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WEDNESDAY - FEBRUARY 27TH, 2019

75 CENTS

DPM: "SINK OR SWIM"

BY LICEC BASTIAN
 Journal Staff Writer

Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Peter Turnquest, said the Bahamas is adapting and the government is committed to keeping up with any regulator or legislative reform necessary to maintain the country's position as a global leader.

Bringing opening remarks at Royal

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Minister of Finance, Peter Turnquest

D'Aguilar surprised by US travel advisory

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

Tourism Minister Dionisio D'Aguilar expressed surprise following the release of the US State Department's recent travel advisory on The Bahamas, particular-

ly considering crime here has been trending downwards.

The advisory, which the Minister stressed, is quite similar to the last, urges visitors to exercise increased caution as "vio-

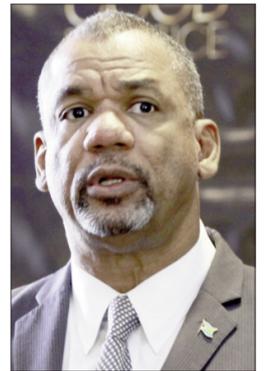
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GG ATTENDS TANKER NAMING CEREMONY HONOURING THE LATE BRADLEY ROBERTS



Governor General, Her Excellency the Most Hon. Dame Marguerite Pindling headed the list of officials during the Naming Ceremony for the transport vessel M/T Brad Sun in honour of the legacy and memory of the late Mr. Bradley B.E. Roberts, yesterday at Prince George Wharf. The Governor General participated in the Ribbon-Cutting for the Christening/Blessing ceremony of the new FOCOL Group vessel, which joins a fleet serving The Bahamas archipelago and the Turks and Caicos Islands, bringing FOCOL's fleet to six. The chemical tanker allows for loading low flash-point products and is adequately equipped with cargo pumps and radar-type gauging -- accommodating a crew of 16. The Governor General is seen next to widow of the late Mr. Roberts -- Mrs. Hartlyn Roberts; and pictured during Ribbon-Cutting along FOCOL Chairman Sir Franklyn Wilson and Lady Wilson, and other officials. (BIS Photos/Patrick Hanna)

Fitzgerald Not Interested In PLP Nomination



Former Cabinet Minister, Jerome Fitzgerald

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

The former Cabinet Minister and Progressive Liberal Party member of Parliament for the Marathon constituency, Jerome Fitzgerald has announced that he is no longer interested in contesting that seat in the next general election.

Mr. Fitzgerald Monday night stated that after 15 years of public life, he is looking forward to the next exciting chapter.

He did acknowledge that his political journey

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Minister Says Grand Lucayan Sale Could Take Longer

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

Having purchased the Grand Lucayan in Freeport, Grand Bahama last summer against the advice of many, the government had hoped to offload the property to a new owner as soon as possible.

Had the government's plans followed through, an investor for the Grand Lucayan Resort would have - at the very latest - been locked down by the second quarter of this year.

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PM MINNIS: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO IMPROVE GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis believes The Bahamas can replicate the success experienced by the Republic of Estonia, which has effectively used technology to transform its government services and attract international investment.

Prime Minister Minnis held a bilateral meeting with the President of the Republic of Estonia, Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, on Tuesday, February 26, 2019, on the sidelines of the 30th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis held a bilateral meeting with President of the Republic of Estonia HE Kersti Kaljulaid at the 30th CARICOM Inter-Sessional Meeting, February 26, 2019 in St. Kitts. (BIS Photo/Yontalay Bowe)

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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

'Complete and diverse growth' led to Bahamas earning double awards

The Bahamas' "very impressive double-digit growth" in stopover arrivals across the destination, including the Family Islands, was a decisive factor in the country earning the Caribbean Journal's 'Tourism Destination of the Year' designation.

Minister of Tourism and Aviation, the Hon. Dionisio D'Aguilar also earned the Journal's 'Tourism Minister of the Year' designation "for shepherding this very complete and diverse growth this year."

