

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor Mapp Should Have Permanent Home Within Two Weeks; Randolph Knight Says

Politics / **Published On October 02, 2015 01:17 PM /**

Staff **October 02, 2015**



THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp's current lodging [at the Ritz-Carlton](#) when in the territory's capital may be more expensive than Villa Fratelli Cresta, the 7-bedroom, 9-bathroom home that the chief executive [stayed in for four months](#) while here.

But according to Randolph Knight, Mapp's chief of staff and chairman of WICO's board, the governor should have a permanent residence that costs "far less" than the amount WICO paid for the Estate Nazareth home, and certainly less than funds being expended for the governor's stay at the Ritz-Carlton here.

Knight, in responding to questions posed by Sen. Marvin Blyden, said the agreement should be completed within two weeks, and that it will be a private home. For security reasons, Knight abstained from giving more details, but senators were pleased to hear that an agreement was forthcoming, hoping to bring to an end the scandal that has beset the Mapp administration like a stubborn malady.

Senator Novelle Francis asked Mr. Knight whether there was anything the administration could have done better in hindsight. He said the runoff election had set the transition team back considerably, and his main concern for the governor, considering the times, was security.

"It was a very long search," Knight said. "Mr. Ashby's residence was the best option at the time. It was not an ideal contract, but that's what the market supported."

Mr. Ashby told senators that the value of his property cost more than what the government was paying for it; adding that the arrangement, to him, was a simple business contract and was confused as to why he was called to testify under oath.

"I'm a business man providing a simple customer service: quality residence, modern amenities, and a peace of mind, peace and security," he said. "And I really don't understand why I'm here today. I provided a service and that's all I did. The government approached me about a residence, I sat with the government, gave a price, we made up a rental agreement and that's as far as it went."

The housing scandal broke out in earnest after an apparent miscommunication with Government House's Communications Director, Kimberly Jones, who, according to Knight, told local newspaper The St. Croix Avis, that the rental cost for the governor's Estate Nazareth residence was "for thousands", which was interpreted as "four thousand".

Sen. Kurt Vialet, however, told Knight that Government House could have fixed the problem by immediately clarifying the matter, and subsequently providing the correct information with supporting documents. Instead, the back and forth with reports of the rental costs jumping from \$4,000 to \$12,500, then \$14,000 and ultimately over \$20,000, created a perception that the Mapp administration was spending carelessly at a time when residents were struggling to make ends meet.