

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Caucus Room, Belize City Council

January 31st, 2024

10:00 a.m.

Present at the meeting were the following:

1. Mr. Bernard Wagner
2. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr.
3. Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh
4. Ms. Kaya Cattouse
5. Mr. Michael Novelo
6. Mr. Edmund Kwan
7. Mr. Javier Castellanos
8. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton
9. Mr. Albert Vaughan
10. Mr. Micah Goodin
11. Ms. Deannie Requena

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt
Mr. Eluide Miller

Mayor
Deputy Mayor
Councillor
Councillor
Councillor
Councillor
Councillor
Councillor
Councillor

City Administrator
Manager, Office of the Mayor

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:25 AM.

1.0 Belize National Prayer

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

2.0 Welcome Remarks

2.1 Mayor Wagner announced that Deputy Pollard Jr. extended his regrets for not being able to attend.



COUNCILOR CASTELLANOS ARRIVED TO THE MEETING AT 10:27 A.M.

2.2 Mayor Wagner extended a warm welcome to everyone present, noting that it marks the final meeting of the current municipal term. Reflecting on the journey, Mayor Wagner expressed gratitude for the progress made. He acknowledged Councilor Vaughan's exemplary leadership, emphasizing his consistent commitment to upholding the values and responsibilities set forth upon their election. Mayor Wagner expressed satisfaction in having served two terms alongside Councilor Vaughan.

2.3 Mayor Wagner acknowledged that navigating public life since 2018 has presented its challenges, but ultimately proved to be a rewarding journey. Reflecting on shared experiences, Mayor Wagner reminisced about campaigning alongside Councilor Goodin in 2018, underscoring the camaraderie forged during those times. He emphasized the importance of building on past achievements, urging the Council not to overlook the progress made over the past six years. Mayor Wagner emphasized the untapped potential within the city, affirming his confidence in its future trajectory.

COUNCILOR NOVELO ARRIVED TO THE MEETING AT 10:32 A.M.

2.4 Mayor Wagner expressed his vision of the Emobility Pilot Project serving as a pivotal driver for expanding the electric public transit system, effectively reducing congestion, and advancing sustainable development goals through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. He highlighted the potential for e-taxis to offer increased returns on investment for taxi operators. Mayor Wagner emphasized that existing bus owners would be engaged as partners in this pilot initiative. While acknowledging that pricing might be slightly higher, residents would be given the freedom to select the service that best suits their preferences.

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2.5 Mayor Wagner expressed his appreciation to Councilor Novelo for his outstanding service throughout the entire term. He acknowledged Councilor Kwan's decision to run for a second term and commended Councilor Pipersbrugh for her dedication and effective representation of the Council. Mayor Wagner also extended his respect to Councilor Castellanos for his perseverance and commitment to the Council's objectives.

3.0 Ratification of the November 24th, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

3.1 (4.5) Change statement to read "Pickstock Committee".

3.2 (13.1) Change statement to read "alternative parking".

3.3 (9.7) Change statement to read "Councilor Pipersburgh and her Youth Shadow Councilor".

4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Mayor Wagner inquired about the progress of the parking lot. The City Administrator (CA) explained that inclement weather in December caused delays, pushing the original completion date. Additionally, there were delays with the contractor, hindering the completion of several sections. However, the kiosk has been finished, and the security structure is nearly completed. Cameras have been installed, and a request has been made to NICH to install cameras on their nearby facility.

4.2 Mayor Wagner inquired about the lighting and access to the facility. The CA explained that once the hot mixing is completed, the lights will be ready, as the trenching has already been done. Additionally, the Council has received the exemption letter for the barrier, and it should be installed as soon as it is cleared.

4.3 The City Administrator indicated that the fence line would be finalized upon completion of the hot mixing process, and the entire project is anticipated to be finished before March.

4.4. (4.7, 4.8) The City Administrator mentioned that she and the Valuation Manager had the opportunity to discuss the senior citizen incentive with Mr. King. They explored the possibility of merging the senior citizen incentive with the prepayment incentive. However, Mr. King pointed out that this would not be feasible due to the wording of the senior citizen incentive. Therefore, individuals would have to choose one of the incentives. The City Administrator suggested that the next incentive could be structured differently, with 50% offered in January, 45% in February, and 40% in March.

