**Minutes of the Virgin Islands Taxicab**

**September 24, 2021**

**Present were; Chairperson Lloyd, Vice Chair Watley, Secretary Myrna George, Members Georges, Brathwaite and Sweeny. Member Paris was absent. There were 6 Board Members present and one absent.**

Chairperson Lloyd opened with a welcome to everyone and requested a prayer from Secretary George. There were a few items not addressed from the September 16, 2021, meeting that Chairperson Lloyd wanted addressed.

 She stated that recommendation was made to hire an Attorney to assist us with By-Laws and Standard Operating Procedures, etc. as the Board is the Policy maker for the Taxicab Commission. She thought it necessary to maintain legal sufficiency. With that said, Member Sweeny made a motion to hire an attorney on Contract, once there is money designated to hire him/her or then one will be hired as funds become available. Secretary George seconded the motion. After hearing no further discussion, the vote was: Lloyd, Watley, Sweeny, George, Brathwaite, and Georges voting yes to the Motion with Member Paris absent. Madam Chair, we have 6 yes and 1 absent. Motion passed.

 Chairperson Lloyd, as a form of information to the body, stated that she was made aware that because our officers worked with the Covid Task Force, we could have possibly been refunded for the burden of not having them perform TCC duties while their payroll and all other expenses to include gas and use of vehicles were the responsibility of VITCC. She was also made to understand that the deadline to request those funds has passed but Director Linda Smith was tasked with looking into this matter. Lloyd also reminded the Board that payment for the Avis and payment on her Credit Card to the Daily News for the placement of the job vacancy for the Executive Director has not yet been reimbursed to her credit

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card or paid to Avis. This was just a FYI. However, Lloyd continued by stating that maybe Secretary George can go into ERP and make those payment processes.

Secretary George told the body that with the Executive Director on board, it will be her responsibility to do so, and she can be assisted by her Office Assistant at the St. Croix Office, Ms. McIntosh.

Lloyd continued by stating that ED Smith was now working on the Exit NOPA for Shane Benjamin as well as her own NOPA with the guidance of the Department of Personnel (DOP). Lloyd thanked Vice Chair Watley for getting a contact at DOP to assist ED Smith. The Vice Chair interjected by asking for a clear copy of Shane Benjamin’s NOPA as she was asked who the signatures should be on the NOPAs. She has a copy, but it is not a clear copy. To Lloyd’s recollection, the NOPAs would have been generated in the VITCC Office and would have had the Chairperson’s signature and Secretary George (only because she currently has access) but she will investigate further. Secretary George said the Governor’s Signature and Sarauw’s signatures were on the NOPA for Shane Benjamin.

Watley said as it is explained she is sure we would get this corrected.

 Lloyd said she is currently preparing Board Invoices for June, July and August. Lloyd then turned her attention to the Fee Schedule at VITCC and asked Secretary George to help her out on this. George said that during a previous meeting, Member Georges mentioned is experience in trying to add his son’s name to his medallion and he was told it would be $300.00 for him and $300.00 for his son. Because of this interaction, the Board decided to look at the fee structure. Member Georges took a picture of what is listed on the board at the Office. Secretary George stated that from what she can see, the employees are interpreting the fee structure incorrectly and that the employees need serious training. She then asked Georges to expound on his experience again. He had two encounters with the employees and the fees charged. He mentioned that he was in a Hearing with a Safari driver who impeded traffic and the TCC Officer charged the driver $1000.00. When he looked at the fees to be charged, it was clear the 1st offense was $50.00, 2nd was $100.00, 3rd was $500.00, and the 4th was $1000.00. The employee, citing the driver, immediately charged the $1000.00, for the initial

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offence. Additionally, Georges stated as I mentioned above concerning his personal medallion. In looking at the fees, he should have been charged $300.00 to place his son as co-owner and not charge him $300.00 again. This should be a $300.00 charge, not $600.00. He asked Member Sweeny if he was aware of this behavior as he was on the previous Board. He said yes, and it was his opinion it was being willfully done by the employees to bring in money to the Office so that their salaries could be paid. The Board agreed to send notice to Executive Director Linda Smith of this activity and to have her put an end to this immediately.

