

The Virgin Islands Consortium

True Price Of Mapp's Former Monthly Rental Expected At Upcoming Senate Hearing

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ST. THOMAS -- Senate President Neville James has designated July 1 as the day members of the 31st Legislature will meet at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall for a Committee of the Whole hearing, where residency and housing issues currently affecting Governor Kenneth Mapp and Lieutenant Governor Obsbert Potter will be discussed.

There, it is expected that the true monthly expense of Mapp's former monthly rental at Estate Nazareth will be revealed, because other costs not yet accounted for will be disclosed.

Topics to be discussed at the July 1 meeting include, but are not limited to the following:

- Statutory requirements of the Governor to reside in the capitol per the Revised Organic Act of 1954 § 11
- Statutory requirements determining the residency of the Lt Governor per the Revised Organic Act of 1954 § 11.
- Incurred debt and non-payments in lieu of taxes of the West Indian Co. Ltd to the GVI.
- Board Resolution and Lease Agreement between WICO and GVI for Villa Fratelli Cresta rental
- Cost and living expenses accrued at Villa Fratelli Cresta by The GVI and WICO.
- The current condition of Estate Catherineberg, the traditional gubernatorial residence.

James said the purpose of the meeting is to give senators an opportunity to carefully review all documents associated with the matters at hand, receive testimony from representatives of all parties involved, and discuss solutions to find suitable residence for the territory's current and future governors and lieutenant governors.

"We want an open, fair and transparent discussion about this situation," James said. "Housing for the Governor and Lt. Governor should never be treated as a political issue, it is very much a matter of public policy that can be resolved if the Legislature and Executive Branch work together to put this waning issue to rest," he added.

The Senate president said that appropriate steps will be taken if wrongdoing is found. He also expressed frustration with the seemingly never-ending problem of residency for the territory's governors. James is hoping that the Committee of the Whole hearing will be the beginning of a welcomed end on the matter.

"If the Body concludes that there was any wrongdoing, we will deal with it accordingly," said James. "History seems to keep repeating itself every time a new governor is elected and they determine that Estate Catherineberg is not suitable enough to live. This hearing is a step in identifying or possibly re-establishing a safe and protected home for the governor of the Virgin Islands to reside in."