

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
Caucus Room, Belize City Council
December 2nd, 2025
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. Mr. Edmund Kwan | Councillor |
| 5. Ms. Kaya Cattouse | Councillor |
| 6. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | Councillor |
| 7. Mr. Evan Thompson | Councillor |
| 8. Mr. Sherwin Garcia | Councillor |
| 9. Mr. Javier Castellanos | Councillor |
| 10. Mr. Dorian Usher | Councillor |
| 11. Mr. Malcolm Nunez | Councillor |

Dr. Candice Pitts
Ms. Carissa Casanova

City Administrator
Administrative Manager, Office of the Mayor

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Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:22 A.M.

1.0 Belize National Prayer

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

2.0 Welcome Remarks

2.1 The Mayor welcomed all attendees to the final Regular Council Meeting for the year 2025.

3.0 Ratification of the October 30th, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

3.1 Correction of the date in the section heading.

3.2 Insertion of the appropriate currency symbol in Section 11.2.

3.3 Councillor Cattouse requested that her attendance record for the previous Council meeting be amended to reflect her absence.

3.4 Deputy Mayor Miller moved for the ratification of the October 30th, 2025, Regular Council Meeting Minutes. Seconded by Councillor Cattouse.

4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Regarding 4.6, Councillor Pollard emphasized that the Council should determine what interventions would be pursued for addressing the approaches to the Chetumal Street Bridge.

4.2 Mayor Wagner advised that a formal request should be submitted to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) regarding the condition of the bridge approaches, with a view to seeking guidance from the Chief Engineer on MIDH's short, medium, and long-term plans for addressing the matter.

4.3 He further requested that the approach to the Lord Ridge Cemetery be included in the scope of concern.

4.4 Councillor Kwan inquired how the previously approved memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Council and MIDH factored into these concerns.

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4.5 The Mayor clarified that MIDH proposed the adoption of a section of the George Price Highway, along with Central American Boulevard from its intersection with the George Price Highway to the intersection of Princess Margaret Drive, Freetown Road, and the Philip Goldson Highway, and the Philip Goldson Highway from the Flag Roundabout to the roundabout intersection with Chetumal Street. MIDH would maintain responsibility for Lake Independence Blvd. and the Chetumal Street Bridge.

4.6 The Mayor reported that he met with the Japanese Ambassador regarding the replacement of the Swing Bridge and indicated that the funding agreement for the project would be signed on the upcoming Friday.

4.7 He emphasized that the Council must collectively determine its priorities concerning the rehabilitation of the Swing Bridge and the Belcan Bridge, noting that the Council is responsible for a population of approximately 70,000 residents. With funding secured for the replacement of both the Belcan and Swing Bridges, the focus should be on identifying local priorities and determining the most effective approach to managing construction impacts.

4.8 Mayor Wagner raised concerns regarding the anticipated impacts that the replacement of the bridges would have on downtown business over the next two years. The business community has expressed that the area is already economically vulnerable.

4.9 Another area of concern was the significant number of students who traverse on foot from the South Side to the North Side to attend school, and the need to quantify how many students will be affected during construction.

4.10 It was agreed that the Council should formally document these projected impacts in a correspondence to the Government of Belize and the implementing agencies, to ensure the Council is on record as having raised these concerns in advance.

4.11 The Mayor proposed engaging the City Engineer and City Planner to conduct an analysis and surveys with the business community and suggested hosting a public consultation to gather stakeholder input.

4.12 The objective is to ensure that the Council provides MIDH with comprehensive data, recognizing that while MIDH's primary focus is bridge construction, the Council supports the projects but remains concerned about community impact. If both bridges are undergoing construction at the same time, the Bel-China remains the only operational crossing.

4.13 Councillor Cattouse asked whether the option of a temporary bridge had been considered.

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4.14 The Mayor confirmed that temporary pedestrian bridge solutions are being considered for both crossings. It was agreed that relevant personnel would be engaged to assess and document the anticipated impact of the projects. The Mayor also noted that the bridge projects would likely be completed after he demits office.

4.15 Councillor Kwan recommended the placement of a stationary barge to assist in easing traffic flow during construction.

5.0 Announcements by the Mayor

5.1 Mayor Wagner commended the Councillors for their strong support and active participation in the celebration of Garifuna Settlement Day, noting that the Council played a significant role in the successful execution of the Garifuna Council's planned activities in Belize City.

5.2 He highlighted the Councillors' attendance at the official ceremony and church service held on November 19th and expressed appreciation for their visible presence and solidarity.

5.3 The Mayor reported that he, along with Councillor Castellanos, represented Belize City at the C40 World Summit held in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. He noted that although it did not win the award for which it was nominated, Belize City was recognized on the global stage alongside major international cities, which he described as a noteworthy achievement.

