



St. Croix Avis



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Trustworthiness questioned Residents, senators react to Villagate lease deal

SHAUNA TUCKER

ST. CROIX — Residents and public officials weighed in on The Avis' story that uncovered a lease agreement for Gov. Kenneth Mapp's St. Thomas rental that he had sworn to the public did not exist.

Reactions ranged from surprise to questions regarding trustworthiness of an administration that advocated transparency.

The 12-page lease agreement,

first obtained by The Avis, proved the governor and his staff knew as early as Jan. 22, or 17 days after his inauguration, that his St. Thomas rental would cost \$14,500 as of March 1.

On Monday, Democratic State Chair Cecil Benjamin said he was "flabbergasted" with the information he read in the Sunday-Monday edition of The Avis concerning the lease.

"My problem with Mr. Mapp is that he says one thing and does the

other," he said, adding the governor has been inconsistent since taking office.

"I am afraid he will lose the trust of the folks, if he continues like this," he said.

Benjamin said he expected more from the Mapp Administration and the governor's inconsistency is not "good for the government."

"We all need to work together to bring about a better Virgin Islands for everyone," he said.

Benjamin said he hoped the governor could "remake himself and do what he has to do for the people of the Virgin Islands."

As recently as last week, Mapp maintained the monthly cost was \$12,500, the amount he first used on Feb. 12, about a week after The Avis first broke the story about the rental. That figure was contradictory to the \$4,000 initially quoted by his spokesperson Kimberly Jones. He said he wanted to correct

the "mistake" printed.

Al Franklin, director of Our Town Frederiksted, said he was "not surprised by anything with this government."

"All sorts of things happen in government that people don't know, but what I read was sad," Franklin said. "While the territory is struggling to recover during this time, it is sad that we are hearing

VILLAGATE, PAGE 5

Mapp campaign disclosure

Lacks supporting proof, documents

BRITNEY KNIGHT

ST. CROIX — Gov. Kenneth Mapp's campaign disclosure has been filed, but is absent of supporting proof and documents as required by law and clearly stated on campaign finance disclosure forms.

The governor's campaign committee treasurer submitted a 17-page document to the Elections System of the Virgin Islands on June 17, but failed to provide the system with a single supporting document or proof as required. The forms instruct candidates to provide copies of checks, money orders or receipts as back-up information.



Judi Shimel

Treats and Tiaras

(Above) 2015 St. John Festival Queen Shanell Hamey receives her crown from Kyrelle Thomas at a coronation ceremony held Sunday in Cruz Bay. Both Hamey and Thomas are new graduates of the Charlotte Amalie High School, who received their high school diplomas on June 14. (Left) Pie? Oh my — Myah Powell celebrates her last appearance as a vendor at the St. John Festival Food Fair with a fluted sweet potato pie. Page 3.

things are not improving over the years.

"We have issues from customer service to lack of services," she said.

Rivera-O'Reilly also inquired how much of the DOL's appropriated funds throughout the year make it to VI youth, it is intended to benefit. She said she has received complaints of the summer job selection programs being "unfair."

DOL Commissioner nominee Catherine Hendry in response said there was no written policy in place to govern the selection process.

During her testimony, which

was not available to youth ages 16-24, Hendry said. To date, 445 of those in that age group have been registered to participate in this work experience program.

"It's not enough. We must do more for the youth and the unit that services them," Hendry said. "The youth need to see, hear, and wake up to labor."

Hendry said DOL also offers the Jobs for Americas Graduates Virgin Islands or JAGVI, an in-school program to help students find their way to graduation and equip them with the skills to find and retain a job.

Hendry told senators that VI youth is part of the DOL's prima-

ry request of \$4.184,143. Hendry noted this year's budget request "reflects the economic challenges being faced by the territory."

"It must be utilized wisely in order to take care of our needs and to enable the Virgin Islands Department of Labor to carry out its local and federal mandates, and fully accomplish its mission to 'administer a system of effective programs and services designed to develop, protect, and maintain a viable workforce,'" Hendry said.

She said the department is critically understaffed in its locally-funded programs and that feder-

al assistance as of June 15 due in interest payments on Trust Fund loans is \$74.5 million, she said, adding that because of the outstanding debt, employers received reduced Federal Unemployment Tax Act credits.

