

EDITORIAL

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Banking fees under scrutiny

SENATOR
DION FOLUKES
MINISTER FOR LABOUR



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YOUR WEATHER

85°F
Periods of sun and clouds with a shower

SUNRISE: 7:17 a.m.
SUNSET: 6:41 p.m.
HIGH TIDE: 9:21 a.m. - 8:55 p.m.
LOW TIDE: 3:10 a.m. - 3:48 p.m.
WINDS: ENE at 13 mph

See Page 10 for full round-up

The Freeport News BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS & SERVICE GUIDE

Whatever you're looking for, these local businesses ask you to consider them first.

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GB RECORDS 11TH HOMICIDE- Police are actively investigating a murder that occurred in the Hawksbill community. Morticians from Russell's & Pinder's Funeral Home are pictured placing the body of a young man in an awaiting hearse, while law enforcement officials continue to comb the crime scene for evidence that would assist in bringing closure to this incident that has shaken the closely-knit community.

(PHOTO: SHAYNE STUBBS)

Government makes "offer of purchase" for Lucayan Hotel

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Minister of State for Grand Bahama Senator J. Kwasi Thompson, during an interview with *The Freeport News*, provided some insight to the offer made by the Bahamas Government to Hutchison Whampoa for the purchase of the Grand Lucayan Resort properties.

While specific details surrounding the offer have not been disclosed, Senator Thompson noted that it is the desire of the Government led by Prime Minister Dr. Hubert A. Minnis to take a proactive step in the restoration, refurbishment and revitalization of the resort properties along the Lucaya strip.

It is important for the public to note however, that presently the accurate status of the negotiations is that there is an "offer of purchase" from the government on the table.

Cognizant of the fact that since the passage of Hurricane Matthew last year, which caused extensive damage to the property, forcing operations to significantly "dwindle" and negotiations to fall through between Hutchison Whampoa and Paul Wynn, CEO of the Wynn Group of Canada, regarding the Grand Lucayan Resort, Senator Thompson revealed the offer made by the government is in keeping with the commitment made to keep the resort open and save the jobs of those presently employed at the hotel.

"The Government simply could not sit on the sidelines and allow

conditions to remain the way they are in relation to the Grand Lucayan Resort, which as you know has not been fully operational for an extended period.

"Indeed Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis remains committed to successfully revitalizing the economy of Grand Bahama. Hence we took a proactive approach and made the decision to be the drivers of this process. So yes, we have made the offer to purchase the Grand Lucayan Resort.

"The Government is not going to hold onto the property for any long period of time and have already begun the process of welcoming other partners to come along that are interested in this type of business venture, and to purchase it.

"We are mindful of the employees as well as those in the Port Lucaya Marketplace and tourism industry. Hence it is imperative that one of the matters that must be emphasized is the fact that the Government has also taken active steps to ensure the security of those jobs for persons presently working.

"Thus far we are pleased that there will be no changes in the immediate future of those persons who are already working. Additionally, we are also working towards renovations of the property and once those are completed the resort will be re-opened," said Senator Thompson, who also made it clear government does not desire to be in the hotel industry business on a long-time basis.

Further to revitalizing the island's economy and boosting employment opportunities, Senator Thompson announced that FRS-Caribbean (Fast Reliable Seaways, LLC) will be offering ferry services to Grand Bahama beginning Thursday October 26, 2017. He said the company's expansion in the cruise market here is a welcomed one, as the *MV Grand Celebration* had to adhere to the request made by the government of the United States of America to pause cruise ship services to the island to help Hurricane Irma victims in St. Thomas for a three-month period.

FRS-Caribbean is a German-based company with ferry services in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and North America and provides a new service currently to Bimini out of Port of Miami, which is the company's second operation in North America, with the first being from Seattle to Victoria, BC and Vancouver and Victoria through Clipper Vacations.

Currently, FRS-Caribbean is looking to expand and open its market with trips to Freeport, Grand Bahama in the next month or so, which would be its third operation.

"The *MV Grand Celebration* three-month pause in service has left a void hence yet again the Bahamas Government took proactive steps to have the FRS-Caribbean vessel come in during that temporary basis and assist us in bringing in those additional tourists to aid us (economically) during this time.

"Definitely we have a niche market here in Freeport, which is cruise stopover visitors and I do not believe that there is any place else in The Bahamas that can boast of such.

"The loss of *Celebration* was

Another male found dead!

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Neighbors and curious onlookers throughout the Hawksbill community, gathered close to crime scene tapes used by the Royal Bahamas Police Force

(RBPF) to cordon off the entrance to Bimini Place where the lifeless body of a man was discovered in a home on Friday October 20, 2017.