5.4 He further advised that the **2025 Energy Fair**, held at Caribbean Motors, was successfully executed, and that he participated in a panel discussion focused on Belize's energy future.

5.5 With respect to the Floating Boardwalk Project, Mayor Wagner announced that the initiative has now passed the feasibility study stage and has progressed to the phase of securing the required funding. He described the project as a transformative development for Belize City and the wider region, noting that several agencies have expressed strong interest.

5.6 He reported correspondence received that morning from Ms. Ibarona, confirming promising multi-national funding opportunities through the Ministry of Finance. He further advised that there were no objections from PACT or other relevant agencies and that the project has garnered political support.

5.7 The Mayor indicated that the Council is exploring grant funding opportunities for the pilot phase through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), PACT, and the Ministry of Finance, and that letters would be issued to GCOM to formally initiate the process.

Councillor Castellanos joined the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

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5.8 The Mayor advised that several entities with the technical capacity to construct the proposed boardwalk have communicated interest. He encouraged Councillors to take the project seriously and to actively advocate for its advancement.

5.9 Reflecting on the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, the Mayor described the event as highly successful despite the inclement weather. He shared feedback from attendees who were visiting from the United States who expressed surprise and appreciation that such events are hosted in Belize City, and he conveyed heartfelt gratitude for the collective effort that made the event memorable.

5.10 Councillor Cattouse shared that performers expressed surprise at the audience's sustained presence throughout the entire program, noting that the crowd remained even after the tree was lit.

5.11 The Mayor noted the effectiveness of having a dedicated stage manager to coordinate the artists seamlessly.

5.12 The Mayor announced that a church service would be held on Thursday at King's Park Church of the Nazarene. He further advised that the Annual Staff Christmas Social would commence at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, and that work is ongoing with respect to bonuses.

5.13 Mayor announced that another edition of the Midweek Wine Down has been scheduled for Wednesday, December 17th, 2025.

5.14 Mayor Wagner announced, that he, along with Councillor Hamilton, and the Director of Communication/Mayor's Aide would be traveling to Brussels, Belgium for the Cities and Regions for International Partnerships 2025 Forum.

6.0 General Updates from the City Administrator

6.1 The City Administrator directed the Councillors' attention to a list of accomplishments achieved since the previous Council Meeting.

6.2 Dr. Pitts then reported that a follow-up meeting was held with Digi Wallet regarding its proposed implementation as a revenue collection method at the Council.

6.3 The Finance Director is required to provide assurances that proper account reconciliation can be achieved through the Digi Wallet platform. Subject to these assurances, it is anticipated that the Council will proceed with adopting Digi Wallet for revenue collection and establishing accounts for managers to facilitate urgent expenses.

6.4 With respect to the Chetumal Street Bridge, the City Administrator advised that she met with the City Engineer and Asst. City Engineer to discuss the ongoing challenges affecting the approaches to the bridge. It was agreed that a more permanent solution must be explored, and that the Council should formally engage the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) to seek clarity on its plans for the street.

6.5 The City Administrator outlined a matter of concern at the Michael Finnegan Market involving a leaseholder who has failed to regularize his occupancy. Management has formally recommended eviction, as it was reported that the individual has not held a valid lease since 2024, following the non-renewal of his lease due to outstanding rental arrears.

6.6 Further investigation revealed that the booth was sublet without authorization. The current occupant advised that, in addition to paying \$350 weekly to the former leaseholder, he has been remitting \$500 monthly to the Council in an effort to reduce the outstanding balance. This arrangement was not approved by the Council and is contrary to established policies.


6.7 The City Administrator further advised that the matter has been exacerbated by reported threats of violence. In light of the seriousness of the situation, including the absence of a valid lease, significant arrears, unauthorized subletting, and safety concerns, the Council has referred the matter to its Attorney for legal guidance on proceeding with eviction and the recovery of the booth.

6.8 Deputy Mayor Miller noted difficulties in securing a transfer of the lease and recommended that the business be re-registered under a new name, with a fresh lease application submitted by the current occupant, thereby terminating the existing arrangement.

6.9 The Mayor advised that eviction proceedings should be pursued through the courts to obtain a Magistrate's Order, after which enforcement action could be taken. The Council's Attorney has been engaged and is in the process of drafting an eviction notice.

6.10 It was noted that the leaseholder is in arrears for several months, with one additional booth also owing in excess of \$9,000.00.

6.11 The Mayor emphasized that the Council must not allow prolonged non-payment and underscored the need for stronger oversight going forward.

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6.12 The City Administrator provided an update on a meeting held with the **Christian Workers Union (CWU)**, during which several matters were discussed. These included concerns regarding the safety of janitors working the late shift at the Digi Park, and inadequate access to restroom facilities for Sanitation field staff. The Sanitation Manager was tasked with facilitating arrangements with nearby businesses for potential restroom access points within designated zones.

