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# Senate Cancels Friday's WAPA Hearing After Failed Attempts to Reach Consensus With Sen. Carla Joseph

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Ernice Gilbert **March 18, 2021**

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**Senator Carla Joseph** By. CHAUNTE HERBERT, LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS.

Freshman Senator Carla Joseph was not pleased that the Committee of the Whole hearing on the V.I. Water and Power Authority was held Tuesday. She was nettled because her committee, which has jurisdiction over government operations and consumer affairs, had scheduled a WAPA hearing for Friday.

The senator expressed her displeasure by using her entire 10 minutes during the first round of questioning on Tuesday, when testifiers were under oath, to read two letters she had sent to key testifiers instead of asking questions. Thirteen senators [signed a petition](#) — Senator Steven Payne

is recovering from Covid-19 — to hold the Committee of the Whole hearing Tuesday. Ms. Joseph did not.

Community members were unimpressed at what they saw as petty behavior, and they [shared their dissatisfaction with the department online](#).

After reading the two invitation letters into the record, Ms. Joseph said, "While I respect my colleagues signing onto the petition, I didn't sign it because I saw that we were going to already deal with this critical issue. It is a bit of a disappointment to me that we could not have wait[ed] because the ball was already in court and I had already sent out all of these letters and gotten confirmation to find out what, exactly is happening."

On Thursday, after failing to reach consensus with Ms. Joseph, the Majority Caucus signed a petition to cancel the Friday hearing.

The Senate's press release on the cancellation reads, "Pursuant to a petition by a majority of the members of the 34th Legislature, please be advised that the Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Affairs meeting scheduled for Friday, March 19, 2021 is hereby cancelled.

"After several attempts to have the agenda modified to remove items discussed in the Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 to no avail, the meeting is cancelled to protect the integrity of the institution."

Senate sources say Majority Leader Sen. Marvin Blyden and other lawmakers attempted to reach consensus with Ms. Joseph to no avail. The sources said Mr. Blyden tried to convince Ms. Joseph to hold the hearing on the bills relating to WAPA that were removed from the agenda on Tuesday, however, she wouldn't budge.

Ms. Joseph on Thursday afternoon told the Consortium that if Mr. Blyden wanted to communicate, he could have done so in writing. The senator said she did not want to change her agenda to hear testimony on the bills because she wanted to give potential testifiers time to prepare.

The freshman senator said that coming from a federal background, she had specific questions to ask the WAPA board members and executives, including information yet to be revealed. "I do have some probing questions to ask and would have loved the opportunity," she said.

Asked why she didn't ask those questions Tuesday instead of using her 10 minutes to read invitation letters, Ms. Joseph said she read the letters to demonstrate transparency. "I thought it would be beneficial to our people to see that transparency, that's what I thought," she said.

In closing, Ms. Joseph stated, "I'm here to do the people's work, I'm here to be a team player, I can be reached and I communicate, I collaborate in order for us to find common ground."

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