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4.5 Mayor Wagner emphasized the necessity of property tax reform, attributing the Council's arrears of over 30 million to this need. He highlighted the importance of implementing a flat rate for specific groups such as senior citizens and military personnel.

4.6 (4.5)The City Administrator reported that the Pickstock Community Festival took place this past Saturday, boasting a record-breaking participation of over 100 vendors, marking one of the largest turnouts for community festivals to date. She highlighted the significant involvement from the constituency and the community. Mayor Wagner expressed his satisfaction with the event's turnout.

4.7 The City Administrator expressed that all recent events were exceptionally well-organized. She particularly highlighted the Tree Lighting Ceremony as the largest one yet. Additionally, she mentioned that the new structure of the Christmas Staff Social seemed to have made the event more enjoyable for Council employees this year. She noted that they were thoroughly entertained and pleased with the raffle.

4.8 The City Administrator informed that the Council has received the Mini Backhoe, which has been assigned to the Sanitation Department for use on smaller earthen drains. Additionally, one of the Garbage Compactors from Japan has also been received, with an official handing over scheduled for February 13, 2024. Furthermore, there are plans for an unveiling of the entire fleet recently acquired by the Council.

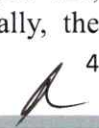

5.0 General Updates from the City Administrator

5.1 The City Administrator conveyed that the Council has been dedicated to finalizing tasks for the current term and ensuring all documentation is organized. Furthermore, as of January 2nd, 2024, all administrative and operational support staff members have been outfitted with new uniforms. Additionally, operational support staff were provided with special events uniforms.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 11:04 A.M.

5.2 The City Administrator also mentioned that the Council has been prioritizing infrastructure projects, although progress was somewhat delayed due to inclement weather. Additionally, the Council has been actively advancing the Emobility initiative. Currently, the Etaxis are in Guatemala and are en route to the Western Border.

5.3 The City Administrator also conveyed that the Council has supplied all necessary information to the CWU for the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Despite this, they have been awaiting a follow-up date to finalize negotiations. Additionally, the

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President of the CWU recently stated in an interview that both the Belmopan City Council and the Belize City Council have not completed CBAs with them. The City Administrator expressed the Council's frustration with this situation and mentioned that a letter will be drafted to the CWU to express discontent, as the Council has diligently fulfilled its responsibilities to facilitate the CBA process.

5.4 Mayor Wagner expressed disappointment, emphasizing that finalizing the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) was one of his top priorities. He highlighted that the Council conducted consultations for the reclassification of workers and fulfilled all requested tasks. Mayor Wagner added that the Council's proposal exceeded the CWU's requests, as it addressed various challenges comprehensively, including the issue of other entities recruiting talent from the Council.

5.5 Councilor Vaughan affirmed on the record that the Council had exerted every effort to complete the task. He attributed the delay to the Union and the lack of response from their end.

5.6 The City Administrator noted that the Council and the CWU are now addressing the final two points of negotiation: job classification and referencing the General Administrative Rule (GAR) in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). She further mentioned that discussions with the Ministry of Labor have taken place, and they have provided guidance on the next steps after the agreement is signed.


6. Notices

6.1 Councilor Vaughan reported that he had discussions with boat enthusiasts who frequently navigate the Northern Lagoon. They expressed concerns about the lack of parking facilities at the Bourdon Canal, which forces them to park at the old Luke Epat estate. Councilor Vaughan mentioned that the Council had filled the back of the Mile 4 compound, adjacent to the canal. The enthusiasts requested the next Council to consider providing a slipway for them to park their boats conveniently.

6.2 The City Administrator requested Councilor Vaughan to provide a contact person for further communication regarding the boat enthusiasts' concerns.

6.3 Councilor Hamilton mentioned that she became aware of letters being distributed to residents regarding the cleaning of drains, but council members were not informed. She requested confirmation regarding this matter.