6.13 The City Administrator further advised that policy matters were also addressed in the CWU meeting, particularly the need to ensure that established appraisal procedures are being followed. She clarified that employees remain entitled to benefits regardless of their performance, when appraisals are not completed within the prescribed timeframe.

6.14 Mayor Wagner emphasized that the performance evaluations of managers should reflect the percentage of outstanding appraisals, and that managers will not receive favorable ratings where the majority of staff appraisals remain incomplete.

6.15 Councillor Castellanos stressed the importance of holding managers accountable, noting that having effective structures in place would ensure that employees come in on time to conduct their appraisals. He further observed that managers tend to not prioritize appraisals and often pass the burden on to the Council.

6.16 Mayor Wagner advised that staff attendance would be a key factor in end-of-year bonus assessments, noting that in previous years employees received a flat \$200 bonus regardless of performance or attendance. This year, bonuses will be issued as a percentage of that amount, calculated based on attendance.

6.17 He further highlighted that several employees have demonstrated exemplary attendance and, in recognition of this, he has requested that the Human Resources Department prepare personalized letters awarding an additional \$75.00 to those employees. He emphasized that the approach is not solely about addressing delinquency, but also about recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance.

6.18 The City Administrator announced that a Work Plan prepared by the Programs Department, for the Belize City Youth Engagement & Empowerment Program, has been formally approved by UNICEF. This approval comes with \$159,804.58 to fund initiatives being executed by the Council in the field of Youth Development.

6.19 Commendations were extended to the Programs Manager, Mr. Micheal Fritz, for advancing the initiative and successfully securing the funding.

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6.20 The City Administrator then reported on a recent Managers' Meeting, convened following discussions with the Mayor who had expressed concern about the demeanor and engagement of some managers at official functions, and the potential implications for how they interact with staff and the public.

6.21 The meeting served as a reminder to managers of their leadership responsibilities, professional conduct, and the importance of upholding the Council's tenets while fostering a respectful and collaborative work environment.

6.22 The City Administrator noted that during the meeting, one manager raised challenges associated with being a female manager and experiencing interference in the management of her department from male counterparts. The City Administrator explained that the manager was encouraged to engage in further discussion with her if desired.

6.23 The City Administrator then raised a concern regarding the inoperability of restroom facilities at Digi Park during periods of rainfall. She advised that the Council frequently incurs costs to rent portable toilets, which is not sustainable.

6.24 Mayor Wagner advised that the matter has persisted for several years and may be linked to the outdated sewer system. He advised that consultations should be held with Belize Water Services (BWS) and the Council's technical team to identify a permanent solution, including assessing the existing soakaway system.

6.25 The Mayor reiterated that fragmented information over the past several years has contributed to delays in resolving the issue.

6.26 Regarding the Managers' meeting, Mayor Wagner emphasized the importance of direct engagement with staff. He noted that staff often approach him directly with concerns rather than following the established supervisory structure, which highlights the need for strengthened internal communication and management practices.

6.27 The Mayor shared observations regarding workplace professionalism, noting the importance of managers actively engaging with their teams, "walking the floor," and maintaining appropriate workplace standards, particularly in customer-facing environments.

6.28 Councillor Thompson emphasized the importance of actively engaging with one's team and understanding how operations function in practice. He recalled an example involving the CEO of Amazon, who personally called the company's customer service department to test response times. While internal data indicated that customers were assisted within 60 seconds, customer

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reviews suggested otherwise. Upon testing the system himself, the CEO discovered that it took nearly 10 minutes before a customer service representative answered the call, confirming the customers' concerns.

6.29 Councillor Castellanos highlighted the importance of ensuring that employees feel comfortable enough to talk to their supervisors. He observed that when staff request transfers or raise other concerns, these matters are often escalated to higher authority unnecessarily, despite being capable of resolution at the departmental level. He emphasized that this approach reinforces the chain of command and encourages managers to address and resolve issues within their departments before escalation.

6.30 The City Administrator echoed this position and requested the Councillors' support in redirecting staff to their respective managers. She noted that the Council operates more effectively when the chain of command is respected and emphasized that staff should feel comfortable approaching their supervisors, managers, and directors to address any issues that may arise.

6.31 The City Administrator concluded by advising the Council that she would also remind Directors of their responsibilities to their managers. The Council should not encourage staff to circumvent their supervisors, managers, or directors. If there are concerns that these environments are not inclusive, respectful, collaborative, or welcoming, all parties have a shared responsibility to work together to address and improve them.

