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Cannabis Board Selects Agriculture Deputy Commissioner as Executive Director of Office of Cannabis Regulation

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Kyle Murphy **September 30, 2021**

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Hannah Carty By. THE DEPT. OF LICENSING AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Hannah Carty was selected as the executive director of the Virgin Islands Office of Cannabis Regulation (OCR) by the Virgin Islands Cannabis Advisory Board in a meeting on Wednesday afternoon.

Board member doctor Catherine Kean announced the decision after the board returned from an executive session where they contacted Ms. Carty about the decision. "She was able to give us a definitive yes," stated Dr. Kean.

Ms. Carty is currently deputy commissioner of the Department of Agriculture.

Dr. Kean said the vote was unanimous and that Ms. Carty's salary will be \$100,000 annually, with other benefits. Later in the meeting, Richard Evangelista, commissioner of the V.I. Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs and advisor to the board, explained that it would be the same benefits other government employees get such as health insurance and retirement.

Mr. Evangelista said some of the primary duties of the director include "qualifying patients in all areas of the territory, ensuring effectiveness of the dispensaries and the cultivation facilities, the effectiveness of the cannabis testing facilities, and the sufficiency of the regulatory and security safeguards," all of which are outlined in Act No. 8167.

He further explained the importance of selecting a director for the OCR. "Essentially this person is going to be, a play on words, the cultivator of the cannabis advisory board," he said. "They are now tasked with running the Office of Cannabis Regulation. They are going to be our liaison to the actual office that is going to be charged with this; we just have oversight responsibility. They are going to be tasked with making sure the rules and regulations are being published, public comment is permitted and that is why it was integral to the process that we get a director on board."

Ms. Kean said she expects the rules and regulations will be completed in the next three to four weeks. Mr. Evangelista said that initially Ms. Kean will be able to hire at least one assistant.

Commissioner of Agriculture Positive Nelson said while he does not have an exact timeline for when medical marijuana will be available in the territory, he hopes by January that patient qualification will have commenced.

Additionally, the board unanimously approved their officers as follows:

- Chairperson: Dr. Kean
- Co-Chair: Mr. Evangelista
- Secretary and Treasurer Dr. Nicole Craigwell-Syms