

The Virgin Islands Consortium

JFL CEO's Position To Be Evaluated, Board Not Consulted On Pay Raises, Retroactive Pay

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Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center (JFL) is making headlines again this week, as late Friday the hospital's governing board of directors issued a statement revealing it was never consulted in the matter of pay raises, amounting to \$720,000, or retroactive pay given to employees of the cash-strapped hospital.

The board said it wanted to clear up "misconceptions" coming from the [recent Senate hearing](#) that it had any prior knowledge that pay raises would be given out, revealing it learned of the hospital's decision only days before the Feb. 24 hearing.

"Never at any time was the board of directors consulted regarding pay-raises nor retroactive pay for JFLH employees. The Board gained knowledge of the raises just days before the committee meeting," the statement began.

Signed by all five board members, including Anthony Ricketts, MD, Troy De Chabert-Schuster, Philip Arcidi, Kimberly Jones and Joyce Heyliger, RN, the statement said, in fact, that "an affirmation and reinstatement of the March 27, 2013 Board directive instituting a hiring and salary freeze had been voted on and unanimously ratified during a meeting of the District Governing Board in January 2015. During that same meeting, there was a request for a report of rumored retroactive payments."

The Luis Hospital falls under the purview of the Senate's Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services, chaired by Sen. Kurt Violet. The committee grilled JFL CEO Dr. Kendall Griffith and the three board members present at the hearing, with most of the questioning focused on the pay raises and retroactive pay the hospital gave in late 2014, at a time when it was, and still is, grappling to stay afloat — [owing more than \\$50 million](#) to its lenders and struggling to make payroll.

According to the governing board's statement, current policy at JFL dictates that pay raises below the \$100,000 threshold can be given without board approval; however, the board says it will be examining this policy and "will potentially lower the \$100,000 threshold and/or change the protocol altogether."

In the wake of the controversy, the hospital's governing board late Friday issued a new plan for JFL calling it, "A Vision for SIA Success." The plan pinpoints areas where the board hopes to breathe new life, including the CEO position.

The board says its "success" plan is a part of its efforts to gain Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) re-certification this summer, and includes:

1. Inclusion of staff, patients and community in the SIA monitoring
2. Improving financial acumen- formally presenting an accurate and correct financial picture
3. Instituting appropriate and qualified staff to unit division ratios
4. Re-establishing a functional office for legal counsel
5. Instituting a media and marketing plan for JFLH services
6. Evaluation of the CEO and guidance by the Board
7. Enhanced relationship with the District Governing Board of the Schneider Regional Medical Center

VI Consortium caught up with Dr. Griffith at the hospital on Friday and asked about the information revealed in the hospital board's statement. Griffith, however, said he had "no comment."

Although it currently has a quorum with five members, JFL's governing board needs four additional members to operate at full capacity. It has forwarded a request to Governor Mapp for the additional members, "to ensure that the Board is truly representative of the entire community on St. Croix."

At the close of its statement, JFL's governing board thanked Sen. Violet, Governor Mapp and President of the 31st Legislature Neville James for "their commitment to the

Governor Juan F Luis Hospital and Medical Center, its employees and the community we serve."

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