7.0 Notices

7.1 No matters were tabled.

8.0 Questions

8.1 No matters were tabled.

9.0 Petitions

9.1 No matters were tabled.

10.0 Reports from Councillors

10.1 Councillor Kwan reported that the Enforcement Department has been collaborating with the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) and the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) in preparation for the commencement of the tourism high season.

10.2 Councillor Kwan further advised that the Enforcement Department has been working in collaboration with the Belize Police Department to conduct monthly operations targeting all modes of transportation, including motorcyclists, buses, taxis, and dollar vans.

10.3 These efforts include night operations, peddler enforcement operations, and joint police checkpoints.

10.4 Councillor Kwan also noted a request from the Enforcement Department regarding the possibility of hiring bus conductors specifically for the E-Transit Department. It was noted that eight (8) Enforcement Officers are currently being utilized to support E-Transit operations and their salaries are being funded under the Enforcement Department. However, because these officers are not conducting patrols and issuing tickets, they are not adding to the revenue being generated by the Enforcement Department.

10.5 Councillor Thompson commented on the importance of having appropriately qualified personnel assigned to roles best suited to their skills.

10.6 The Mayor emphasized the need to effectively utilize the existing workforce and explained that it is important to have personnel that are trained in Enforcement act as conductors, rather than bringing in untrained persons to carry out the duties of conductor.

10.7 Councillor Cattouse reported that several key activities have been held or are being planned in the coming days. She highlighted the observance of the 16 Days of Activism and expressed appreciation to Councillors and the Deputy Mayor for their participation in the flag-raising ceremony, as well as the event held at the Civic Center, alongside Hon. Thea Garcia-Ramirez, the Minister of Human Development, Families and Gender Affairs.

10.8 She further reported that a Youth Panel Discussion will be hosted on December 10, 2025, in collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA.

10.9 Councillor Cattouse also outlined the Child Advisory Body's (CAB) Christmas engagement activities, including outreach at the Youth Hostel and the Welcome Resource Center. She noted that efforts will be made to strengthen CAB membership beginning in January through a recruitment drive to replace members who have turned 18.

10.10 Regarding the student hubs, Councillor Cattouse advised that both locations continue to be utilized daily, serving a combined average of about 55 children per day.

10.11 Councillor Cattouse commended the successful management of the UNICEF partnership, noting that the funding was secured through the dedicated efforts of the Programs Manager, Mr. Fritz, and extended commendation to him for his work.

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10.12 She also spoke to elements of the Strategic Workplan, including the Mayor for a Day competition, which encourages high school students to write essays promoting youth involvement in local government.

10.13 Councillor Cattouse also shared plans for the rehabilitation and retrofitting of an existing child-friendly space under the Community Policing Initiative, to be carried out using funds received from UNICEF.

10.14 With respect to the Sanitation Department, Councillor Cattouse noted that the hurricane season recently concluded and addressed public concerns regarding flooding. She observed that even first-world countries with advanced drainage systems experience flooding, and emphasized that, locally, floodwaters tend to recede quickly, which is an indication that the Sanitation team has been effectively carrying out its duties.

10.15 She gave a special commendation to the Councillors who participated in the Corporate Category of the Belize City Triathlon and advised that they are hoping to see increased participation in this category for next year's event.

10.16 Councillor Cattouse concluded by informing the Council that she has successfully completed her course of study at the University of the West Indies, earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sports.

10.17 Councillor Nunez reported that the third cohort of the Youth Shadow Council program is nearing the end of their term. He noted that he, along with the programs manager and Councillor Hamilton, will be meeting to discuss the selection criteria for YSC participants traveling to Miramar in January 2026. He also advised that recruitment for Cohort 4 will commence in due course.

10.18 Councillor Nunez further reported that, through the funding received from UNICEF, the Council will be engaging three youth interns who will focus on youth development initiatives.

10.19 Councillor Nunez highlighted the Mengage initiative, which focuses on the self-development of young males, including emotional awareness and regulation, stress management, and the promotion of positive masculinity.

10.20 Councillor Nunez concluded by advising that a Youth Mainstreaming Taskforce was launched in partnership with UNICEF Belize and the Department of Youth Services. The groundbreaking initiative seeks to institutionalize youth participation and incorporate their ideas and perspectives into policy, strategy, and programming.

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10.21 Councillor Thompson reported that market activity remains steady overall; however, there has been a reduction in wholesale vendor turnout. Revenue collections remain generally consistent, despite the reduced wholesale vendor turnout.

10.22 Total garbage fees collected amounted to \$1,550.00, while Bathroom Fees generated was \$5,592.00 for the month of November.

10.23 Total revenue and delinquent balances were noted, with a concern raised regarding reduced collections during the month of November.

10.24 Councillor Thompson highlighted that several vendors are operating without valid leases, contributing to outstanding arrears and challenges in revenue collection.

