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No-Shows and Last Minute Emergencies Force Early End to Economic Development Committee Meeting

Unexpected no-shows disrupt agenda, leaving cannabis regulation discussions unaddressed

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Sen. Javan James, chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Wednesday's meeting of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture ended as many as three and a half hours before its scheduled time after multiple testifiers failed to show up for their scheduled time block.

Among them was Agriculture Commissioner Louis Petersen, who informed committee chair Senator Javan James via text moments before he was due to appear at 2:30 that a pressing issue

had arisen making it difficult for him to attend. That prompted Mr. James to adjourn the hearing entirely, simultaneously postponing a planned general update from the V.I. Port Authority.

Earlier in the day, a discussion on the status of the Office of Cannabis Regulations, the implementation of Act 8680 and an update on licensing procedures for the cannabis industry had to be abbreviated because of no-shows as well. Although two representatives of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs were present to offer testimony, Cannabis Advisory Board chair Catherine Kean was not. Kean was invited to testify but sent in no excuse for her failure to appear, according to the legislative clerk.

Kean's absence made it nigh impossible for legislators to be brought up to speed with any progress being made with the industry, especially with nobody present to staff the Office of Cannabis Regulations. Former Executive Director Hannah Carty resigned from the post earlier this month, and her exit left the office unstaffed. DLCA's Director of Business and Administration Lorraine Fredericks reminded lawmakers that "we have no employees at this time" in OCR.

Kean announced on Tuesday that a [candidate had been selected](#) to fill the position of executive director, while Horace Graham, DLCA assistant commissioner, told lawmakers that other vacant positions for OCR have been advertised and applications have been received, however no final selections have been made. DLCA provides human resource supervision to the Office of Cannabis Regulation.

Senator Marvin Blyden wondered who would conduct those interviews, however, in light of Ms. Carty's resignation.