Chairperson Lloyd then referenced the taxi class, exams and medallion owners and asked Secretary George to speak to this. Secretary George stated that several residents have reached out to her as they feel there is some sort of bias which is prohibiting them from being called to take the taxi class. George said she too has been waiting for years to take the class and has seen so many come after her and now has a taxi license. She noted that when she worked at BMV, she was reading through some minutes and found where the VITCC Board at that time voted to have the Board determine who is qualified to take the exam before it is administered. She stated that she has yet to receive a call telling her she can now enroll in the class. It is apparent there is something wrong with this system. If the Board should be handling this, then the Board needs to do so and bring fairness to this process. Also, I am asking a question, should Medallion owners have preference in taking the exams before the non-medallion owner? Sweeny stated the light is very dim in the Office of St. Thomas. We have a new ED, and this matter should be placed on her desk to avoid the dim light going into utter darkness. Sweeny you are in the meeting where the Board stated they are to determine the qualification of the applicant. Chairperson Lloyd interjected by saying that ED Linda Smith is on top of this list and this type of activity should soon be a thing of the past. She further stated as it pertains to the Medallion list, if you recall, Member Georges and Brathwaite did the inventory. Executive Director Smith is working on these things now so we will be getting a report on this. Vice Chair Watley recommended that a list of applicants be published. Secretary George noted that we do not have access to funds at this time, however, Member

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Georges suggested we monitor how Executive Director Smith handles this and hopefully it does not have to come to the Board at all.

 Member Georges also added that he encountered a driver yesterday who wanted to handle some processes with his Safari and could not get it done. The employee at VITCC told the customer, “I have to eat too”. The customer, seeing so many Haitians are now drivers, decided to ask one how they go about getting their work processed. The Haitian driver told him it cost him $3000.00, under the table. The customer told Georges he would not be doing that.

 Vice-Chair Watley asked to make a motion to move the agenda up: Addressing the medallion ownership of CC Officer Callwood, describing that he owns a medallion 2. Eulatemae Joseph, completing status and 3rd item is the address of the lease for the St. Croix Office relocation. Sweeny seconded the motion. Discussion: Watley said she came across an email which reflected that TCC Enforcement Officer owns a medallion, that he leased the medallion out and that there is now a letter that reflects the termination of that current lease. Secretary George has not seen the email, so she has requested it be sent to her.

Watley, Sweeny, Georges, George, Lloyd, Brathwaite (6 yes and one absent in Member Paris) Motion carried.

Vice-Chair Watley stated and revealed the following: Job Description: Title of Taxi Inspector: Shall not be a current operator nor taxi medallion owner or ever have been convicted of a Felony. There is a letter reflecting a lease between Officer Derick Callwood and Tasha Freeman-Garrett, (Certificate of Entitlement- STT 0689 extension of lease dated 12/21/2020 to Tasha Freeman- Garrett) signed by Executive Director Shane Benjamin. There is also a letter stating she wants to end the lease for the medallion. Letter is from Tasha 12/22/2021, as of 12/31/2021 I will no longer be leasing plate #0689.

Member Sweeny stated that he thought the evidence was clear. Also, Julia Callwood transferred the medallion and taxi plate in 2012 to Derrick Callwood. Member Sweeny stat “It is clear, so what do we do about this? The Executive Director is walking in with a bright light as the St. Thomas TCC office is very dim. Also, the Taxi Enforcement Officer who was serving as Acting Chief has just

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relinquished that position. There is a lot of friction in the St. Thomas TCC Office”. Sweeny noted he also wanted this body to address security concerns immediately.

