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V.I. Board of Elections Demands Apology from Member After Incident Disrupts Early Voting

Board member Harriet Mercer faces a 24-hour deadline to issue a written apology following an incident that disrupted early voting and required police intervention, or risk being banned from participating in the 2024 election cycle

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Board of Elections member Harriet Mercer.

As soon as they convened for an emergency meeting on Tuesday afternoon, members of the V.I. Board of Elections retreated into executive session. “There was something that occurred yesterday at the St. Thomas office,” said board chair Alecia Wells. “It deals with a board member.”

Upon the board's return — almost half an hour beyond the initial 45 minutes allotted for discussion in executive session — they were ready to make a decision. Board member Raymond Williams moved that fellow board member Harriet Mercer “submit a written apology to the Election System and specifically to the Deputy Supervisor Keevermay Douglas and election officials who witnessed the negative behavior.”

While board members were reluctant to provide too much detail, the negative behavior in question, which occurred on Monday, was said to have disrupted early voting to such an extent that the police had to step in to restore order.

Mr. Williams's motion set an initial deadline of 24 hours for the written apology to be provided, failing which Ms. Mercer would be subject to “a formal censure” and disallowed from formally participating as a board member through the remaining days of this election cycle.

Ms. Mercer offered an amendment to the motion which sought to reprimand her, suggesting that no action be taken until the board had the opportunity to consider her declaration on the issue. That amendment, while seconded by board member Epiphane Joseph, failed at a vote.

The original motion passed, and thus the clock began ticking on Tuesday at approximately 6:30 p.m. According to the Board's decision, the Election System should receive Ms. Mercer's written apology before Wednesday evening, failing which she will be banned from official participation in the remainder of the 2024 election cycle.

In a statement placed on the record prior to the vote, Mr. Williams declared that “candidates are not to be allowed into the vote centers.” That is what poll watchers are for, he noted.