10.25 Councillor Thompson also raised concerns with issues of garbage accumulation, he recommended the implementation of compliance and vendor registration campaigns to address these concerns.

10.26 The Mayor recommended that Councillor Thompson re-engage with the Revenue Manager to determine the current status of outstanding arrears.

10.27 Additionally, Councillor Thompson informed the Council of plans to engage personnel to power wash the market area and repaint the perimeter fence in an effort to improve cleanliness and overall appearance.

10.28 Councillor Hamilton reported that she represented the Council at the Salvation Army's Kettle Launch which was held on November 7th.

10.29 Councillor Hamilton further advised that she participated in a meeting held between the Council, the Belize Tourism Board, and the Tourism Police Unit on November 13. During the session, the Standard Operating Procedures for the Fort George Tourism Zone were presented, and an open dialogue was held among the participating entities.

10.30 Councillor Hamilton indicated that the Council is collaborating with Hoping Hearts Ministry and continues to strengthen networking efforts related to Sister City relations.

10.31 Councillor Hamilton reported that the Local Economic Development Manager, Ms. Melecia McDougall had the opportunity to participate in a workshop which was held in Taiwan. She noted that this engagement was a significant achievement and reported that Ms. McDougall even received an award for the best presentation.

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10.32 Councillor Castellanos reported that on November 11, he represented the Mayor at an engagement in Belmopan, following an invitation from PACT. During this event, the Council received a laptop. He also met with the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, where discussions included the potential development of a summer program for the Council's GIS Department.

10.33 Councillor Castellanos further reported that he participated in a gentlemen's exchange, which brought together men from across the country to discuss emotional intelligence and mentorship, with a particular focus on supporting and guiding youth.

10.34 He also advised that he accompanied Mayor Wagner to Brazil to attend a Local Leaders Forum. During the forum, it was observed that mayors are increasingly serving as key drivers of economic development and are leading efforts related to climate change adaptation.

10.35 Councillor Castellanos concluded by commending the City Emergency Management Organization (CEMO) for its effective work and noted that the unit has begun to strategize for the coming year.

10.36 Councillor Pollard reported that the city has experienced sustained rainfall over the past few weeks, which has required that the Works Department operate within the confines of the weather.

10.37 Efforts are continuing to address longstanding infrastructure issues, including the conversion of a metal culvert to concrete. Work is also underway to improve the Southern Foreshore area for pedestrian use.

10.38 Regarding the rehabilitation of a portion of Orange Street, Councillor Pollard reported that casting of the concrete on the opposite side of the street is scheduled to commence in the coming week.

10.39 Councillor Pollard noted that the roller and backhoe are currently out of service and that the Council's mechanic is on vacation, resulting in prolonged repair times. He emphasized the need for both immediate and long-term solutions to address the issue, including the recruitment of two mechanics.

10.40 A concern has been raised regarding drainage issues at the Smart Roundabout on the Philip Goldson Highway, where water is pooling. It was noted that the Council has the capacity to assess and address this drainage problem.

10.41 Councillor Pollard provided an update on the rehabilitation of manhole covers along East Collet Canal, Water Lane, King Street, and Freetown Road. He advised that a small in-house team has been established to address missing manhole covers, which requires the procurement of materials and the rental of a concrete mixer. There are plans to acquire a permanent mixer for the department in the future. It was noted that vehicle parking on sidewalks is causing damage to the manhole covers.

10.42 The City Administrator informed the Council that she recently met with the Assistant City Engineer regarding an incident in which a child fell into a manhole, an occurrence that subsequently garnered significant attention on social media. During the meeting, the Assistant City Engineer emphasized that vehicles driving or parking on sidewalks are a primary cause of damage to manholes.

10.43 In light of this, the City Administrator proposed the implementation of a public awareness and educational campaign to address the issue. While the Council continues to undertake repairs to damaged manholes, it was noted that persistent public behaviour remains a contributing factor to their ongoing deterioration.

10.44 Mayor Wagner recommended that data be compiled on the costs incurred for manhole mitigation, with a view to quantifying the investments made. He further proposed that correspondence be sent to the Department of Local Government, requesting that they explore measures to hold the public accountable, including the potential for increased penalties through statutory instruments. It was noted that these measures would be accompanied by a public awareness and educational campaign.

10.45 Councillor Pollard emphasized the significant effort the Council has invested in addressing manhole-related issues, noting that both in-house and outsourced solutions have been explored. He highlighted the severity of injuries resulting from damaged or open manholes and advised that he has directed the Works Department to ensure proper demarcation of open manholes to enhance public safety. While it may not be possible to address all damaged manholes immediately, he stressed the importance of proactive measures to mitigate risks and prevent potential injuries.

