

Bryan's Nominees for WAPA and CZM Committee Impress at Judiciary Hearing

Maurice Muia and May Adams Cornwall move closer to confirmation for key USVI positions

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From left to right, May Adams Cornwall and Maurice Muia By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Two Virgin Islanders recently nominated for service by Governor Albert Bryan earned the favor of members of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary on Thursday.

The first, Maurice Muia, has been nominated to serve on the board of directors of the Water and Power Authority. An electrical engineer by profession, Mr. Muia told lawmakers that “WAPA is the sole reason” why he chose that career field. “My educational choices, career opportunities that I seized and areas of public and personal service have prepared me for today,” he affirmed.

Mr. Muia currently resides on the mainland but says he regularly immerses himself in current affairs at home. He is well aware of the challenges threatening the USVI's economic success, with "high electricity and potable water rates" among those factors. The cost of electricity in the territory, he noted, was "three times the national average", requiring a concerted effort to reduce the rate per kilowatt hour to 14-16 cents.

"Achieving that rate will certainly bring a better life to the people of the Virgin Islands," Mr. Muia told lawmakers. His priorities, if confirmed to WAPA's board, include increasing reliability, ensuring that the utility company's workforce is optimized, and developing a plan to reduce the residential electric rate. Responding to Senator Carla Joseph's query regarding his commitment and ability to perform in the position as a non-resident, Mr. Muia asserted that he was "fully committed to the VI WAPA board and the people of the Virgin Islands."

Meanwhile, May Adams Cornwall, nominated to serve as part of the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Committee for the district of St. Croix, also received the approval of lawmakers. Regarding her ability to serve in this role, "my formal education and my public service experience have prepared me professionally to effectively deliver on my duties and responsibilities," Ms. Cornwall assured committee members.

"There is no question about your experience and knowledge in this field," Senator Franklin Johnson remarked, noting Ms. Cornwall's previous experience at the Department of Public Works, Water and Power Authority and as the Waste Management Authority's first executive director.

Highlighting numerous areas she wishes to explore if confirmed, Ms. Cornwall promised to remain true to the CZM mandate; to "comprehensively review proposed projects, [and] exercise due diligence and integrity to assess, evaluate, and balance community and economic development needs with environmental and public health risks."

Following the committee's votes in favor of both Mr. Muia and Ms. Cornwall, the nominees now await the support of the full body at a later date.

The Committee of Rules and Judiciary also supported Bill 35-0116, a Resolution honoring and commending Lieutenant Colonel Leayle Gerard Galiber for his leadership in the Virgin Islands National Guard and his dedication to his country and to the people of the Virgin Islands, and Bill 35-0178, which allows for the automatic expungement of arrest records upon a finding that the arrest lacked probable cause.