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Senators Amend Gas Station Ban Law to Patch Permit Issuance Loophole; Bryan Nominees for Six Boards Advance

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Senator Novelle Francis abstained from voting on the gas station moratorium measure Thursday, himself a gas station owner on St. Croix. By. VI LEGISLATURE

The Committee on Rules and Judiciary heard testimony Wednesday from six board nominees chosen by Governor Bryan, all of whom received favorable votes and their nominations forwarded to the full body for further consideration. Lawmakers also amended the gas station ban law to patch a loophole.

The boards with would-be members under consideration were VI Board of Land Use Appeals, VI Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyor, VI Coastal Zone Management Commission,

VI Taxicab Commission, UVI Board of Trustees and VI Board of General Contractors.

Jeffery Boschulte was nominated for two boards: VI Board of Land Appeals and the VI Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyor. According to his testimony, Mr. Boschulte attended All Saints Cathedral School and his first architect and engineering jobs were in high school. He received his bachelor's degree at the University of Virginia and master's of architecture at Georgia Tech.

Mr. Boschulte opened his own firm in 2002 and became certified by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB). Both of his nominations were forwarded unanimously.

Ryan Wisheart was nominated for the Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyor, and moved to the Virgin Islands in 1999 where worked for Brian Mosely and Associates before purchasing the company in 2012. He is a graduate of Purdue University with a bachelor of science degree in land surveying. He was licensed as a land surveyor in 2002.

Elissa Runyon was nominated for the VI Coastal Zone Management Commission. She has lived in St. John since the late 1970's and is a real estate appraiser. Her priorities listed in her testimony were beach access, hotel reconstruction and extending the coastal zone.

Franklin Brathwaite Sr. was nominated for the VI Taxicab Commission and graduated from Ivanna Eudora Kean school. He has had a part-time taxi cab since the late 80's and became a full-time operator in 2011 after retiring as a P.E. teacher for the Virgin Islands Department of Education after 29 years.

Julio King was nominated for VI Board of General Contractors and has over 35 years in the construction industry, and moved back to the territory in 1984. He started his own firm J.U.B. King & Assoc. Inc. in 1995.

Henry Smock was re-nominated for the UVI Board of Trustees and has a lot of experience with the university. Besides being a member on the board of trustees, he has taught at the university and UVI CELL, and his son also attended UVI. Mr. Smock is the current chair of the UVI Board of Trustees and the chair of the Virgin Islands Academic & Cultural Awards Endowments Board. When asked how long he has served on the board by Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, he jokingly said, "Do I really have to answer?" He finally responded, "I was first appointed by Governor Schneider."

The committee also voted in favor of Bill 34-0010, which amends the original gas station five-year halt bill. The original measure issued a moratorium on the provision of licenses for gas stations. It did not, however, block the issuance of gas station permits, issued through the Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources, and therefore created a loophole that allowed current license holders to move forward with construction.

According to bill sponsor Sen. Janelle Sarauw, there are currently six pending permits before D.P.N.R. for four new gas stations on St. Thomas and two on St. Croix. St. Thomas has 32 gas stations in operation, St. Croix 30 and St. John 3 – a total of 65 gas stations in the small U.S. territory.

Through this amendment, the pending six permits, if they are not approved before the measure becomes law, will be rejected, Ms. Sarauw said.

Five Senators voted in support of the measure, while Senator Novelle Francis abstained from the vote, himself an owner of multiple gas stations on St. Croix along with his brother. Senator Steven Payne was absent.

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