

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Education Commissioner, Personnel Director Approved

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Cynthia Graham **February 20, 2015**



The Committee on Rules and Judiciary, chaired by Sen. Kenneth Gittens, Thursday approved Governor Kenneth Mapp's nominations for Commissioner of the Department of Education Sharon Ann McCollum, PhD, and Director of the Div. of Personnel Milton Potter.

According to information released from the Senate's public affairs office, during her testimony, Dr. McCollum shared her vision for raising the Education Department's profile in the community.

"My vision of leadership for the Department of Education requires systemic changes that would include actively engaging the media to transform the public's perception of the services we provide," she said.

Furthermore, Dr. McCollum shared some of the strategies she plans to use to prepare students to meet the challenges of the global marketplace, some of which include: releasing the Third Party Fiduciary with the target date of June 2016, identifying external funding sources to support and develop programs and initiatives, improved student achievement meeting national honors, and change to Schools of Specialization: Gifted and Talented, STEM, fine and performing arts, medical careers, marine industry, hydroponics and more.

Attorney Judy Gomez testified on Dr. McCollum's behalf.

"Dr. Sharon McCollum's eagerness to push the frontiers of learning, her extensive classroom exposure, her exceptional instructional and leadership qualities, her ability to lead, care and develop interpersonal skills with all stakeholders make her eminently qualified to serve as your next Commissioner of Education," Gomez said.

In response to Sen. Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly's inquiry of the three important skills a leader should have, Dr. McCollum said leaders should be able to foster positive relationships with the people they lead, establish a solid foundation, and to be an effective manager.

Sen. Novelle Francis, Jr. asked Dr. McCollum of the plans she has to "reach a struggling student."

Pointing out that that is a challenge many schools face, Dr. McCollum said, "It is important to involve the student in an activity that interests him or her. Music, sports and hydroponics are examples of activities that a student can participate in in exchange for good grades."

When it comes to the territory's libraries, Sen. Gittens asked Dr. McCollum if she believed they were appropriately placed under the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

Dr. McCollum said that while she hadn't given much thought to Gittens' question before, she sees the need for there to be greater synergy between the schools and libraries, and that the territory's library hours should be extended to accommodate students more regularly.

Committee members voted favorably for McCollum's nomination, as did they for Potter's.

The nomination of Lawrence Olive, director-designee of the Department of Motor Vehicles, was held in committee.

All approved nominations will be forwarded to the full body for further consideration.

Feature Image: Dr. Sharon McCollum

