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Conn Davis II and Lindel Williams, Nominated to Waste Management Board, Impress Lawmakers

Bringing extensive financial and operational expertise, the nominees pledge to enhance accountability and innovate funding mechanisms to tackle the territory's waste management challenges

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From left to right, WMA nominees Conn Davis II and Lindel Williams. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Conn Davis II and Lindel Williams, both nominated by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to serve on the Waste Management Authority Board of Directors, received overwhelming support from lawmakers on the Committee on Rules and Judiciary.

The two men both have a wealth of experience in financial management, and on Thursday, both assured legislators of their passion for effective waste management as part of a well-functioning society.?

Mr. Davis, who would serve as one of the board's representatives from St. Thomas, has worked as a financial trader, and also boasts experience in working with companies interested in producing clean energy from waste. "I'll bring great work ethic, strong financial and operational expertise and a deep global business network to the V.I. Waste Management Authority," he promised. Waste management, he said, is "one of the most fundamental and essential functions of government."?

To effectively address ongoing concerns with waste management - including finding solutions to [managing green waste](#) - Mr. Davis told lawmakers "we need to assess our current scenario with brutal honesty, seek examples of applicable best practices and determine where we want to be." He promised to push for accountability to "staff, citizens, vendors, contractors and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency."

Another one of his goals, noted Mr. Davis, is "exploring creative funding mechanisms which are effective and equitable." He referenced an "advanced disposal fee levied on incoming goods at ports of entry" which he believes could be more secure and effective than the prevailing practice of assessing tipping fees.

The second nominee, Lindel Williams, is being tapped to hold one of the WMA board seats designated for St. Croix representatives. He told lawmakers that he is a military veteran with international experience as an engineer and construction executive, and a former commissioner of the Department of Public Works, which, during his tenure there, handled the responsibility of waste management. Like Mr. Davis, Mr. Williams is also well versed in managing multi-million dollar portfolios, something that lawmakers were pleased to hear. Effective management of the WMA "requires accountability to the public, with emphasis on compliance and the responsible use of public funds," he said.?

Mr. Williams highlighted a need for innovative financing, including public-private partnerships. He listed employee training, changing the image of the WMA as a "world-class place to work," repairing the sewer system in the long term, building new and modern pump stations, and landfill management as some of his long and short-term goals.

Lawmakers, excited to strengthen the WMA's board, thanked the two men for their willingness to serve. Senators posed several questions to the two nominees regarding their plans for wastewater management, reducing mounting green waste, long-term strategies, public education and waste collection fees. Mr. Davis highlighted the need to change public opinion of waste management as a crucial component of advancing the WMA's goals. "I think that we need to have a shift in mindset amongst our population where we really view taking care of waste and taking care of our properties and taking care of derelict vehicles as a necessity, both as a health issue, as beautification as well as for tourism purposes," he opined. Mr. Williams believes that mindset shift must come as a result of robust public education efforts.

A raft of suggestions from both men came as a result of the robust discussion between nominees and lawmakers, but Messrs Davis and Williams must wait to be formally confirmed to the board before they are able to act on any of them.

Nonetheless, Senator Kenneth Gittens remarked that the extensive financial experience of both nominees was "a plus" for him. As he often does, Mr. Gittens noted that "the Virgin Islands does

not have a money problem, but rather a money management problem.” He encouraged the two men to “bring these management skills to the forefront and ensure that we do what we're supposed to do in properly managing the authority.”?

Perhaps anticipating an unchallenged confirmation process, Mr. Gittens has already tasked Messrs Williams and Davis with proposing new legislation “to make better the authority and for providing a cleaner and healthier environment here in the territory.”

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