The Virgin Islands Consortium

Former Port Authority Supervisor Pleads Guilty to Embezzling Over $200K

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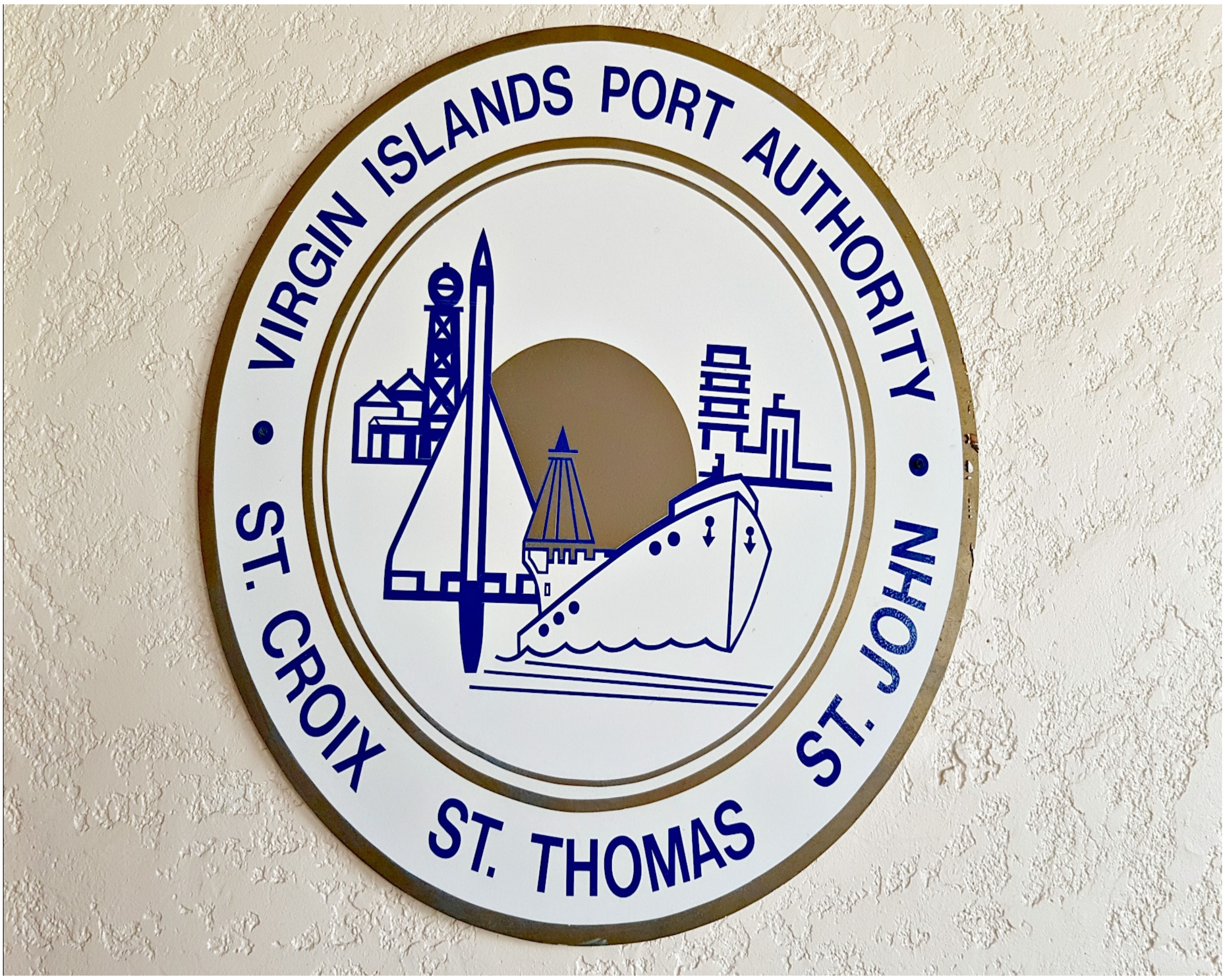

ST. CROIX – After pleading guilty to spending more than $200,000 of public funds without authorization, former V.I. Port Authority Purchasing Supervisor Lydia Cabret faces possible jail time at sentencing next month.

In November of 2015, Ms. Cabret was arrested and charged with the following: (1) embezzlement of public accounts (2) criminally influenced and corrupt organizations embezzlement of public funds (3) obtaining money by false pretenses, and (4) unauthorized use of credit card.

This March she pleaded guilty to the first charge – embezzlement of public accounts – via a plea agreement that would free her of all the other charges in exchange. Ms. Cabret's plea deal also guarantees that the government cannot reopen the case in the future.

According to V.I. law, the penalty for embezzlement of public accounts is a fine of no more than $10,000, or imprisonment for up to 10 years, or both imprisonment and a fine. The plea deal signed by both Ms. Cabret's lawyer, H. Hannibal O'Bryan, and Assistant Attorney General Joseph Ponteen doesn't specify what Ms. Cabret's penalty would be.

However, V.I. Attorney General Claude Walker confirmed early this morning that his office will be requesting the full jail time during the sentencing on July 25 at the Superior Court. But it's up to the judge to decide how much time Ms. Cabret will spend in prison. In addition to the $10,000 fine, Ms. Cabret will also have to pay back the amount of the misused funds, by law, and will be given time to do so, according to Mr. Walker.

For over a year, Ms. Cabret spent hundreds of thousands of government funds on goods and services outside the scope of her post as the Authority's purchasing supervisor.

According to an affidavit signed by Leonardo Carrion, a special agent from the V.I. Department of Justice, the evidence points to Ms. Cabret's misuse of a V.I.P.A. credit card to make cash advances totaling $213,095.58 between February of 2014 and June of 2015. During that time period, the credit card was also used to purchase parts from Rock Auto online in the amount of $2,000 for vehicles that the V.I.P.A. didn't own. Those vehicles included a Mercedes Benz E500, a Toyota 4Runner, a Chevy Corvette and a BMW 328CI.

Other purchases on the card, as outlined in the affidavit, included the following:

- Amazon Marketplace – $2,490.60
- American Airlines – $1,308.76
- AT&T – $644.55
- Batista Auto Sale – $2,076.00
- Chief Supply – $6,000.00
- Boatzines – $40.00
- Paradise Freight – $3,142.68
- One Travel Com Air – $634.00
- Officemax – $634.00
- Kmart – $308
- JPAY – $825.00
- Paypal – $1,790.75
- Ebay – $333.99
- The Tire Rack – $2,410.48
- V. I. Water and Power Authority – $127.59

Ms. Cabret was reportedly the only employee to have a company visa card. According to the affidavit, Ms. Cabret admitted to using the card for personal purposes when questioned by V.I.P.A.'s internal auditor, Tonya Pickering, in November of 2015.

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