Neighbors of the closely-knit neighborhood were stunned and troubled by the development. According to official police re-

ports the death has been recorded as the eleventh homicide for the year on Grand Bahama.

RBPF Public Affairs & Communications Officer and Superintendent of Police Macktavus Daniels flanked by fellow law enforcement detectives and officers, provided the media with

some details.

"Shortly after 2:00 p.m. police responded to a report of a man found dead in an abandoned house at Bimini Place, Hawksbill.

"Upon arrival at the scene, officers discovered the body of a
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St. George has high hopes for GB Island

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The top executive in the Grand Bahama Port Authority (GBPA), has expressed enthusiasm regarding the future of the island.

Sarah St. George, who sits in the chairmanship of the GBPA, during a recent address to members of the Bahamas International Diplomatic Corps, emphasized the important roles stakeholders have been playing, and continue to do so while ensuring a stable climate in Grand Bahama. She spoke candidly of the growth and development of the island over the past 60 years.

St. George said she is proud of the partnerships the GBPA and the Bahamas Government have collectively established to improve and strengthen the economy of Grand Bahama, and looks forward to the future success of various projects, "which will not only augur well for the citizenry but also the introduction of new, exciting and cutting-edge industries that will further expand the business and service offering available here."

"On behalf of the Grand Bahama Port Authority, indeed I am truly delighted to welcome all members of the Bahamas International Diplomatic Corps and taking the time to learn more about our beautiful, unique and small Grand Bahama Island.

"Certainly, I know the Minister of State for Grand Bahama



SARAH ST. GEORGE
GBPA Vice Chairman

the Honorable Senator J. Kwasi Thompson agrees with me that all the best things in life come in small packages and everything you will see here is as a result of a very innovative Public/Private Sector partnership between the Government of The Bahamas and the GBPA.

"Unlike the ancient civilizations from Europe, Africa, Israel and Malta and other parts of the Caribbean, Freeport, Grand Bahama goes back a mere 60 years however, it has been remarkable.

"Imagine, in the mid-1950s a swampy wilderness with no roads, no power, no mains water, let alone an airstrip and the early pioneer developers having to make do with an old Grummond Goose Flying Boat manned by one of two pilots.

"The population was a few thousand people scattered in isolated settlements from east to west across the island so Freeport had to invent itself and here there is no oil, gas, gold or diamonds (maybe the odd Conch pearl)— but we consider

ourselves to be rich in nature as we are blessed with an abundant supply of freshwater, a fantastic geographic location and, a natural deep water harbour.

"Coupled together with the fertile imaginations of visionaries like Charles Allen, DK Ludwig, Wallace Groves, Sir Charles Hayward and later, Sir Jack Hayward and my father, Edward St. George - resulted in Freeport Grand Bahama becoming one of the earliest Special Economic Zones in the world, which came with the signing of the Hawksbill Creek Agreement (HCA) in 1955," said St. George.

Boasting of the fact that today, Grand Bahama is an example of manufacturing and export unrivaled in The Bahamas and the entire Caribbean, St. George informed her audience that the largest ship repair facility in this hemisphere, the Grand Bahama Shipyard Co. Ltd.; as well as the largest exporter in this region that produces Styrofoam beads for the Dart Corporation, Polymers International Ltd.; as well as one of the largest manufacturers in the region, PharmaChem Technologies Ltd., which makes the revolutionary HIV drug tenofovir disoproxil and the Hepatitis C drug known as Harvoni for Gilead, are all established here due to special concessions available to each in Freeport.

Cognizant of the Diplomatic Week 2017 theme is 'Innova-

tive Approaches to a Changing World', St. George further noted that it is impossible not to talk about the tech explosion on Grand Bahama and a number of projects that further lend to the progressive economic future of the island, which appeals to investors.

"Last week, Carnival Cruise Lines opened an office here to develop and configure their brand-new "Ocean Medallion" the size of a quarter, which will act like a personal digital concierge for cruise passengers, eliminating the need for room keys, payment and, I am told, can even fix you a drink or prevent you getting lost in your dressing gown on the way to the spa and more importantly perhaps, avert a tragic accident," shared St. George, who went on to state that "Of course our aim is to be a Smart City - in every sense of the word and we have already introduced Smart-Metering for water, which will end up being a multi-million dollar investment funded by the IDB."

"Soon even a boring old power pole will have a voice and report how old it is, where it is and how strong it still is, digitally.

"We found this kind of information to be so important after the hurricane.

"The GBPA is also the title sponsor of an upcoming Grand Bahama Tech Summit on Information and Communications, which is organized by the Gov-

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