

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Caroline Fawkes A No Show At Emergency Board Meeting

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The emergency meeting called by the Board of Elections, St. Croix District, on Monday evening, did not last very long as the Supervisor of Elections, Caroline Fawkes, who is an employee of the Board, failed to show at the meeting she was summonsed to.

The meeting was contentious. At about 5:32 p.m., it was called to order by Chairman Adelbert Bryan, who included two items for discussion on the agenda.

The first, "Apparent changes in ballot by Supervisor Fawkes," sought to discuss the reasoning behind Fawkes' decision to order 1,000 sample ballots without the Board's consent. But with Fawkes' absence from the meeting, Bryan could not get a clear

understanding as to her decision.

Bryan then moved to ask Genevieve Whitaker, deputy supervisor of elections, why her boss wasn't present at the meeting, to which Whitaker could not give a clear answer.

While the exchange was taking place between Whitaker and Bryan, board member Rupert Ross, who is seeking re-election, repeatedly interrupted, contending that Ms. Whitaker was not in a position to answer questions on Fawkes' behalf. Bryan challenged Ross, citing VI Code, which makes it clear that in the absence of the Supervisor of Elections, the deputy supervisor is responsible for making known the supervisor's agenda.

"It appears that the supervisor of elections believes that the Board works for her," Bryan said. Whitaker, unable to answer, said she wasn't aware of Fawkes' whereabouts.

The 1,000 ballots Fawkes ordered without the consent of the Board displeased Bryan, who said, "There was no reason for Mrs. Fawkes to order 1,000 ballots without the Board knowing what she is doing."

However, Ross and board member Raymond Williams, who is also seeking re-election, appeared disinterested with the proceedings of the meeting, and Ross ultimately walked out, followed closely by Williams, before the meeting was adjourned.

There were two sample ballots, Bryan explained, and the Board needed to make a decision on which would be approved--a decision that should be made taking into consideration two recent court rulings, one permanent and one temporary. Yet, Bryan's concerns ostensibly fell on mostly deaf ears, and Ross, who seemed to agree to approve a ballot he nor other board members had seen, motioned to approve the new ballot with changes made by Fawkes.

Voting to approve the new ballot, which will include embattled Sen. Alicia "Chucky" Hansen's name, were Ross, Williams, Glens Webster and Lisa Harris Moorehead. Voting against its approval was Bryan and Roland Moolenar. Board member, Liliana Belardo de O'Neal was absent.

"Decision for Legal Representation for St. Croix District Board of Elections and Supervisor of Elections" was the second item slated to be discussed on the agenda, with Bryan explaining there was a conflict of interest when the Attorney General's office represented Fawkes in recent court proceedings surrounding the issue of returning Sen. Hansen's name to the Nov. 4 ballot. He noted that VI Code states the Board of Elections has a right to choose its own attorney.

Bryan relayed the events which took place on Sept. 10 at the District Court of the Virgin Islands, when Hansen and her supporters took Fawkes to court, requesting that a temporary restraining order be granted Hansen because the Governor's pardon had "cured" her crimes and made her eligible to seek re-election in the 31st Legislature. Bryan cited "collusion" between Hansen's lawyers and lawyers for the Attorney General's office representing Fawkes, which lead Judge Wilma A. Lewis to conclude there was no real difference between the plaintiff (Hansen) and defendant's (Fawkes) cases.

Almost immediately after Bryan was through speaking, Ross moved to "indefinitely table" the discussion of the Board having its own legal representation. Along with Ross, the move was given a "yes" vote by Williams, Moorehead and Webster. Voting against it was Bryan and Moolenar.

After much of the board members had exited the meeting before Bryan could officially adjourned the gathering, Moolenar motioned for the audience to ask questions, which was granted by Bryan. The meeting lingered for a while as Bryan fielded questions and listened to citizens' concerns. Eventually, with an almost empty room remaining, the meeting came to an end.