10.46 Councillor Pollard reiterated the urgent need for an additional mechanic and advised that a request would be submitted for the rental a roller for approximately 19 days, emphasizing the need to commence rehabilitation works once the rains subside.

10.47 Councillor Pollard concluded by advising that the Works Department is awaiting mobilization payment for the mechanic's bay and noted that, once received, the works can be completed promptly to ensure an operational mechanic bay for the team.

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10.48 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that the Traffic Department's revenue for the month of November totaled \$456,096.00, reflecting an increase when compared to November of last year.

10.49 He then reported that the records room backlog related to driver's license records, which dated back to 2017, has been successfully updated.

10.50 Deputy Mayor Miller announced that two new staff members have been recruited, one assigned to the Records Room and the other to the Cashier position. He also raised a concern regarding the proper storage of license plates and advised that the department has requested the procurement of a wooden cabinet to facilitate more organized and secure storage.

10.51 Deputy Mayor Miller further reported that two additional Belize Bank credit card machines have been installed at the Traffic Department, enhancing operational efficiency.

10.52 The MIS Department has requested the procurement of new printers due to ongoing equipment challenges.

10.53 With respect to the development of the Belize City App, Deputy Mayor Miller noted that a request has been made for the legal counsel to prioritize the review of the pending agreement, as both Telepin and Digi are awaiting clearance to proceed.

10.54 Deputy Mayor Miller also provided an update on the Cemetery Digitization initiative. He advised that the geotagging of the graves have been completed at both the Lord Ridge and Eternal Gardens cemeteries.

10.55 He also reported that the printers assigned to the Revenue and Valuation Departments have been non-operational since August, which has negatively impacted revenue collections. Repair costs for the machines are relatively low and represent "low-hanging fruit" that could be resolved promptly.

10.56 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that concerns have been raised regarding the punch clock systems at the Works and Sanitation Departments, which have been non-functional for several months, preventing staff from effectively clocking in and out.

10.57 Deputy Mayor Miller then reported that he attended the Smart City World Congress held in early November, during which he participated in high-level sessions focused on smart city initiatives.

10.58 While attending the conference in Barcelona, Spain, Deputy Mayor Miller also received an invitation to attend an event hosted by the Mayor of Barcelona and observed that he was the only Caribbean representative present. This participation reflects the growing international recognition of Belize City. He encouraged the Council to follow-up on matchmaking sessions through GCOM, as exposure to smart city technologies presents opportunities for future development.

10.59 Deputy Mayor Miller also reported his participation in the 16 Days of Activism Flag-Raising Ceremony and Garifuna Settlement Day activities, which were described as meaningful and culturally significant.

10.60 The Deputy Mayor emphasized the importance of Garifuna Settlement Day in strengthening connections with residents and celebrating the city's cultural diversity.

10.61 Deputy Mayor Miller reported that the 3rd Annual Triathlon was well-received by the sporting community, and encouraged Councillors to continue promoting similar events. He acknowledged Councillors Cattouse and Nunez were acknowledged for their role in organizing the event.

10.62 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that he was invited by the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) to participate in a culinary competition.

10.63 Additionally, St. John's Jr. College, has requested the Council's assistance with works within the school compound prior to reopening in January.

10.64 Deputy Mayor Miller also reported that the Council has partnered with the Office of the Special Envoy to raise awareness about Gender-Based Violence. He noted that he also received an invitation to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the Stella Maris Rehabilitation Project.

10.65 Deputy Mayor Miller extended congratulations to Councillor Nunez on his election as President of the Belize Youth Movement, which was described as a significant achievement for the Council and at the national level. He noted that there are now two Belize City Councillors, both youth representatives, serving on the National Executive Council.

10.66 Councillor Thompson reflected on the showcasing of culture during the mayor's recent trip to Brazil and commended the mayor for embracing and promoting cultural identity, particularly when hosting visitors.

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10.67 Councillor Castellanos noted a tourism funding model observed abroad, where visitors are charged a small fee through hotels, and suggested that similar mechanisms could be explored locally.

10.68 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that NICH will be hosting a Christmas Bram at Battlefield Park on December 14 at 5:00 p.m., featuring the National Orchestra and other bands, and extended an invitation to Council Members and the City Administrator.

10.69 Deputy Mayor Miller concluded by congratulating Councillor Cattouse on completing her degree and acknowledged several Councillors who are currently pursuing advanced studies, emphasizing the importance of continued personal and professional development.

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 Councillors

12.1 Councillor Castellanos moved a motion for the Council to approve a contribution of \$3,600 towards a 12-Day Countdown to Christmas Initiative being organized by an organization called MC Shimmers. The motion was seconded by Councillor Nunez.

