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Power Outage in St. Thomas Ends Rare Quorum of V.I. Taxicab Commission Meeting

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WAPA's Randolph Harley Power Plant in St. Thomas. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

On Friday, a rare quorum of the VI Taxicab Commission's governing board was thwarted by a power outage that brought the board meeting to a premature end.

The V.I. Taxicab Commission (VITCC) board, which has been publicly struggling with a [myriad of issues](#), including infrequent meetings and members whose tenures have mostly long expired, announced a public meeting for June 30 at 9:00 a.m.

The activity began without a quorum, something board chair Loretta Lloyd had articulated as a problem the last time she testified before the Senate in May. Despite the board's initial inability to cast meaningful votes of the business before it, attendees nevertheless decided to go through as

much of the agenda as they could despite the lack of quorum.

After a few minutes, board secretary Myrna George announced that there was a quorum of five board members present, and the meeting looked set to proceed apace. Board members were notified that the long-awaited bylaws had been prepared by the board's attorney and sent to members for ratification. Members were asked to sign off on the bylaws by the end of the day if they had not done so already.

An announcement from the chair that the shortage of enforcement officers for the commission would soon be made more acute by the imminent retirement of a member of that cohort was met with questions from board member Sweeney Toussaint. He noted that the short staffing in that department has been a chronic issue at VITCC. "We have known this for quite some time. Has anything been done in anticipation?" he asked.

Unmoved by claims that Executive Director Vernice Gumbs had made the hiring of more enforcement officers a priority, Mr. Toussaint pressed for information about what exactly has been done to address the situation. "At what stage are we in? Did we put an ad in the newspaper looking for new officers?"

Speaking on behalf of the executive director, who is still grappling with health concerns that have left her with little speaking voice, Lloyd indicated that Ms. Gumbs was "working" with the Office of Management and Budget, and noted that there needed to be budget clearance before personnel recruitment ads could be published. Mr. Sweeney was not mollified, however, and expressed displeasure at the lack of movement on the issue. "I have cab drivers on St. Croix... shouting at me for the things that are taking place downtown on the taxi stand in Christiansted, that had been going on for a long time...and the comments about a resolution is just about all we're saying," he complained.

Ms. Gumbs noted that part of the problem when it came to trying to fill the four vacancies that currently exist for that role is the low salary that is being offered for that position, compared with similar roles at other agencies. Based on the commission's current budget, an increase in remuneration was not possible. "We have to have approval from OMB and now she's working on that," the chairman said.

However, while these discussions have been proceeding slowly for years, Mr. Toussaint noted that things were "getting pretty much out of hand" due to the lack of enforcement officers on taxi stands. "Cab drivers are saying that they have to call officers of the Virgin Islands Police Department to resolve some of the things that are happening," he said, asking whether VITCC could approach any other agency for assistance. He moved that the board make a public announcement regarding various challenges facing the body and what the entity was doing to address them. However, without support from any other member, that motion failed.

Moving on to other matters, the chair reported on a meeting held with Governor Albert Bryan on May 25. "He's looking at the board to see what he can do," Ms. Lloyd noted. "I'm still waiting to hear back from him as to what his plans are," she disclosed, stating that until the governor decided to take action, the Taxicab Commission board was in "limbo" because apart from the nine-member board only having seven persons currently active, the terms of all but one of those seven had already expired. "Only one person is legally on the board," Ms. Lloyd stated.

After briefly mentioning legislation concerning pedal cabs and rickshaws that was penned by Senator Marvin Blyden, Lloyd turned to new business. However, before the executive director's report could be read into the record, a power outage affecting St. Thomas and St. John knocked

several board members offline.

After waiting for several minutes to see whether electricity would be restored, a decision was taken to bring the meeting to a close.

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