Member Georges stated that Officer Mena told him just recently that Officer Callwood never answers his Radio calls; he comes and goes as he chooses, and therefore there is no accountability for him. Watley interjected that ED Smith is aware of what Callwood is doing so she now has Callwood reporting directly to her. Member Georges said that Smith is on St. Croix and there needs to be someone on St. Thomas running without supervision. Sweeney stated he does not want us to get back in this as he has recommended before there should be an Executive Assistant in the other District as he has mentioned before.

Vice Chair Watley asked what the decision on Callwood is. She then made a motion to ask the Executive Director to bring a recommendation to the Board concerning Callwood. It was seconded by Member Sweeny. Watley said the ED is controlling her shop so the Board will await a recommendation from the ED. Votes: Watley, Georges, Sweeny, Lloyd, Brathwaite, George – all voted yes. Madam Chair 6 yes and 1 absent, that being Member Paris. Motion passed.

Vice Chair Watley asked that we revisit the situation with Eulatemae Joseph. Secretary George said that last week Executive Director Linda Smith indicated that she cannot work with Special Assistant Eulatemae Joseph and, as such, would like to have her removed. Secretary George stated that the ED stated at the last Board meeting that she has yet to meet her Special Assistant and that she comes into the Office, just to take care of payroll for herself and her sister Carol and then says she is not feeling well and leaves. We know that since Benjamin’s termination, Eulatemae has been on sick leave but able to slide in and cause the payroll for her and her sister. Eulatemae was invited to come in and meet the new ED and she never showed up. Secretary George stated that she has listened to Member Sweeny speak as he is the one with institutional knowledge, and he has said time and time again that Eulatemae is the root cause of the problems the VITCC has been having, for many years now. The Director stated that she needs someone that she can trust, and she does not find that in Eulatemae Joseph therefore with that said, I make the motion to have Eulatemae Joseph terminated. Chairperson Lloyd

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seconded. There being no further discussion, a vote was taken: Lloyd, Georges, Watley, George, Sweeny all voted yes to have her terminated. Members Paris and Brathwaite at this point were absent. Madam Chair 5 yes and 2 absent. The motion passed.

Secretary George stated that she will not be terminated while on sick leave, so the window of opportunity must be present. However, Executive Director Smith has now given Eulatemae FMLA and is working with Cigna and OCB. The ED is working within the Labor Laws. Sweeny said that decisions in the past made at the Board level always seem to get out, so he hopes this is not the case.

Finally, Watley addressed the Lease consideration for property in St. Croix. She believed the location is ideal for the Taxi Commission office on St. Croix. There is also space for sub-lease as well and there is a conference area as well. She noted that the current location is not an office, it is just a room. Sweeny said she looked at the same location and believes it is about 5000 square feet and around $9000.00 per month. Sweeny said it is an excellent location. It would really be an uplifting for the taxi industry on St. Croix.

Member Georges asked if we could afford $9000.00 ($8, 960.00) per month. Watley said with the increase in the Budget, she believes we can. Sweeny asked that we wait so we can get all the information we need but Watley said there is a deadline till the end of September. Georges maintained that we cannot rush into anything, and we need to be sure we would have the money to meet the monthly payments.

Chairperson Lloyd stated that an increase in the Budget requires an appropriation. There is no guarantee. Remember we would have to pay $22,400.00 just to move in. We must know what we must do. Watley stated that we should meet very soon to address this location to include meeting with the Director.

Member Sweeny had to leave and thus we lost our quorum. Watley said he is leaning towards forgiving the cost of the outstanding rent and the terms would be, from that day forward, we would then begin to pay the rent again.

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Member Georges asked if other places in St. Croix was checked out and Member Watley said she checked but there was nothing she found that was conducive to the business. This location will become open to the public, Watley stated.

All members mentioned the meeting was very productive. Chairperson Lloyd thanked everyone for attending and after 1 hour 34 minutes, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Myrna S. George

Secretary, VITCC