12.2 Mayor Wagner asked why this specific organization was chosen.

12.3 Councillor Castellanos advised that the organization has conducted the initiative in previous years to give back to deserving members of the community. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.4 Deputy Mayor Miller moved a motion, on behalf of Councillor Garcia, for the rental of Booth No. 6 at the Memorial Park to Ms. Tanisha Vernon for the operation of a tour company by the name of Tuk Tuk Belize. The motion was seconded by Councillor Castellanos.

12.5 Councillor Cattouse noted having observed creatively designed vehicles displaying the Tuk Tuk branding during cruise ship days, as well as a pedal bus bearing the same signage. She remarked that the initiative could be of interest to the city. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Councillor Hamilton left the meeting at 12:53 pm

12.6 Deputy Mayor Miller moved a motion, on behalf of Councillor Garcia, to approve the trade-off and write-off of service rental fees charged to Account 555-S for the rental of Booths Nos. 2, 3, and 5 at Memorial Park.

12.7 Deputy Mayor Miller advised that the tenant, Ms. Kimberly Searle, was requesting an offset and credit adjustment totaling BZ\$52,000, in respect of renovations carried out to the respective booths and for her inability to occupy the booths since entering into a lease agreement with the Council.

12.8 During the discussion, it was noted that, in other jurisdictions, renovations are typically subject to defined timeframes.

12.9 Mayor Wagner explained that the matter highlighted a broader concern regarding the need to minimize wastage and to exercise greater oversight in the rental of booths and other Council-owned spaces. He emphasized the importance of addressing systemic inefficiencies and advised that the booths should not have been rented prior to completion, particularly given the outstanding infrastructure issues.

12.10 The Mayor expressed no objection to offsetting verifiable investments made by the tenant; however, he raised concerns regarding the granting of rental credits. It was further noted that the tenant was effectively seeking reimbursement from the Council for renovations undertaken.

12.11 The Revenue Manager, Ms. Sovania Requena, was invited to provide clarification. She explained that the situation stemmed from arrangements made prior to her employment. She further advised that the Council had not provided the necessary drainage infrastructure to allow Ms. Searle to fully establish the expanded restaurant area, which prevented her from occupying the booths, despite a rental account having been generated and billed monthly.

12.12 Ms. Requena advised that Ms. Searle was asked to submit receipts to substantiate her claims; however, to date, these have not been provided.

12.13 The Council proposed that the adjustment be limited to the cost of renovations as certified by the Assistant City Engineer in the amount of BZ\$25,650, together with a write-off of the remaining accumulated rental charges of BZ\$17,200, rather than honoring the total claim of BZ\$52,000, which would have resulted in a credit balance of BZ\$9,150 on the account.

12.14 Ms. Requena noted that when this proposal was presented to Ms. Searle, she did not accept the terms.

12.15 The Council further advised that billing would resume as of December, regardless of whether the booths were operational.

12.16 Ultimately, the Council agreed to offset the value of rehabilitation works completed by the tenant, as certified by the Assistant City Engineer at BZ\$25,650, and to write off the remaining account balance of BZ\$17,200, resulting in a zero balance on the account.

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12.17 Deputy Mayor Miller amended the motion for the Council to approve a trade-off of BZ\$25,650 for renovation and plumbing works, as assessed and verified by the City Engineer, and a write-off of the remaining balance of \$17,200, resulting in a total adjusted amount of BZ\$42,850. The motion was seconded by Councillor Castellanos. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.18 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the renewal of a media contract between the Belize City Council and R.S.V. Ltd. The motion was seconded by Councillor Kwan. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.19 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the implementation of a stipend for members of the Disciplinary Hearing Committee as follows:

- Chair - \$1,250.00
- Councillors (2)- \$750.00
- Director of Administration - \$375.00
- Human Resources Manager - \$375.00
- Recording Officer - \$250.00

12.20 Deputy Mayor Miller seconded the motion and inquired whether there was a discrepancy in the proposed stipends for the Director of Administration and the Human Resources Manager. He noted that the HR Manager, in particular, carries a significant workload in preparing matters for consideration by the Committee.

12.21 Mayor Wagner advised that these responsibilities already fall within the respective job descriptions of the positions, and that both individuals are receiving a salary from the Council.

12.22 Councillor Nunez stated that matters before the Disciplinary Hearing Committee often involve difficult decisions and require substantial time commitments. He emphasized that the introduction of stipends would help ensure the Committee's work is taken more seriously, particularly given the time required away from regular duties.

12.23 Councillor Cattouse remarked that Committee members frequently face personal and professional challenges, including strained relationships, when deliberating and making difficult decisions, and expressed support for the motion.

12.24 Councillor Thompson noted that Committee members are often required to attend lengthy meetings, sometimes at short notice, and must address a backlog of files. He further highlighted the level of deliberation involved and the need for members to become familiar with legal terminology.

