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PRESS RELEASE

Department of Local Government Holds Municipal (Magistrate) Court Initiative with Town & City Councils

Belmopan, June 27, 2023.

Today, mayors and key administrative staff from town and city councils across Belize, including the chairperson of the Caye Caulker Village Council, participated in a one-day consultation session with the Department of Local Government, on a proposed initiative to expand the establishment of Municipal (Magistrate) Courts.

The consultation session provided a platform for local authorities to gain an understanding of the legal and administrative dynamics of the Belize City Municipal (Magistrate) Court's management and operations. This session will additionally assist participants in understanding the legal and administrative processes and procedures for establishing Magistrate Court Places of Sitting, as well as articulate their concerns and considerations for the establishment of Municipal (Magistrate) Courts in other jurisdictions.

The advancement of the Municipal (Magistrate) Court Initiative constitutes a component of the ministry's intent to strengthen local governance and the institutional capacity of town and city, and it is thus aligned with the Government's Medium-Term Development Strategy to facilitate the economic transformation of urban communities throughout Belize. The achievement of Sustainable Financing for Municipal Governments is a fundamental strategic objective of the Department of Local Government, as expressed in the ministry's Strategic Plan. Town and city councils are entrusted with increasing citizen compliance and improving residents' safety and security as part of their duty to improve municipal service delivery.

Currently, only Belize City has a declared Place of Sitting for a Municipal (Magistrate) Court, which was established in 1997. As a result, the establishment of Municipal (Magistrate) Courts will greatly improve the capacity of town and city councils to resolve matters related to local offences such as breaches of traffic management laws and regulations, property tax matters, garbage and littering offenses, amongst others.

During the session, Hon. Magali Marin-Young, Attorney General, along with other key staff of her ministry addressed the municipal councils. Mr. Jermaine Hyde, Court Manager for the Belize City Council, also presented during the consultation session.

In the coming weeks, the Department of Local Government will be holding consultation sessions with other relevant stakeholders.

Ends

For more information, please contact:

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