



BCCI
BELIZE CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

2026



**Annual General Meeting
Councilor Candidates**



William A. Neal



Fourth-Term Councilor Candidate:

William A. Neal, MBE, is a candidate for a councillor position within Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), aiming to leverage his communication expertise to advance economic growth, food security, and social well-being. His objective emphasizes strengthening commerce locally and internationally, with a strong focus on the agro-productive sector and expanding market opportunities.

Neal holds a Master of Arts in English (Technical and Professional Communication) from East Carolina University, earned through a scholarship from the Organization of American States. He currently serves as Communications and Government Affairs Officer at Belize Sugar Industries Ltd., following a five-year tenure as Dean of Student Affairs at the University of Belize. Widely recognized for his media career, he has worked as a television host and journalist for over 25 years, earning multiple accolades including two CNN World Report Awards, and was awarded an MBE in 2007 for his contributions to arts and entertainment in Belize.

Throughout his career, Neal has held diverse roles including Communications Officer for UNICEF, Director of the Institute of Creative Arts, educator, and PR consultant. In his current role at BSI, he represents the sugar industry in public relations and media at local and regional levels, including engagement with the Sugar Association of the Caribbean. He also serves as a liaison with government officials and regional bodies, contributing to national sugar sector reform and advocating for policy development at the CARICOM level.



Luis Ugarte



Second-Term Councilor Candidate:

Luis Ugarte, born on April 27, 1969, in Rivas, Nicaragua, migrated to Belize in 1985 and has built a distinguished career in the FMCG industry. He joined GraceKennedy (Belize) Ltd. in 1991 as an Account Manager and has since advanced through several leadership roles, including Customer Service and Sales Manager in 2013, and most recently Senior Manager, Sales & Operations in 2023. With over 34 years of experience, he has played a key role in developing and growing both Grace and non-Grace branded products, many of which are now household names in Belize.

Beyond his professional achievements, Mr. Ugarte has demonstrated a strong commitment to community service and national development. He has held leadership roles in numerous organizations, including the Rotary Club of Corozal, where he served in multiple capacities up to Assistant District Governor. His contributions also extend to education and governance through positions such as Chairman of ITVET Corozal Chapter, Chairman of the Corozal District Education Council, and Commissioner on the Belize Teaching Service Commission. He continues to serve on several national bodies, including the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), the National Accreditation Council, the Bureau of Standards, and the Economic Development Council.

Mr. Ugarte holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Management Studies from the University of the West Indies (UWI). He is a dedicated family man, having been married to his wife, Vilma, for 32 years, and is the proud father of two children, Gabriela and Luis Jr.



Sharmayne Saunders



Second-Term Councilor Candidate:

Dr. Sharmayne Saunders is a distinguished Belizean academic, consultant, and organizational leader with over 25 years of experience in higher education, consultancy, and corporate management. Since May 2020, she has served as Head of The University of the West Indies (UWI) Global Campus – Belize, where she provides strategic leadership to advance tertiary education and professional development across Belize and the wider Caribbean.

In addition to her academic role, Dr. Saunders is the Founder and Lead Consultant of Saunders Consultancy, established in 2002. Through this platform, she has advised numerous organizations on strategic planning, organizational development, and capacity building. Her work includes collaborations with international agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), where she has facilitated national stakeholder consultations on governance, transparency, and accountability. She is also deeply committed to social advocacy, serving as President of Haven House Belize, which supports women and children affected by domestic violence.

Dr. Saunders' contributions extend to research and thought leadership, with a focus on corporate social responsibility, disaster risk management, and strategic organizational change. As both a scholar and practitioner, she continues to influence Belize's socio-economic development, public policy dialogue, and academic excellence, embodying leadership defined by service, impact, and commitment to national progress.



Salem Guerra



Second-Term Councilor Candidate:

Salem Guerra is a Mechanical Engineering professional at Guerra Engineering Ltd., where he serves as Project Manager, HVAC Technical Support Engineer, and Supervisor of day-to-day operations, while also holding a position as a Director on the Executive Board. In these roles, he oversees project implementation, manages personnel and operational resources, and supports the coordination of company vehicles, tools, and technical activities to ensure efficient and high-quality project delivery.

He holds an Associate Degree in Mathematics and Physics from St. John's College Junior College and a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from Murray State University. Salem is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Business Administration at Formato Educativo Business School, further strengthening his ability to combine technical engineering expertise with strategic management and leadership.

With five years of full-time experience at Guerra Engineering Ltd., Salem has developed strong capabilities in project management, leadership, team collaboration, problem-solving, and mechanical engineering operations. Known for his strong work ethic and attention to detail, he is committed to advancing in engineering and management while contributing to larger-scale projects and making a positive impact in his community.



Bruno Kuppinger



Hon. Bruno Kuppinger is a highly respected businessman with over 25 years of professional experience in Belize, recognized for his strong leadership, strategic thinking, and ability to navigate complex issues. He has represented Belize both nationally and internationally in tourism, investment, and cultural matters, building a reputation for professionalism, diplomacy, and excellence. Fluent in English and German, he is known for his effective communication and his extensive network across Belize, Central America, and the Caribbean.

His deep commitment to community service is reflected in numerous leadership and advisory roles. He has served as a Justice of the Peace since 2003, later advancing to Senior Justice of the Peace and Commissioner of the High Court. Mr. Kuppinger has held key positions in tourism and civic organizations, including past presidencies of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (Toledo) and the Association of Justices of the Peace (Toledo), as well as membership on several national boards and committees. His contributions extend to regional development, tourism marketing, trade missions, and public service, culminating in his current role as Ambassador for the Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry in Toledo.