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12.25 Mayor Wagner further noted that the Financial Director had previously been appointed to the Committee on a temporary basis, but that the position is now being filled by the Human Resources Manager. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.26 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the dredging of the mouth bar of the Belize River in the Freetown Constituency.

12.27 Mayor Wagner further stated that boats are facing growing difficulty navigating the area due to increased siltation. The Belize River, the largest river in Belize, empties into the sea near the Haulover Bridge area. As the river flows into the sea, it carries sand and silt with it. Because this area forms the northern part of a delta, much of this material settles at the bar mouth, blocking the river's entrance to the sea and contributing to flooding in the Belama Phases 3, 4, and 5 areas.

12.28 The Mayor expressed that it has been eighteen (18) years since this entrance has been cleaned/ dredged. The current depth at the channel is approximately only three (3) to four (4) feet deep.

12.29 The Mayor concluded that reports received expresses that at low tide, tourist boats have challenges trespassing the area. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Miller.

12.30 The Mayor advised that the Council is serving in a facilitative role for the project, which is being funded by the Government of Belize through the Ministry of Local Government and the Belize City Council. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.31 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the Rehabilitation of U Crescent in the Belama Phase 1 area. The motion was seconded by Councillor Cattouse. **MOTION APPROVED.**

13.0 New Business

13.1 No matters were tabled.

14.0 Submissions from the Building Unit

14.1 A request from Mr. Nirmal Babani, on behalf of Mr. Kevin Ayuso, for the provision of a no objection letter to the Central Building Authority for the construction of a three-storey apartment building at Parcel No. 1907 Driftwood Bay. **MOTION APPROVED.**

14.2 A request from Mr. Rupert Hall, on behalf of Fultec Systems Ltd., for the provision of a no objection letter to the Central Building Authority for the construction of a four-storey commercial/residential building at Parcel No. 1129 Sunrise Ave. **MOTION APPROVED.**

14.3 A request from the Department of the Environment, submitted on behalf of YIC Ltd., for the provision of a letter of no objection for the reclamation and development of a parcel of land located at Parcel No. 4791, Caribbean Shores Registration, Bella Vista.

14.4 Councillors raised concerns regarding the proposed filling of the property due to its proximity to an existing pier. The Council determined that a public consultation with the area representative and residents must be conducted prior to any approval. The Council further requires that YIC Ltd. satisfy the Council and that adequate consultation has been carried out with the residents of Bella Vista and the wider public. **MOTION DENIED.**

14.5 A requested submitted by Mr. Dwayne Thurton, on behalf of Fort Street Tourism Village, for the provision of a letter of no objection for the rehabilitation of two boat piers located at the Fort Street Tourism Village. **MOTION APPROVED.**

14.6 A request submitted by Ms. Kimberly Searle for the provision of a letter of no objection for the expansion of a booth located near the Farmer's Market. **MOTION APPROVED,** provided that construction be conducted at the proprietor's expense, and that there be no increase to existing lease fees.

14.7 A request from the National Fishermen's Cooperative for a letter of no objection for the proposed construction of a cold room.

14.8 The City Planner advised the Council that the Cooperative's existing fence is currently constructed on Belize City Council's property. The Cooperative has expressed interest in expanding its facilities, including an addition to its existing building, which would require even greater use of a portion of City Council land.

14.9 At present, the exact property boundary is unclear. It was recommended that corner pegs be placed to clearly demarcate the boundary and determine the extent of City Council land involved. The Valuation Manager will conduct an evaluation of the area to assess the space to be leased or sold to the Cooperative.

14.10 The proposed structure is intended to be permanent. Council was advised that a licensed surveyor should be engaged to accurately determine how much City Council property will be utilized. It was further noted that the existing building is constructed directly on the property boundary with no setback, and the Cooperative is requesting approval to waive the four-foot setback requirement for the proposed expansion. **MOTION DEFERRED.**

C.P.

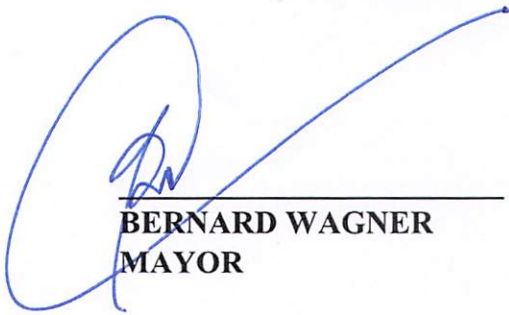

15.0 Any Other Business

15.1 No matters were tabled.


16.0 Adjournment

16.1 Deputy Mayor Miller moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councillor Nunez.

The meeting concluded at 2:18 p.m.



BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



DR. CANDICE PITTS
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

