

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Financial Crisis: Mapp Executive Order Gives Finance Commissioner Vast Power Over Gov't Finances

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A executive order obtained by The Virgin Islands Consortium that Governor Kenneth Mapp signed since February 8, places vast control over the government's finances in direct control of the territory's Finance commissioner, a position currently held by Valdamier Collens, seen above. The order is separate from [another executive order signed by Mr. Mapp](#) aimed at limiting government expenditures by suspending non-essential hiring, use of vehicles and travel, as well as wage negotiations.

The executive order appears to be aimed at reconstructing the Government of the Virgin Islands' finances for better management, stating that the GVI has a responsibility to use "timely, reliable and comprehensive financial information when making decisions which

have an impact on citizens' lives and livelihoods." It deems the current structure "misaligned," which the order says has caused "longstanding financial management concerns."

The Department of Finance (D.O.F.) has developed a "Statement of Policies and Procedures" as well as other rules and regulations "to serve as best practices and to provide step by step on how tasks are to be processed from inception to completion, along with the internal controls to be implemented and performed," according to the order. (See full order below this article.)

The order gives Mr. Collens direct and indirect oversight of all financial management related to functions of the executive branch. It also directs Mr. Collens to establish rules and regulations for a centralized management organizational structure within D.O.F., to be known as Office of Fiscal Management and Reporting (OFMR).

Some of the OFMR's duties include:

- Providing direction to the existing financial management related to subordinate units across the department and agencies within the executive branch.
- Direct and coordinate the central government's activities related to financial plans, financial management, financial reporting, financial analysis, and compliance with budget and financial plan of the GVI.
- Gives the commissioner of Finance the authority to, 1) Determine placement of all finance, budget and non-exclusive federal grants related to positions, including the selection and removal of incumbents within the OFMR, and to make recommendations to the governor and respective commissioners and agency directors as to the other central government departments, divisions and agencies. 2) Create or modify job titles, roles, responsibilities and positions with the OFMR. 3) Make recommendations to the governor as well as agency and department heads as to the creation, modification of job titles, roles, responsibilities and positions relating to finance throughout the central government. 4) Make recruitment, hiring, retention, demotion, reassignment and any other related personnel recommendations to the governor, as well as to each of the other central government's various departments, divisions and agency directors concerning the central government's finance and budgeting personnel.

In a [wide-ranging interview](#) with this publication two weeks ago, Mr. Collens alluded to changes coming at D.O.F. He mentioned what he called areas of excess capacity with no accountability, which Mr. Collens said needed to be eliminated. He said the government lacked structure, and mentioned an item within the governor's five-year plan that calls for reorganizing all the finance officers under D.O.F.

"That's a good thing because first of all there will be better accountability. Number 2, we can get officers to follow policies and procedures as written versus a CFO telling me, 'I have to get back to you on that, I have to get back to my commissioner.' Those days have to be over," he said. The restructuring will also help identify who the best CFOs and deputy CFOs are, and who the best analysts are that fall under those directors.

"Everybody else will either have to be retooled or, you know, that excess capacity goes away," he said.

Mr. Collens also spoke of restructuring the IT operation in the government. "Lots of IT professionals throughout our government, but they have no structure. If you reorganize them and figure out who the best are, you reorganize them under BIT, it will better serve the government, and you may figure out that there's a bit of excess capacity IT officers that are not necessarily IT officers. So this is good for us," he said.

The order also gave structure to the OFMR, and establishes 9 chief financial officers within the OFMR, "who shall be deemed employees of the Department of Finance, and have all the functions, associated powers, duties, rights, and responsibilities as assigned by the commissioner of Finance."

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