Professionally, Mr. Kuppinger has spent over two decades as a tour operator with Toledo Cave & Adventure Tours, where he has successfully promoted Belize's natural and cultural assets while delivering high-quality travel experiences. His earlier career in Germany included senior roles in banking and finance with institutions such as Volksbank, BMW Bank, and Mercedes-Benz Lease Finance. Complementing his practical experience are strong academic credentials, including an MBA-equivalent qualification in banking and an executive diploma in international law. His achievements have been recognized through national tourism awards and numerous accolades, underscoring his impact on Belize's tourism sector and community development.



Claudette El Ters



Claudette El Ters is a proud Belizean leader, wife, and mother whose work is deeply rooted in service, personal growth, and community development. She currently represents the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) on the Labour Advisory Board, where she contributes informed perspectives to national labor dialogue and policy. Her academic journey reflects both local and international excellence, having attended St. Catherine Academy and St. John's Junior College, before earning a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida, a Master of Business Administration from Galen University, and a Master's in Industrial and Employment Relations from the University of Turin in Italy.

With more than a decade of service to the BCCI, Claudette has demonstrated sustained leadership and commitment to advancing the private sector. She has served three terms on the Executive Board and spent ten years as Chair of the Labour Sub-Council, where she played a key role in promoting fair, progressive, and balanced labor practices in Belize. Her contributions have helped strengthen dialogue between employers, employees, and policymakers, positioning her as a respected voice in labor and business advocacy.

In addition to her institutional work, Claudette is the Managing Director of Maheias United Concrete & Supplies Ltd., her family-owned business, where she navigates the dynamic demands of the construction industry while championing increased opportunities for women in the sector. Outside of her professional responsibilities, she is an endurance athlete and active community volunteer, embodying discipline, resilience, and a strong sense of purpose. Her life and career reflect a deep commitment to faith, family, and service, as well as a passion for making a meaningful impact in her community and beyond.



Hertha Gentle



Ms. Hertha Gentle joined The Belize Bank Limited in 2022, where she serves as Chief Human Resource Officer, leading the Bank's human resource function with strategic oversight and vision. With over 15 years of experience in senior leadership roles across both the public and private sectors, she has built a strong reputation as a human resource and labour administration specialist. Her expertise spans talent acquisition, employee retention, and workforce motivation, all grounded in a results-driven approach that recognizes people as an organization's most valuable asset.

Throughout her career, Ms. Gentle has demonstrated a commitment not only to organizational success but also to the development of individuals. In addition to her executive responsibilities, she has contributed as a Facilitator, Adjunct Lecturer, and consultant, sharing her knowledge in areas such as Labour Administration, Organizational Behavior, Strategic Human Resource Management, Discipline, and Industrial Relations. These roles have allowed her to shape and mentor emerging professionals while strengthening HR practices across multiple sectors.

At The Belize Bank Limited, Ms. Gentle continues to drive initiatives that enhance the impact and effectiveness of HR in alignment with the Bank's business objectives and the needs of its more than 450 employees. Her approach emphasizes culture transformation through well-defined strategies and policies that promote sustainable growth, employee engagement and wellness, talent management, operational efficiency, and strong labour relations. She holds a Master's degree in Labour Economics and Human Resource Management from Chulalongkorn University, further underscoring her academic and professional foundation in the field.



Stacey Tewes



*Stacey Tewes is an educator, researcher, and business professional with over 15 years of cross-sector experience spanning the private sector, government collaboration, and international organizations. She currently serves as a Marketing Lecturer at the University of Belize and is pursuing a Doctorate in Instructional Technology. She is also the author of *Wealth Untold* and the founder of initiatives such as WISER (Women in STEM Entrepreneurship and Research) and BEACON (Business Excellence and Collaboration Network), demonstrating her commitment to education, innovation, and entrepreneurship.*

Her experience includes work with institutions such as Atlantic Bank, BELTRAIDE, the Ministry of Economic Development, and UNICEF. Internationally connected, she has served as Chair of the UWI Executive Guild, lectured in South Korea, and holds an International MBA as a Taiwan Scholar. Fluent in multiple languages, she brings a global perspective while maintaining strong local engagement, contributing to entrepreneurship development and national curriculum initiatives in Belize.

As a candidate for the BCCI Executive Council, Stacey is focused on strengthening connections between academia and industry, making research more accessible to businesses, supporting international trade readiness, and advancing SME growth. She is also a strong advocate for digital innovation, aiming to integrate AI, technology, and data-driven strategies into business development. Her approach is rooted in collaboration, accessibility, and practical solutions to drive meaningful impact for Belizean businesses.



Norman Dueck



Norman Dueck is a lifelong Belizean from Spanish Lookout with a strong commitment to community development and business leadership. With over fifteen years as Managing Director of Universal Hardware, he has built extensive experience in strategic planning, operations, and business expansion, supporting both small contractors and large-scale developments across Belize while promoting sustainable growth and high standards of service.

Beyond his corporate role, Dueck has been deeply involved in leadership within the business community. As President of the Business Chamber of Spanish Lookout, he advocates for economic growth, security, and innovation while fostering collaboration between the private sector and government. His past and ongoing roles with the Spanish Lookout Credit Union and the Social Security Board Investment Committee have further strengthened his expertise in financial governance, risk management, and institutional accountability.

Dueck's broader contributions include service on social and religious boards, reflecting his dedication to ethical leadership and community engagement. Grounded in strong family values, he is motivated to help build a secure future for the next generation. His candidacy for the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry Executive Committee is driven by his desire to support business growth, enhance competitiveness, and strengthen public-private collaboration nationwide.