"The Unemployment Insurance taxes that are collected from liable employers are deposited on behalf of the Virgin Islands into a Federal Unemployment Trust Fund," Hendry said. "Monies from this fund are used solely to pay benefits to eligible unemployed Virgin Islands workers."

The outstanding debt, she said, negatively affects every taxable

entity. She said she would like to see an additional reduction for the 2014 tax year. However, once the debt remains unpaid the penalty will continue to increase.

Also Monday, senators learned that even while the department is struggling with the Worker's Compensation Fund, DOL is paying \$3222,000 annually to rent space at Estate Coakley for a 20-year period.

Sen. Kurt Violet, who noted that the St. Thomas DOL office was costing \$250,000 annually, said that by the time the St. Croix lease is up, DOL would have paid over \$6 million just to use the property.

WAPA line crews respond to small service interruptions on St. Thomas and St. Croix

Residents in the Frenchtown area lost power just before 2 p.m. Wednesday after a trailer truck hit a utility pole.

Line crews from the Water and Power Authority worked through the afternoon following the incident about 1:30 p.m. to make repairs in the area.

The trailer truck, "impacted both telecommunications and power lines in the vicinity of the Joseph Aubain ball park at about 1:30 Wednesday, spokesperson Jean Greaux said.

"Not only were the lines were impacted, a utility pole snapped as well," he said.

All but a small number of customers on Feeder 10A had their service restored as of late Wednesday, Greaux said.

Service interruptions also were reported in Sorgenfri on St. Thomas and portions of the East End on St. Croix. Greaux said for about a half-hour Wednesday service was interrupted on a portion of Feeder 7A affecting the Sorgenfri area and the Ridge Road feeder, servicing some areas in the southeastern end of St. Thomas.

On St. Croix, Feeders 1A and 6A were restored to power after service interruptions, but Greaux said that as of 3:30 p.m. Wednesday small areas in Cotton Valley, South Grape-tree Bay, Teague Bay, Estate Boetzberg, Morning Star and Solitude were without service. Line crews were dispatched to restore power as quickly as possible, he said.

DISCLOSURE:

FROM PAGE 1

As an example, the documents noted the Mapp-Potter campaign received \$10,000 on May 15, 2014, to "start the campaign."

It also notes that \$10,000 was donated on Aug. 10 and Nov. 6 of 2014 to fund the campaign, but does not provide copies of checks, money orders or receipts as back-up information required by the Elections System. The disclosure also listed the campaign raising \$131,281.09 in other events, but does not list the name of the events or provide documentation.

In total, the Mapp-Potter campaign said it raised \$221,442.09 through food and drink sales, a 50/50 raffle and five major fundraising events, but again does not provide documentation.

The Elections System form instructs the candidate to provide "one original document" for proof of event — such as a food sale ticket — for back-up information. No such proof was pro-

vided.

Five events were listed under a form titled the Contributions Other Receipts FORM 1-G. It states the five events all took place in October 2014 and raised a total of \$90,161, but only gives the date the event was held, the price of tickets and total amount raised at each event.

The disclosure lists several companies and individuals that donated to the Mapp-Potter 2014 Campaign for governor of the Virgin Islands, however, it does not provide receipts or copies of checks or money orders.

On March 18, The Avis was the first to report the campaigns of Mapp and two freshman senators — Justin Harrigan of St. Thomas and Kurt Violet of St. Croix — had missed the Jan 21 deadline to file campaign finance disclosures. Violet filed shortly after The Avis' report and Harrigan filed in May. Both paid accumulated fines.

The Avis learned of the delays in filing after visiting the Elections System's Sunny Isle location in March and requested to view disclosures for the 2014 election.

At the time, The Avis was provided with two very large binders of copies of various original documents including receipts and checks when asked to see the Christiansen-Ottley campaign finance disclosure.

On Monday, The Avis again asked to review the Christiansen-Ottley campaign finance disclosure, but was unable to do so because it was locked in the office of the Supervisor of Elections Caroline Fawkes.

Fawkes is currently off island and did not return calls for comment by The Avis. Fawkes was approached last week about viewing the documents submitted by the Mapp campaign team after the governor announced at a press conference it had been filed.