6.4 The City Administrator responded that she was not aware of the situation and promised to seek clarification from the Sanitation Manager before providing an update.

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6.5 Councilor Cattouse mentioned that during her recent visit to the Pickstock Constituency, she requested that a speed bump be placed on Cleghorn Street after its intersection with Mapp Street.i

6.6 Mayor Wagner emphasized the importance of improved discipline among drivers, noting that the increasing need for speed bumps also contributes to the deterioration of streets.

6.7 Councilor Cattouse raised concerns about pedestrian safety at the intersection of Cleghorn Street and Douglas Jones Street, particularly due to the presence of a call center in the area. She requested a pedestrian crossing marking to improve safety at that intersection. Additionally, Councilor Cattouse relayed a request from Pitts Alley residents for a speed bump to be installed in their area.

6.8 Councilor Vaughan reported that the Traffic Committee conducted a survey regarding turning 3rd Street into a one-way street, with only three residents expressing objections. He also mentioned a new proposal for alternate parking. Mayor Wagner added that residents had requested him to explore this alternate parking proposal during a recent Community Meeting he attended in the Caribbean Shores Constituency.

6.9 Councilor Cattouse brought up a request from residents living near 4th Street, close to Old Mirab, where several families reside down an alleyway behind the Ministry of Education. They are requesting that the short section of the street be converted to allow two-way traffic so that they do not have to take a longer route to access their homes.

6.10 Councilor Vaughan mentioned that they had obtained permission to implement this change during the COVID-19 period when there was minimal traffic in the area. However, he expressed concern that this adjustment could lead to issues once the tourism village is operating at full capacity.

7. Questions

7.1 No questions were tabled.

8. Petitions

8.1 Councilor Novelo requested that the entrance to the basketball court behind the complex building be cleared, as it currently has a crushed culvert that needs fixing. Additionally, he asked for culverts to be installed on Giles Street, which was recently rehabilitated.

9. Presentation of Reports from Councillors

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9.1 Councilor Hamilton announced the inauguration of the Fort George Artisan Alley and expressed gratitude to everyone for their support. She also mentioned that the inauguration of Mahogany Street will take place next week. Furthermore, Councilor Hamilton shared her recent campaign activities and expressed appreciation for the extraordinary feedback received from the community.

9.2 Councilor Pipersburgh shared that she, the Youth and Community Support Officer, and the City Administrator met with representatives from the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) regarding the Belize City Council's certification. However, she mentioned that she is aware another conversation took place afterward.

9.3 The City Administrator shared that the NCFC has provided documentation to support their certification process, but they have requested a meeting to present these documents due to the volume involved. However, the NCFC mentioned that their schedule is currently tight, which might cause some delays. The City Administrator mentioned that the Council is collaborating with the Public Relations Department to set up a new billboard highlighting their efforts towards achieving the Platinum designation.

9.4 Councilor Pipersburgh shared that Constitution Park has been completed and reopened and Dolphin Park has also been completed and reopened.

9.5 Councilor Castellanos reported that during the Market Committee meetings held on November 10th, 2023, and January 10th, 2024, discussions were held regarding two specific matters. Firstly, Ms. Gonzales, a tenant occupying booths #16, #17, and #18, requested a booth transfer for her daughter, Ms. Requeña. The Committee had no objections to this request. Secondly, Mr. Enrique Herrera requested space measuring 14x19 between his booth and the area designated for garbage distribution to build a walk-in freezer. The Committee also had no objections to this request, and it was discussed with Ms. Patnett.

9.6 Councilor Vaughan expressed gratitude to the Council for the ham, turkey, grocery bags, and bonus received, emphasizing that these contributions were greatly appreciated by the residents. Additionally, Councilor Vaughan shared a report from Mr. Blake, the Traffic Manager, indicating that collections for December amounted to \$500,000.00. He commended the efforts of the Traffic Department, highlighting their hard work and dedication.

9.7 Councilor Vaughan expressed gratitude to Mayor Wagner for his kind words shared earlier in the meeting. Reflecting on his experience, Councilor Vaughan noted that while he knew a few of the council members previously, many were practically new to him. He shared that meeting Mayor Wagner and working collaboratively with the Council has been a gratifying experience, emphasizing the value of teamwork.



