

The Virgin Islands Consortium

JFL CEO And CFO Said They Reported Suspected Medicare Fraud To The Feds. Today, They Were Fired.

VIC News / **Published On September 07, 2018 11:21 PM /**

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Wanda Reuben, JFL's new CEO, responds to question posed during a town hall meeting held at the hospital in November 2017. (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

ST. CROIX -- The Territorial Hospital Board has decided to let go the Juan F. Luis Hospital Chief Executive Officer Wanda Reuben and its Chief Financial Officer Deepak Bansal, according to a release the territorial board issued Friday.

The board said it will seek a consulting firm "to provide highly experienced interim leadership (CEO and CFO) to oversee recovery efforts and improvements in the day-to-

day operations of the hospital." According to the release, this action will be contingent upon the Senate's approval of the merging of the two hospitals, an action Governor Kenneth Mapp has said he would initiate.

The board gave no explanation as to its actions, but Ms. Reuben, who spoke with The Consortium late Friday, said the board decided today not to renew her contract without giving her a reason. Ms. Reuben said she was served by Dr. Olivine Treasure and Department of Health Commissioner Michelle Davis. She said she was presented with a document to sign that would bind her from speaking on the inner workings of the hospital; agreeing to the terms would make her eligible for one month's severance pay, she said.

But Ms. Reuben, whose tenure as CEO would be one year in October, said she refused to sign the document.

The fired CEO said she had uncovered what appeared to be medicare fraud at the hospital, specifically with one physician, and informed both the U.S. and local Office of the Inspector General. The local I.G., she said, would soon commence a preliminary investigation. Mr. Bansal was also a party in reporting the suspected fraud, Ms. Reuben said.

Ms. Reuben stressed that she was a victim of a particular board member's angst, after this board member asked Ms. Reuben to rehire someone the hospital had fired. The former CEO said she did look into the matter, but after reviewing the case, she concluded that the hospital had strong cause for terminating the employee.

"This board member was upset and started finding cause with everything I did," Ms. Reuben said. She contended that the board has been the cause of many problems facing the territory's medical facilities. Ms. Reuben did not reveal the identity of the board member, fired employee, nor the physician said to be under investigation for medicare fraud.

The Consortium was informed this morning by a trusted source that a sweeping change of leadership was to take place at the Juan F. Luis Hospital today. The action was described as a coup of sorts, with J.F.L.'s top brass being let go.

According to the board's press release, Dyma Williams, the hospital's current corporate compliance officer and risk manager, was chosen as J.F.L.'s acting chief executive officer.

Chosen as chief operating officer was long-time JFL employee Angeline Ravariere, who has served as administrative team member working with regulatory compliance and facilities management, according to the release. As for chief financial officer, the board chose Shenel Moorehead to lead the role.