In accordance with the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1972, campaign finance laws are set in place to restrict the influence wealthy individuals and special interest groups may have over the

DISCLOSURE, PAGE 5

DISCLOSURE:

FROM PAGE 4

election process. It also limits the amount an individual can donate to a candidate, enforces campaign laws and attempts to make elections transparent. Campaign finance filings also allows the public access to information such as what corporate entities donated to which candidate.

Under the VI Code, Title 18, Elections Chapter 29 — Disclosure and Limitations on Campaign Contributions requires:

(d) The treasurer of each political committee shall keep a detailed and exact account of:

(1) all contributions made to or for such committee;

(2) the identification of every person making a contribution, or aggregate contributions of over \$ 100;

(3) all expenditures made by or on behalf of such committee; and

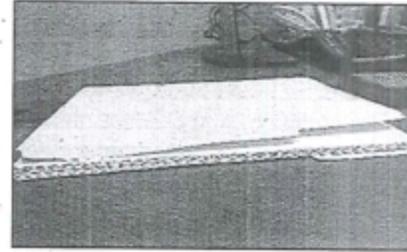
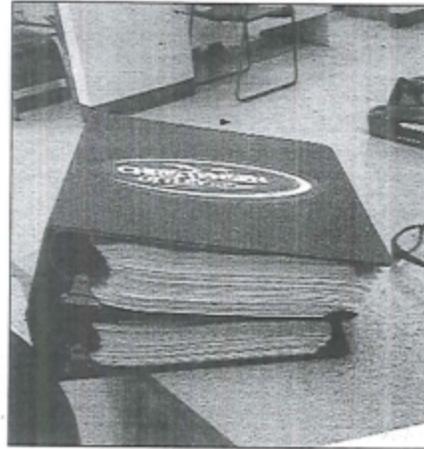
(4) the identification of every person to whom any expenditure is made, the date and amount thereof, and the name and address of and office sought by each candidate on whose behalf such expenditure was made.

(e) The treasurer of each political committee shall obtain and preserve, for such period of time as is determined necessary by the Supervisor, receipts for expenditures made by or on behalf of the political committee over \$100, and for any such expenditure in a lesser amount if the aggregate amount of such expenditures to the same person during a calendar year exceeds \$100.

The documents filed by the Mapp-Potter campaign also states that two black-tie events were held, one in New York and the other at the Buccaneer Hotel on St. Croix. The other event was a Caribbean dinner at Divi Carina Bay Resort and Casino.

The Mapp-Potter campaign disclosed that during the period of "May 14 to December 14," a total of \$175,113 was contributed by individuals and companies.

The Mapp-Potter campaign also disclosed that the total amount raised from events and fundraising amounted to \$426,555.09. The form notes the events or fundraising activities where these receipts were collected are listed regardless of the amount received, however, there were no receipts included in the fil-



Photographed are the campaign finance disclosure filings for both the Mapp-Potter and Christensen-Ottley gubernatorial campaign teams. The photo of the Christensen-Ottley campaign finance disclosure (left), filed before the Jan. 21 deadline, was photographed that month and the Mapp-Potter campaign finance disclosure (above) was photographed on Monday.

Britney Knight

ing.

The Itemized Expenditures Form 2-A is blank and the campaign instead attached what it titles: "Mapp-Potter Campaign 2014 Itemized Expenditures Form 2-A."

Form 2-A requests copies of checks, invoices, receipts and all documents to support expenditures. The campaign provides total expenditures for utilities, travel, supplies, repairs and maintenance, advertising, rent, permits, bank charges, donations and

consulting fees for a total of \$422,105.06. There are no receipts attached as requested by the Elections System.

The Form 2-B titled Other Disbursements, is left blank.

The Mapp-Potter campaign also states that no loans were borrowed and lists "not applicable" for following forms: The Contributions Other Authorized Committees Form 1-E; Contributions Loans made or Guaranteed by the Candidate Form 1-F; Debts and Obligations Contributions Receivable,

Debts and Obligations Expenditures Payable and the Non-monetary Contributions Items.

The document was signed by the campaign treasurer, which was identified as Eliud Richard.

Mapp, at the June 17 press conference, said that fines associated with a late filing were paid. The documents provided to The Avis showed that on June 17, Richard signed a check for \$1,020 in late fees payable to the Elections System.

VILLAGATE:

FROM PAGE 1

According to the lease agreement obtained by The Avis...