

Senate Committee Approves Nominations to Real Estate Appraisers Board and UVI Board

Elizabeth Guadalupe-Perez and Trinity Granger-Austrie received unanimous support from lawmakers to serve on the Real Estate Appraisers Board and UVI Board of Trustees. Their nominations will advance to the full Legislature for consideration.

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From left to right, Trinity Granger-Austrie and Elizabeth Guadalupe-Perez. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

The Committee on Rules and Judiciary has approved the nominations of two women to serve on the Virgin Islands Real Estate Appraisers Board and the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees, respectively.

First up for consideration was Elizabeth Guadalupe-Perez, a licensed and certified residential real estate appraiser, currently working to attain licensure as a general appraiser. She told lawmakers that she has “served the Virgin Islands in some capacity as an appraiser since 2006,” serving clients including local banks and government agencies. “I would like to mentor and share my knowledge with others, especially the younger generation,” Ms. Guadeloupe-Perez told lawmakers. With the territory's small talent pool when it comes to appraisers, “we need to start preparing and training new ones,” she said.

“I know that I still have a lot to do and give to this community,” she told Senator Angel Bolques Jr., who asked what motivated her. “What better position to be able to ... dedicate some of my knowledge and what I have to give to this younger generation,” she said. Reiterating a point made in her testimony, she told Bolques that there is a dire need to increase the number of appraisers operating in the territory. “There's a lot of work, and we need to prepare people to join this profession.”

“I would recommend implementing a training system and exposing this profession to our people, especially the younger generation, through school,” she suggested. “We need to let them know about this profession... and give them the opportunity to give it a try,” Ms. Guadalupe-Perez told Senator Clifford Joseph, who wondered what avenues existed to encourage youth to get involved.

Ms. Guadalupe-Perez assured lawmakers that outside of caring for her immediate health concerns, dedicating herself to the board would be a priority. “Currently, I am fighting a condition of cancer,” she disclosed.

Nonetheless, Ms. Guadalupe-Perez's nomination received unanimous support from committee members. Senate President Milton Potter thanked her for “agreeing to accept the challenge to serve on this very important board,” as did committee chair Senator Carla Joseph. “I was totally in awe of your level of courage, your level of dedication and commitment to this industry,” Sen. Joseph said.

The committee also supported the nomination of Trinity Granger-Austrie, the Governor’s nominee for the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees. An alumna of UVI, Ms. Granger-Austrie noted that “the opportunity to contribute to its governance is both humbling and inspiring.” Ms. Granger-Austrie possesses a bachelor's of science in environmental engineering and has held several roles within the field of engineering. She told lawmakers that she credits UVI for her success in each position.

Between 2012 and 2018, Ms. Granger-Austrie was an adjunct professor for the process engineering program at UVI’s St. Croix campus. After the 2017 hurricanes, she co-founded Tysam Tech LLC, “a USVI-based environmental engineering firm” with the goal of “delivering engineering and environmental management services tailored to the unique needs of Caribbean industries, governments and institutions.” The firm now employs twenty-five people here in the territory. “Through this work, I have been able to help counteract brain drain by creating opportunities for Virgin Islands professionals,” Ms. Granger-Austrie said.

She believes that her “professional background, education experience and unwavering commitment to advancing STEM...uniquely qualify me to serve on the UVI board.” The nominee also indicated her desire to enhance the university’s STEM programs by “strengthening alignment with industry and academic partners and expanding alumni engagement in ways that directly benefit students and our territory.”

“It is fitting that you want to be able to give back to where you received your education and your ability to stand where you are,” remarked Senator Carla Joseph.

Sen. Bolques asked how the nominee intends to contribute to UVI's current strategic plan, particularly within areas that align with her “expertise in environmental, environmental engineering and STEAM education.” A first step, said Ms. Granger-Austrie, is “encouraging people to consider UVI as an option when they're looking at all of their options for schools.” One of UVI’s major issues, she noted, is waning enrollment.

While praising the benefits of UVI’s smaller size, she told Senator Avery Lewis that it will be critical for the university to continue to work with its institutional partners “to see what programs they can bring down to UVI from their research programs.”

Sen. Lewis, who said he was disappointed that some tended to view UVI as a “negative place,” encouraged Ms. Granger-Austrie to help dispel the “misnomer” and “educate the community that UVI has and is delivering to our people on the Virgin Islands.”

“Based on my observation [of] your background and your experience, it looks as though it was a wise choice by Governor Bryan,” Sen. Potter remarked. He, along with the other six committee members, voted in favor of her nomination.

The nominations of both Ms. Gaudalupe-Perez and Ms. Granger-Austrie will be considered once more at an upcoming Legislative session.