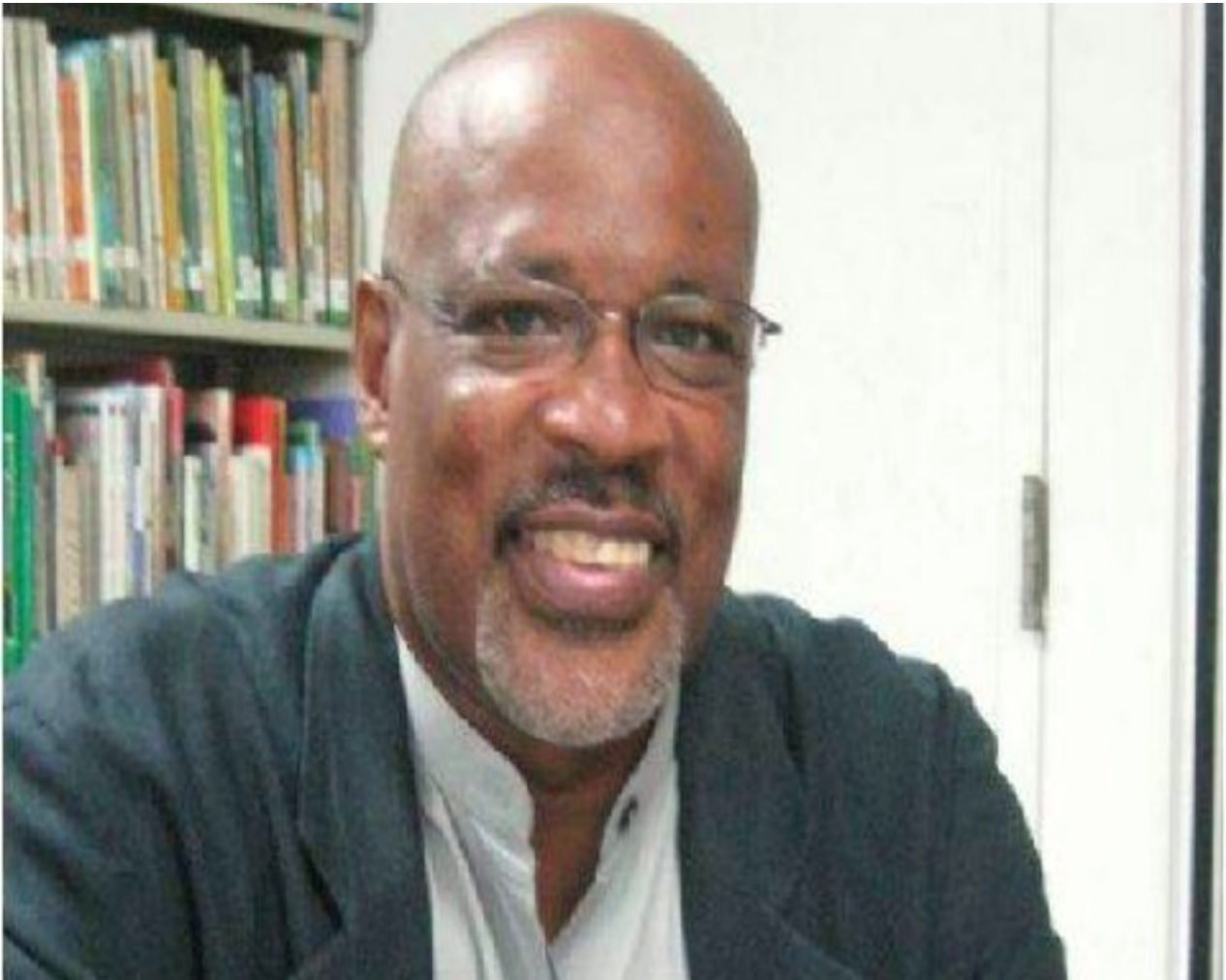


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Elections Board Candidate: "I Did Not Ask For A Recount"

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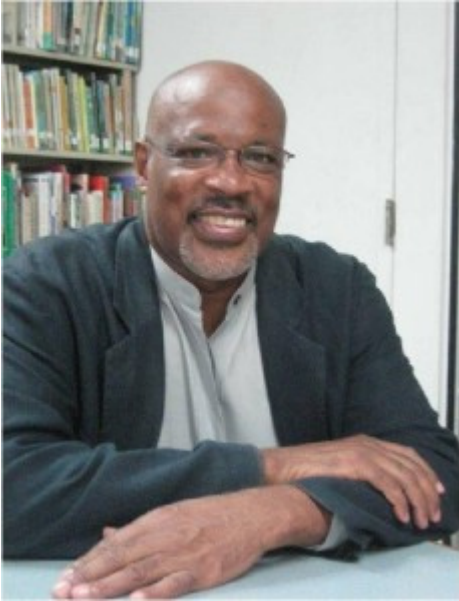
Cynthia Graham **December 14, 2014**



In yet another turn of events surrounding the St. Croix District Board of Elections ongoing recount of votes cast for three candidates in the General Election, one of those candidates, Epiphane Joseph, who made an unsuccessful bid for membership on the Board of Elections, told *VI Consortium* on Friday night that he did not request a recount of his ballots, neither did Sen. Diane Capehart.

"It's as plain as A-B-C, I did not request a recount of any ballots for my seat," Joseph said in a telephone interview. "The affidavit that I signed and I notarized and I submitted to the Supervisor of Elections, on time, was not calling for a recount of the ballots," Joseph explained.

