

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Griffith Appointed Permanent CEO, Meets With CMS On Friday

VIC News / **Published On September 30, 2014 09:34 AM /**

Cynthia Graham **September 30, 2014**



At a meeting of the St. Croix District Governing Board on Monday, Dr. Kendall Griffith was appointed as permanent CEO of the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center on St. Croix for a contract of one year. Griffith had been serving in the capacity of interim CEO since January 2013.

Griffith's promotion came when Board Chairperson Dr. Anthony Ricketts proposed it at the meeting, which was described as having "a quorum for the first time in over a year."

"We are again open for business," Dr. Ricketts said.

He then announced the names of the two new members appointed to serve on the Board by Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr., including Troy de Chabert- Schuster and Kimberly L. Jones. Of the new appointments, Dr. Griffith said he is "grateful."

"I am grateful to Governor de Jongh for appointing two additional nominees to the St. Croix District Governing Board and to once again have a foundation in place for hospital governance, accountability and overall management," he said.

Griffith then offered a detailed update on the moves the hospital has been making to avoid losing its certification following the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) recent announcement that it would withdraw its funding from the Luis Hospital on Oct. 9.

"We are preparing for an upcoming meeting with officials from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services scheduled for Friday of this week in Baltimore, Maryland and feel well-prepared to discuss the improvements underway at JFL," Griffith said. "We intend to show CMS and the Virgin Islands community how serious we are in addressing our deficiencies and bringing increased quality care to JFL."

It was well publicized last week that JFL had retained the services of Boston-based law firm Ropes and Gray in the wake of the [damning 112-page CMS](#) report. Griffith said the strategy behind that decision had only to do with an effort to help the hospital maintain its certification.

"We engaged legal counsel not to fight CMS, but to assist JFL in the process of avoiding de-certification," he explained. "We are maintaining a collaborative relationship with CMS."

On Saturday, Griffith announced part of JFL's overall strategy to maintain its certification was to draft a comprehensive Corrective Action Plan that would be submitted to CMS.

"That is now complete," he said. "This plan will provide CMS officials with a clear and thorough accounting of the reforms and future operating procedures planned across the board for Juan Luis Hospital."

At Monday's meeting, Sammy King was appointed as JFL's Chief Financial Officer and provided a summary of the hospital's financials.

"My goal is to ensure that JFL becomes one of the most financially stable institutions not only in the Virgin Islands, but in the entire country," King said. "We are going to be more responsible in our expenses and streamline our processes."

Procurement agreements were also approved for three electronic medical records system upgrades, which will interface with the hospital's current data system, Meditech, and enable medical providers to access data in real time; assist JFL's data efficiency management; and manage physicians' orders electronically.

In addition, an agreement with Banco Popular was approved that will provide JFL with greater efficiency in collecting on its delinquent accounts.

The meeting's full agenda also saw discussions of policies pertaining to patient safety, wound care, emergency management, the Americans with Disabilities Act, case

management, discharge planning, patient advocacy, documenting case management, nutrition procedures, medical records and other policies that were cited by CMS as having deficiencies.

The Board also approved the Implementation of an FPL Energy Services Audit, as described by VI Energy Office Director Karl Knight. The measure gives Griffith the authority to allow the VI Energy Office to conduct an energy audit of JFL and provide recommendations on how the hospital could reduce its energy consumption. The audit is a commitment by Governor de Jongh and the VI Energy Office for \$12 million to provide energy consumption reduction measures at no cost to JFL.

Griffith praised the efforts of the Territory's elected officials in support of JFL, noting, "We continue meeting and dialoguing with the Governor, the Delegate and Senators. The leadership is united in assisting the hospital to maintain certification, and that means a lot. We are moving forward with their backing."

Griffith said he remains hopeful the Luis Hospital will regain the "public's trust," telling Board members the improvements planned for JFL will "help our community feel safe, comfortable and confident. The Juan Luis Hospital team is committed to building back the public's trust."