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Voting Fraud Response Ratified Amid Dispute as V.I. Board of Elections Meeting Devolves Into Confusion

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Voting booths at the V.I. Board of Elections office on St. Croix during the 2022 elections.
By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

During Wednesday's Special Meeting of the V.I. Board of Elections, draft correspondence from an ad hoc committee was ratified amidst objections and a heated debate. Chaired by Alicia Wells, the meeting began with roll call, establishing that the board had a quorum.

The primary agenda for the meeting was to vote on a response to correspondence previously received from a member of the public. The letter to the board requested several things, including the report produced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation into allegations of voting fraud. The FBI later concluded that [no evidence](#) of criminal or fraudulent activity could be found during

election night vote counting. Another request was for information surrounding the documentation provided by Senator Angel Bolques Jr. that supported his [eligibility](#) to serve as the territory's at-large representative.

The response was drafted by committee leader Michael Joseph and "enhanced" by the other members, Mr. Joseph said during his oral report. Following his brief remarks, Ms. Wells called for a motion to accept the draft as written, however board member Harriet Mercer objected, arguing that despite only receiving the report the previous day, a brief review revealed that it was riddled with objections.

Without requesting discussion of its contents, and over the member's objections, a vote was conducted with a majority of members voting to accept the draft as written. Mercer voted against the motion, and former board chair Raymond Williams abstained. Mercer voiced serious concerns over the board's readiness to accept a report she deemed as having many flaws, insinuating that members who voted yes on the motion had not read the report.

In response to the previous motion, member Mercer proposed one of her own, moving that Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes be compelled to submit to the board all documents previously and timely submitted to her office, pertaining to the residency history of Senator Angel Bolques Jr., whose eligibility for election as the territory's at-large representative has been questioned since last year's primary races. Member Mercer's motion did not receive a second, and it was therefore dismissed by the chair.

Chairwoman Wells then attempted to adjourn the meeting, ignoring repeated requests from Mercer to have the floor on a point of inquiry. After being reminded that she needed to seek a motion for adjournment and secure a second, the board chair tried to dismiss the board a second time, which was successful. Over the vocal objections of Mercer, who contended that they had not addressed the "New Business" portion of the agenda, the meeting came to a contentious close.

In an exclusive post-meeting interview with Consortium journalists, Mercer expressed her discontent over what she felt was a lack of due process. "For me, I don't believe that it's fair to speak for the others, but I would be very surprised if they were pleased with today's meeting," she stated, highlighting her belief that all board members should have the chance to discuss the recommendations in detail before casting their votes.

Mercer further criticized the decision-making process, asserting that it was "nonsense" that only four of the ten members were effectively speaking for the board, without other members being given the opportunity to discuss the correspondence that would be going out in the name of the Board of Elections. She argued that this approach silenced board members and did not represent the constituents they were elected to serve. "It has to be a decision. It has to be a discussion and a rendering of a decision based on that discussion," she demanded, going on to compare the situation to the Supreme Court, where dissenting decisions are heard and considered.

Perhaps even more upsetting to Mercer was the contents of the response, which she denounced as unsatisfactory and irrelevant. In her opinion, the draft response failed to address Dr. Peter's questions, instead containing unrelated content. "There was no need to talk about witch hunt inside of the draft. There was no need for that," Mercer complained.

Now that the board has voted to accept the committee's draft unchanged, members of the public will soon have the opportunity to scrutinize the body's response to calls for greater transparency. At least one member of the board – Harriet Mercer – believes that citizens will be disappointed with what they read therein.