Joseph, who garnered only 2,033 votes in the Nov. 4 General Election, bringing him in at last place in the Elections Board contest, said what he did request of the Supervisor of the Board on his affidavit dated Tuesday, Nov. 25, is a used in the General Election.



Epiphane Joseph

"I asked for a count of the amount of ballots that were ordered, the amount of ballots that were submitted to the different polling stations--the different precincts, the ballots that were spoiled and the ballots that were good ballots and what came back so when you add all, you would definitely come to the number you had from the origin. That's what I asked for, in terms of the count," he explained.

The first page of the signed, dated and notarized nine-page document Joseph submitted to Fawkes and the Elections Board clearly states the reason for the correspondence: "Challenge and Complaint in Regards to the Conduct of Election Officials, Election Process and Election Outcome in Relation to the 2014 General Election."

Click [here](#) to view Joseph's complaint.

Joseph said his reason for requesting a full accounting of the ballots that were ordered is the result of a Joint Boards of Elections meeting held at Gertrude's ahead of the Nov. 4 election when St. Croix Board Chairman Adelbert Bryan was prepared to give a report on the numbers of ballots that had been ordered. But, because a motion was made to adjourn the meeting and quorum was eventually broken, the chairman never had the opportunity to give his report.

"But, knowing Bert, he called over some of the media present [at the meeting], and he said something that stuck with me, in his report he was going to report that there were more ballots than there were voters. I took that to be very serious," he said. "That is one of the reasons I asked for a count, as well as in my affidavit, about some of the other irregularities. That's what I asked. I never asked for a recount."

Joseph went on to say that after submitting his complaint to Fawkes, he did not, however, receive a response from her or anyone on the Elections Board.

"I asked about all of those irregularities and they never responded to me about anything, except that I received a letter from Belardo stating that the recount would start," he said.

Joseph further offered details of a Nov. 26 Elections Board meeting called by Chairman Bryan at 9 a.m. that no Board member, besides Bryan, attended. The agenda for that meeting, Joseph told the *VI Consortium*, had as its only item: "Discussion and decision on Senator Alicia Chucky Hansen Request of 2014 General Election Recount." He supplied a copy of the meeting's agenda to the *VI Consortium*.

Joseph said it was evident Bryan had read his affidavit and was aware he had not requested a recount of ballots, which is why there were no other discussion items on the agenda regarding a recount of votes for him or Capehart.

At 12 p.m. that same day, Nov. 26, Joseph said four Board members convened a meeting on their own, in the absence of Bryan, and it was conducted by Vice-Chairwoman Lilliana Belardo de O'Neal. At that late meeting, Joseph said, there was an even split of votes, 2-2, deciding for and against granting him a recount, something he did not request. Because the vote was split evenly, and there was clearly not a majority, Joseph said a recount should not have been initiated.

A call *VI Consortium* made to Belardo de O'Neal on Saturday night about the events surrounding the recount of Joseph's ballots has not been returned.

When asked what course of action he took as media reports surfaced that he was one of the three candidates that had requested and was granted a recount, Joseph detailed receiving a letter from Belardo de O'Neal on Wednesday, Dec. 3 stating that the recount would begin on Thursday, Dec. 4.

He said he visited the Elections System office on Dec. 4, during the time the recount would take place, and spoke privately to Belardo de O'Neal referencing her email the night before and informing her that he did not request a recount of his ballots.

"I said, 'Did you read my complaint?' She said, 'No, do you have it?' She lied because the chairman gave every last one of them a copy," Joseph said.

He continued: "I said, I have no interest in [a recount]. My concern is all the irregularities," Joseph said, adding that he told Belardo de O'Neal he had written to both the district board and the joint boards about his concerns and had not received a single response from any of the Board members.

He said Belardo de O'Neal then told him he would need to give her "something in writing" in order to validate his claim.

"I said, 'what do I have to give you in writing; you have not responded to me and you're asking me to put something in writing? I have no interest in writing to you because you have not addressed my concerns'," Joseph explained.

He said he then expressed the same sentiments to Fawkes, who had entered the building while he was speaking with Belardo de O'Neal.

"I said, 'Mrs. Fawkes, what I want is a count of the ballots--how many ballots you ordered, how many ballots you gave to the different polling stations; how many were received, how many were used, how many were spoiled,'" he said.

Joseph said he did not get a response from Fawkes that day, as well.

"I realize what you all are up to and I'm going to take my case to the public airwaves," he said were the last words he uttered and left the building.

"I came home and I called Mario [on the radio] and I said, this was the first time I'm calling the station since May, since I was a candidate I could not call, and I made it known, and I made it public, that I did not ask for a recount," he said.

"I cannot understand the things that they do," Joseph said, "it's so blatant."

Joseph says he suspects some members of the Elections Board are using him and Capehart--who Joseph said also did not request a recount, and who had signed and notarized an identical document to his own and submitted it to the Elections Board--as part of a ploy to have Sen. Hansen's ballots recounted. He said it may have looked suspect to only recount the senior senator's ballots, so some members of the board voted to include others in the recount.

A court hearing will be held on Monday in an attempt to permanently stop the recount, as Sen. Nellie Rivera-O'Reilly is stating that the recount is being conducted illegally because Hansen was a write-in candidate and does not have the right to a recount of votes.

The St. Croix District Board will continue recounting ballots for Joseph, Capehart and Hansen Sunday, Dec. 14 at 9 a.m. at the Board of Elections Office in Sunny Isles.

Click [here](#) to see a copy of Hansen's recount request.

Click [here](#) to see the letter Belardo de O'Neal emailed to candidates informing them of when the recount would begin.