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## Public Works Nominee for Commissioner and 9 Board Members Forwarded to Full Body Following Vetting in Rules and Judiciary Committee

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### Derek Gabriel

The Senate Committee on Rules and Judiciary heard testimony Thursday from ten persons and advanced their nominations to various positions across the territory, most notably Derek Gabriel, Governor Albert Bryan's pick for commissioner of the Dept. of Public Works.

Board nominees that were forwarded to the full body, if approved, would serve on the Virgin Islands Public Services Commission, Board of Social Work Licensure, Virgin Islands Board of Pharmacy, Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority Board, UVI Board of Trustees, Board of Mariculture and Aquaculture, Virgin Islands Real Estate Commission, and the Virgin Islands

Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors.

Mr. Gabriel has worked at APTIM — one of the largest disaster recovery and infrastructure companies in North America — for fifteen years, according to his testimony. He has also worked within the government of the Virgin Islands for ten years.

“My experiences gave me perspective into the importance of building a strong team of professionals dedicated to excellence in their specific subject area,” he said during testimony. “I believe in trusting your team to provide recommendations, based on their area of expertise, to allow you as the organizational leader to make the best decisions possible.”

Mr. Gabriel also spoke of his goals if he were to become the D.P.W. commissioner. “My goal is to ensure that each member of my team is empowered to make decisions they believe are in the best interest of the department and territory,” he said. “I have given each manager my personal commitment to work hand in hand to make sure they have the resources needed.”

His three short-term goals for the department are:

- Comprehensively assess the department and its current strategic vision
- Develop a more robust communications and outreach plan
- Prioritize upcoming D.P.W. projects for resource alignment

His long-term goals are:

- Establish a Territorial Cemetery Enhancement Plan
- Establish an engineering recruitment and scholarship program
- Convert 20 percent of the department’s fleet to electric vehicles by 2026

He said, “I strongly believe my long-term goals provide for long-term stability in some of the most critical areas.”

Asked by Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory what was his response to those who doubt his ability to lead D.P.W. because he lacks a background in engineering, Mr. Gabriel stated. “I’ve been saying it to my management team since day one, I focus on the business side of Public Works.”

Mr. Gabriel said he recognized that the projects are technical in nature but there is a business element to the department as well. He said he has focused on “identifying gaps that we have and finding resources to fill those gaps, so we started stripping away all the non-technical, non-engineering issues that engineers and technical folks are dealing with.”

This strategy takes the procurement process away from the engineers which frees up their time, said the commissioner-nominee, who also stated he will focus on future-planning.

### **Other nominees**

Pedro Williams, a nominee for the Virgin Islands Public Services Commission, moved to the Virgin Islands when he was six years old and graduated from Charlotte Amalie High School

before heading to the University of Texas School of Law where he earned a doctor of jurisprudence degree.

In private practice, Mr. Williams has represented the Board of Trustees of the Government Employees' Retirement System, the Virgin Islands Board of Education, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. He has also served on a variety of both public and private boards, to include: the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority, Legal Services of the Virgin Islands, Women's Resource Center, the Virgin Islands Bar Association, the Virgin Islands Law Revision Commission, and Prophecy Academy Inc.

Amialyn A. Augustus, a licensed social worker practicing in St. Croix, is a nominee to the Board of Social Work Licensure and her nomination was favorably approved as well.

She was born on St. Croix and graduated from the University of the Virgin Islands with a degree in psychology and a masters' in public administration. She has served 20 years as a social worker.

Amy Durand, a nominee to the Virgin Islands Board of Pharmacy, was born in St. Thomas and graduated from U.V.I.

She received her doctorate of pharmacy degree at Nova Southeastern University and moved back to St. Thomas in 2008. While in St. Thomas, she was offered a job at the Havensight Pharmacy. Ms. Durand was the staff pharmacist until early 2015 when she and her husband purchased the pharmacy.

Maureen Burke-Ventura is under consideration for the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority Board.

She is from St. Croix and received a bachelor's degree in architecture from Howard University before returning to the territory for an internship. After her internship, Mrs. Burke-Ventura accepted a reviewer II position at the Department of Public Works, Division of Building Permits (transferred to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources), and received a promotion to chief building inspector after one year on the job. She is presently at Banco Popular as the assistant vice president and manager of facilities and interior services for the Virgin Islands region.

Erica Johnson was nominated to the Board of Trustees of the University of the Virgin Islands.

Ms. Johnson has a master's degree in public relations management from the University of Maryland and is an experienced public affairs professional and communications strategist with broad corporate relations experience in government relations and political affairs, brand public relations, reputation management, employee and executive communications and community affairs. In her current position, she leads communications and community relations for Diageo USVI.

Kirk Lewis is a nominee for the Board of Mariculture and Aquaculture. Mr. Lewis graduated from the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School and is a science teacher there. Mr. Lewis developed the first aquaponic system in the Virgin Islands public school system.

Karen Korsgren was nominated to the Virgin Islands Real Estate Commission. She moved to the Virgin Islands in 2004 and has sold real estate in the territory since 2005. She is the current Board of Realtors director.

Damian Cartwright is a nominee for the Virgin Islands Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors.

Mr. Cartwright has a bachelor of science degree with honors from the University of Florida and has over 20 years of progressive experience in the practice of civil engineering. Mr. Cartwright is also assistant executive director of the V.I. Port Authority.

Raymond Arthur Burton is another nominee for the Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors. He earned a bachelor's of science in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech in 2005, and a master's of arts degree in public administration from the University of the Virgin Islands in 2013. Mr. Burton graduated from the St. Croix Educational Complex and worked at WAPA for 15 years.