

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dr. Tonjia Coverdale, V.I.N.G.N. CEO, Resigns

Business / **Published On March 10, 2016 10:35 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **March 10, 2016**



ST. THOMAS -- Dr. Tonjia Coverdale, president and chief executive officer of the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network (V.I.N.G.N.), has resigned from the semiautonomous entity, following a highly anticipated [board meeting](#) today in St. Thomas.

"I resigned," was all Dr. Coverdale told The Consortium this afternoon, following attempts by the publication to clarify rumors that she had been made redundant by the board; its chairman being Governor Kenneth Mapp. Her resignation will come as a surprise to many, as Dr. Coverdale has been an ardent advocate for V.I.N.G.N., and as recently as February, expressed optimism to senators who make up the Committee on Economic Development, Agriculture & Planning, about the future of the company.

"My goal is to make sure that this technology touches every Virgin Islander because I really understand the potential that it has to transform the economy. So I strove to be very truthful and I know that there are a lot of feathers that I ruffled," Dr. Coverdale said in her closing remarks during the February hearing. She had revealed that her vision for the company as president and CEO was not shared by its board of directors, as members wanted to use V.I.N.G.N. as a service to help government agencies upgrade their networks to 21st Century standards, while Dr. Coverdale, although being in agreement with their stance, also wanted to turn V.I.N.G.N. into a money-making powerhouse for the government.

Understanding V.I.N.G.N.'s prowess, Dr. Coverdale said that major firms -- including one that wanted to invest \$1 billion in an undisclosed project on St. Croix — had been in talks to use the V.I.N.G.N.'s service. She also argued that just one such client could yield roughly \$1 million a month for the territory, an estimate that piqued the interest of Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly and others.

But, almost prophetically, the highly educated Coverdale predicted her end as head of V.I.N.G.N. and as a member of its board, acknowledging that she had "ruffled feathers" during the Senate hearing, when she revealed that her vision was seen by the board as divergent.

"My goal was to make sure that if I'm not sitting here and this is my last time addressing you guys, that you would know what the technology can do. And don't let anybody tell you that it can't do it. Think big and understand that we really do have the power," she said.

At today's brief board meeting, V.I.N.G.N.'s [annual review](#) was the matter up for discussion. There, Dr. Coverdale said the company's financials were improving, and expressed optimism moving forward, and ways in which she intended to accomplish growth.

Governor Mapp, however, took exception with a portion of the review that showed a performance-based incentive that gives employees an extra holiday each quarter. Mr. Mapp said he was amazed that Dr. Coverdale could make this decision without consulting the board. But Dr. Coverdale countered, stating that V.I.N.G.N. employees work around the clock -- even when they're at their homes -- and the incentive is another way to help keep morale up.

"I can see me and you are not going to get along today," the governor said.

The meeting was adjourned, the board moved into executive session, and Dr. Coverdale resigned.