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Scrappy Taxicab Commission is Scolded in Senate as Hearing is Canceled: Get Your Act Together, Frett-Gregory Chides

Government / **Published On July 18, 2023 05:40 AM /**

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Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, chair of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, announced that the Taxicab Budget Hearing was canceled after failures of the commission both technically and in terms of information. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

The V.I. Taxicab Commission has once again raised the ire of senators, as technical difficulties, missing testifiers, and last-minute submission of information scuppered the commission's scheduled hearing before the Budget, Appropriations and Finance Committee on Monday.

Executive Director Vernice Gumbs was present in the chamber, as was the secretary to the commission's board, Myrna George. Board Chair Loretta Lloyd was granted permission to join

the hearing remotely, however her camera was non-functional. Even after a short recess during which the Legislature's media team tried to assist, Ms. Lloyd's camera issues persisted, meaning that the body could not receive her testimony.

An unimpressed Senator Donna Frett-Gregory took the commission to task for being so unprepared for their hearing. "I want to make sure I put this on the record," she said. "This committee, we are not satisfied with the Taxicab Commission."

Sen. Frett-Gregory, chair of the budget committee, noted that the financial information from the commission, which was supposed to have been sent to the post audit division of the Legislature by May 5 of this year, was over two months late, having only been received by the Senate on July 12. "We continue to experience challenges with the Taxicab Commission, and we are not going to continue to allow the taxicab commission to disrespect the institution," she said.

With Gumbs still experiencing medical issues that have left her unable to speak above a whisper, she had requested that her testimony be read into the record by Ms. George . However, Ms. Frett-Gregory insisted that Gumbs either provide the testimony herself or deputize a board member to do so. With the only board member present remotely seemingly unable to operate her computer's camera, Frett-Gregory decided to scrub the hearing altogether, after ascertaining that the board's Vice Chair Elizabeth Watley had been informed that the commission's budget hearing was scheduled for Monday.

"We are going to adjourn this meeting until such time as the Taxicab Commission can get their act together," Sen. Frett-Gregory decided. "I'm just not that chair."

Before she brought Monday's Senate hearing to an end, the committee chair scolded the Taxicab Commission for its continued failure to interact with the Legislature in a competent manner. "We are not going to continue to allow the disrespect," she said.

The committee chair threatened to have the Legislature make the decision on what budget to appropriate for the commission if they are not able to field an acceptable slate of testifiers, or to provide information that was still outstanding. "That's where we are heading," she warned.

The senator requested of Gumbs, the commission's executive director, information about the commission's 2023 revenue generation, following which a determination would be made on how to proceed with a budget for the upcoming financial year.

During budget hearings for fiscal year 2023, the commission was unable to account for the majority of its operating proceeds, leading then-chair of the Finance Committee Kurt Vialet to [call for an audit](#) of the agency by the inspector general.