9.8 Councilor Vaughan proudly recounted the rehabilitation of Custard Apple Street, highlighting its enduring quality. Expressing pride in his role within the team, he described the journey as remarkable and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve. Councilor Vaughan affirmed his ongoing support for the Council and pledged to always be available to provide assistance when needed.

9.9 Councilor Vaughan emphasized that the agreement with Marion Jones Stadium was to clear the property and use Cumberbatch Field for waste disposal, highlighting the need for improvements there. He expressed concern about infrastructure in Belama Phase 4 and stressed the importance of conducting necessary works before March. Councilor Vaughan extended gratitude to all fellow Council members for their service and wished luck to those running again in the upcoming elections.

9.10 Councilor Goodin reflected on the past term as a roller coaster ride, acknowledging significant personal growth and maturity, especially at the age of 30. He expressed gratitude for Mayor Wagner's leadership, recognizing his adeptness in navigating uncharted waters. Councilor Goodin credited Mayor Wagner's leadership for the progress and development witnessed in Belize City during his tenure.

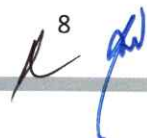
9.11 Councilor Goodin reaffirmed his availability to offer assistance and expressed his unwavering support for the team.

9.12 Councilor Cattouse reiterated the City Administrator's previous updates on the successful programs recently conducted. However, she emphasized the ongoing need for improved drainage despite the significant progress made in recent years. Councilor Cattouse underscored that addressing this issue would be a priority for the next administration to bring it under control.

9.13 Councilor Novelo reflected on the past term, expressing that it differed greatly from his initial expectations but was ultimately a respectable experience. He acknowledged the Mayor's unique political style while praising his exceptional leadership and vision, which has brought about unforeseen accomplishments. Councilor Novelo specifically commended the Mayor for his dedication to the Emobility program, which is now yielding tangible results.

9.14 Regarding the Cemetery, Councilor Novelo expressed disappointment in its current state despite his efforts as the responsible Councilor. He admitted feeling worn down by the lack of progress and expressed hope that the new administration would have more flexibility to address the issue effectively. Despite challenges, Councilor Novelo expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work with his fellow Council members and pledged ongoing support to the team.

9.15 Councilor Kwan proposed adding one more cohort to the upcoming Belize City Accelerator Program (BCAP) and requested the Council's backing for this initiative

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before the term ends. Looking back on his three years in office, Councilor Kwan recognized the valuable lessons learned and stressed the significance of shared objectives in advancing development for residents, even amidst divergent viewpoints. He praised Mayor Wagner for his leadership, highlighting his capacity to identify overlooked aspects. Councilor Kwan conveyed his belief in the Council's effectiveness and encouraged sustained dedication to further enhancement. He reiterated his commitment to continued teamwork and assistance for the group.

9.16 Councilor Hamilton expressed her belief that being part of the team elevated her to another level. Despite differing opinions, she emphasized that significant development was achieved for residents through the collective efforts of the Caucus. Councilor Hamilton extended gratitude to Mayor Wagner for his leadership characterized by soul and passion, highlighting his embodiment of exemplary qualities.

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

10.1 No matters were tabled.

11.0 Motions by Councilors

11.1 Councilor Pipersburgh moved a motion for Ms. Irma Ramos to lease Booth #7 located at Memorial Park for the sale of little girls clothing. Seconded by Councilor Goodin. **MOTION PASSED.**

11.2 Councilor Pipersburgh moved a motion for the Council to allow Mr. Phillip Broaster to lease Kiosk #2 in NICH Parking Lot to vend food. Seconded by Councilor Goodin. **MOTION PASSED.**

11.3 Councilor Pipersburgh moved a motion for Home Protector Insurance Company Limited, Diversified Life Solutions Brokers Ltd and Caribbean Shipping Agencies Limited, for the renewal of adoption agreement for Home Protector Park and Fred Westby Park. Seconded by Councilor Goodin. **MOTION PASSED.**

11.4 The City Administrator shared that the adoption agreement with Digi Park has been improved with them making a \$1500 contribution towards the cleaning of restrooms,

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collection of garbage, and cleaning of park grounds, and \$5000 towards the maintenance and necessary repairs of the park monthly.

