

## **GOVERNOR'S NOMINEES GET COMMITTEE NOD**

**Date :** July 25, 2019

ST. THOMAS--The Committee

on Rules and Judiciary chaired by Senator Janelle Sarauw held confirmation hearings on Wednesday in the Earl B. Ottley

Legislative Hall, St. Thomas

to

consider several nominees sent down by the Governor of the Virgin Islands.

Raymond

Williams, Nominee for the Directorship of the VI Lottery (VIL) said that they are looking at new opportunities to enhance and make the traditional games more competitive and attractive. In this way, they are considering moving to a weekly drawing and reassessing the prizes along with the costs of tickets.

He

added that they have had preliminary discussions with the Property and Procurement about printing their tickets, as currently, tickets are printed by an off-island contractor. Furthermore, to enhance ticket sales, they would have their vendors incorporate debit/credit card purchases, in addition to cash sales.

Dr.

Vincentia Paul-Constantin, Nominee to the VI Board of Licensed Counselors and Examiners said in her presentation that hospitals in the territory are not equipped to handle the everyday needs of mental patients, and the schools are ill-prepared to accommodate students who have significant learning disabilities, and emotional and behavioral challenges.

She

pointed out that issues and challenges impacting the mental health care and

substance abuse system in the Virgin Islands are; (1) Limited qualitative and quantitative data for system oversight planning and evaluation; (2) fragmented system of care; (3) lack of transitional programs, acute care to outpatient services, and related support services; (4) serious gaps in services/continuum of services, and a need to include suicide prevention and services for the homeless who are mentally ill; and (2) dwindling funding for mental health and substance abuse.

She

told the Committee that as a candidate for committee membership of the proposed board, she brings a wholistic view of experience, education, and expertise.

Hugo

Vincent Hodge, Jr., Nominee to the VI Horse Racing Commission said his understanding of sports, horse racing, he possesses a strong skillset in organizational behavior, planning, operations, and regulatory management.

He

told the Committee that he fully understands the nature of the conflict of interest. As a horse owner and a board member, he understands the importance of recusing himself from any vote on an issue where it might personally benefit him.

His

short-term goals, he said is to ally regional tracks that allow for a balanced, conflict-free, racing calendar; incentive for native breeding; proper functioning pari-mutuel; and proper track surfacing.

His

long-term goals, he added, are stable and affordable inter-island transportation for horse owners; simulcasting nationally of local races; and

development of a local horse racing industry that includes more frequent racing inclusive of claiming stakes.

Shane

Benjamin, Nominee to the VI Horse Racing Commission said over the years he has moved from being a groomer to owning his horses. He stated that he also acquired an owner's license at Gulfstream Park and has been a board member of the St. Thomas/St. John Horsemen Association since 2015.

His

goals, he pointed out are: (1) move horse racing from a hobby or sport in becoming an industry and to inform and educate the local horse owners, trainers, grooms, and exercise riders; (2) creating rules and regulations to keep all who are involved in a race day safe; (3) monitor and make sure that promoters are abiding by the rules and their commitment to the Horsemen Association and the government; and (4) seek to get grants, funding, land, donations, and volunteers.

Catikawa Richardson,

Nominee to the Board of Licensed Counselors and Examiners said that he is an advocate and an advocate is to have courage, independence, and passion for the things that matter.

He added that his

independence and courage help him go where no one else wants to go and interact with those members of the community who are overlooked forming a bond of trust they so desperately need.

According to Richardson, in

the 9-years that he was with the St. John Community Crisis Center, he implemented the Kids Against Drugs and Alcohol, Senior Prescription Fund, and a

24-hour emergency hotline. Furthermore, he had the honor of teaching a seminar in Los Angeles, California about the signs of elderly abuse.

The Rules and Judiciary

Committee approved all four nominees and sent them on to the Full Body for further consideration.

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