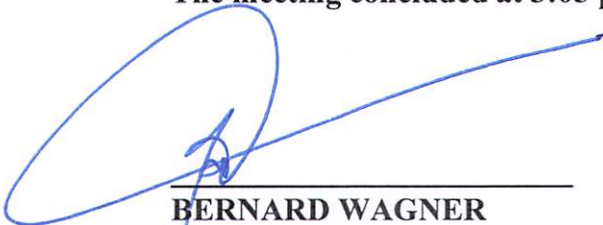
15.7 Deputy Mayor Miller noted that a deadline of this Thursday was issued, and upon receipt of the revised agreement, a signing date will be scheduled prior to February 15th. He further indicated that the anticipated turnaround time for completion of the application is approximately five (5) months. Accordingly, if the contract is executed in February, the application is projected to be completed by August of this year.

15.8 Mayor Wagner requested that a demonstration of the application be prepared for presentation at the next Regular Council Meeting.

16.0 Adjournment

16.1 Councillor Castellanos moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councillor Kwan.

The meeting concluded at 3:05 pm.



**BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR**



**DR. CANDICE PITTS
CITY ADMINISTRATOR**

