

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Judge Hears Heartbreaking Pleas From Unpaid Silver Airways Workers Amid Bankruptcy Fallout

Former Silver Airways employees made emotional appeals in court Tuesday, pleading for unpaid wages and accountability as Judge Russin warned that no money is currently available and a trustee will now investigate what led to the airline's collapse.

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Silver Airways aircraft at the Luis Munoz Marin International Airport in Puerto Rico back when carrier was operational. By. ERNICE GILBERT. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Despite their letters to him not being part of the “proper legal process”, bankruptcy judge Peter Russin nevertheless allowed some former employees of Silver Airways to be heard

in court on Tuesday.

"Currently, Silver Airways owes me about \$6,411," said Maria Salinas, who [worked as a Silver flight attendant](#) for approximately a decade. "I don't know how I'm going to get that money back since we don't have a payroll department anymore." Her voice trembling with emotion, Ms. Salinas pleaded with the judge to assist former employees with getting some of the money that a potential Seaborne sale could generate to pay down Silver's administrative debts. "Please help us to get that money to us, not to let Mr. Rossum or any of the people here to administer that money," she asked the judge. "We worked, we sweat [for] the money, and we're asking for the money that is owed to us," Ms. Salinas said.

"Mr. Rossum will no longer be in control of the business," Judge Russin assured her. However, that was the only comfort he could provide. "The sad reality of this case is that currently there is no money, that's my understanding." He noted that even his understanding was shaky, but promised that the Chapter 11 trustee that he ordered appointed would "hopefully get to the bottom of that."

Apart from his mandate to rule on the issues brought before him, Judge Russin, there was little else that he could do to assist the former staffers who say they are owed over half of their May salaries as well as wages for the days they worked in June, before the airline's collapse on June 11. "It's a system that will work out on its own, as it usually does," the judge explained. The employees were encouraged to ensure that they filed administrative claims before the yet-to-be-set deadline, "and then hopefully there will be money at the end of the day that might be able to be paid on those claims."

Charles Segal, a former quality control manager for Silver Airways, addressed the court next and posed several questions that he said deserved investigation and answers. "When did Silver Airways start losing control?" Mr. Segal also questioned who made the decision to begin withholding payments to service providers, and wondered "how did Silver Airways get to this point...where no one in the industry wanted anything to do with Silver Airlines?"

While there was nothing contained in Mr. Segal's remarks that the court could address, Judge Russin said he nevertheless allowed him to be heard because, "I think it's important that these cathartic events occur, especially for those that feel abused by the company." Like with Ms. Salinas, the judge assured Mr. Segal that he would have ample opportunity to file a claim for the monies he believes are owed to him by the defunct airline. He told the distraught former employee that "the court shares your concerns about how it got here," and noted that he is forced to operate within a very limited information space. "I only get to know what people are able to tell me that's admissible in evidence, so we just haven't gotten to any point where that has occurred, at least reliably."

Despite his limited ability to provide definitive relief to the affected former employees, the judge nevertheless hoped that the opportunity to address the court had provided Mr. Segal and Ms. Salinas some cathartic benefit. "Hopefully some money will be available to pay some of these claims. We shall see," Judge Russin concluded.