12.0 New Business

12.1 Mayor Wagner shared that some streets were not on the initial 90-street list prepared for the Council's Infrastructure Plan for the year 2023, and as a result, the list must be amended and reapproved by the Council.

12.2 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the Council to approve the proposed list of streets to be upgraded/rehabilitated in an effort to improve the quality of life for city residents. Seconded by Councilor Goodin. **MOTION PASSED.**

12.3 Councilor Vaughan requested that Carissa Street, Maurice Bishop Street, and John Smith Street be added to the list.

12.4 Councilor Cattouse asked for Hall Street to be added to the list.

12.5 Councilor Kwan asked for Martha Theus Street to be added to receive material and to be rolled and compacted thereafter.

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

13.1 A request by Mr. Alvan Gillet for a No Objection Letter to the Central Building Authority for the construction of a loading/unloading and parking area for a warehouse being built on Western Avenue. The Planning Unit has no objections to this request but recommends limiting the size of trucks that use the parking lots and ensuring that any damages to the median or street resulting from their operations are repaired. **MOTION APPROVED.**

13.2 A request by Ms. Sue Courtenay, Principal of VIVIDARCH on behalf of the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) for a No Objection Letter for the proposed pier for the BTB's Fish Market located at Parcel No. 1063 North Front Street, Belize City. **MOTION APPROVED.**

13.3 A request by Mr. Dhiraj Nandwani to reclaim a portion of the sea located alongside Parcels No. 330 Port Loyolaville, 1884, 3646, 4643, 4644 Caribbean Shores Registration Section in Belize City. **MOTION APPROVED.**

13.4 A request by Ms. Marlene Laing for a No Objection Letter for permission to survey a parcel located at No. 150A Neals Pen Road, Belize City. **MOTION APPROVED.**

13.5 A request by Mr. Corny Dueck on behalf of Life Church to adopt the round-a-bout near the North End Estate on the Phillip Goldson Highway. Life Church is proposing to plant some low plants and place a sign measuring two feet by four feet at five feet height in the round-a-bout. **MOTION APPROVED** under the condition that the name of the church be displayed and the sign is to be placed at a maximum of four feet total height.

13.6 A request by Ms. Greta Williams of the Harbour View Boutique for a No Objection Letter to place a concrete post measuring 10" x 10" x 10' high and enhanced sign that will be lit measuring 5'-0" x 8'-0" at the corner of Cork Street and Goldson Street. **MOTION DEFERRED.**

13.7 A request by Mr. Enrique Carrera for a No Objection Letter for the proposed construction of a cold room and offsetting for the cost of construction works, located at the Michael Finnegan Market that will measure 11'-2" x 17'-0". **MOTION DEFERRED.**

13.8 A request from the Street Naming Committee seeks approval to rename a list of streets provided and assign names to several streets currently unnamed throughout Belize City. **MOTION DEFERRED.**

14.0 Other Matters

14.1 Councilor Vaughan expressed concerns about the intersection of the Biltmore Hotel and TV Ramos due to safety risks. He noted that the mirror installed by Biltmore Hotel is relatively small and suggested consulting with them promptly to address this issue and prevent potential accidents at the intersection.

14.2 Mayor Wagner requested all council members to indicate their support and approval for an honorarium of \$2,000.00 for all city council members in recognition of their service as they approach the end of the 2021-2024 municipal term. All council members voted in favour. **MOTION PASSED.**

14.3 Councilor Vaughan reminded council members currently sitting on school boards that they are to continue to be of service until new assignments are announced following the upcoming municipal elections.

15.0 Adjournment

15.1 Councilor Cattouse moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councilor Novelo. The meeting was adjourned at 1:37 p.m.





BERNARD WAGNER
MAYOR



SHARLENE RUDON
ACTING CITY ADMINISTRATOR