Alexander Britell, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Caribbean Journal said The Bahamas' "complete and diverse growth" over the past year "was very impressive." Mr. Britell presented Minister D'Aguilar with the double awards during a brief ceremony held at the offices of The Bahamas' Ministry of Tourism, downtown, Nassau, February 22, 2019. Also present was Mr. Guy Britton, Executive Vice-President and Managing Director of Caribbean Journal.

Caribbean Journal is the world's largest website covering the Caribbean with original content and video focusing on travel and tourism across the entire Caribbean Basin. The Journal is considered the global leader in covering Caribbean travel and trade news.

Mr. Britell said the Journal's Selection Process "is a very competitive process as the Journal's Editorial Team looks at everything from hotel development to tourism arrival numbers, flights and brand aware-



► The Hon. Dionisio D'Aguilar celebrates The Bahamas' designation as Caribbean Journal's 'Destination of the Year.' Minister D'Aguilar also earned the 'Tourism Minister of the Year' designation. (BIS Photo/Patrick Hanna)

ness."

"The Bahamas, for its very complete and diverse growth this year took home the crown and the Minister earned Minister of the Year Award for his efforts to shepherd that," he said.

"In many ways, and this has happened several times, the two awards are intertwined. Sometimes when you win Tourism Destination of the Year, in large part, it is because you have a Minister who is stewarding that growth and making that growth happen. The Bahamas' growth was very impressive this year because there was double-digit arrival growth across the destination, including the (Family Islands) which was a new thing."

Mr. Britell said the results indicate that there is a growing awareness among travelers that The Bahamas is more than just Nassau and Grand Bahama.

"People are talking

about Cat Island, Long Island, Eleuthera and Harbour Island and I think it was that complete overall impact and growth that was really eye-opening this year. It's sort of a new Bahamas and people are really starting to see that (The Bahamas) its not just Nassau and Grand Bahama, but that it is all of the 700 islands and cays."

Minister D'Aguilar said the recognition fortifies what officials at the Ministry of Tourism have been trying to accomplish in marketing The Bahamas as sixteen different destinations.

"I have said this over and over again, that there is no need to visit anywhere else in the Caribbean because in The Bahamas we have everything you could possibly want in a Caribbean vacation. In Nassau, which is our epicentre and where we have our large resorts, our guests can visit nice restaurants, shop in nice

stores, visit the casinos, have that big resort feel, and go on wonderful excursions. Then we have our 15 other Family Islands that we market where you have that more intimate experience.

"It is delightful to see that our marketing strategy is working as The Bahamas, overall, had in excess of 16 per cent growth in stopover visitors and we are seeing

that continue into this year with the growth spread over many of the islands. Abaco is doing extremely well, up 17 per cent; Eleuthera is up a whopping 28 per cent; San Salvador is up 8 per cent; Andros is up 8 per cent and so we are seeing all of our major Family island destinations experience wonderful growth.

"It really brings about the culmination of what

we have been trying to do at the Ministry of Tourism and that is to market our 16 different destinations. We have developed a credible strategy, launched a new marketing campaign. All of that is contributing to the phenomenal growth that we are seeing," Minister D'Aguilar added.

Minister D'Aguilar said he was "delighted and humbled" to receive both awards.

"Delighted, that The Bahamas was selected by a reputable and well-known company such as Caribbean Journal as the Destination of the Year and then I am humbled to receive the Tourism Minister of the Year Award. I really am receiving this on behalf of the 376 hard-working members of the Ministry of Tourism. It is because of them that I am here today receiving this award. I am delighted and humbled to receive both of these Awards from the Caribbean Journal and I shall have them prominently displayed for everyone to see what wonderful things we are doing here in The Bahamas."

Persons with unpaid work permits will be deported



► Minister of Immigration, Brent Symonette

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

The number of illegal immigrants could very well increase here in The Bahamas considering there is some \$5 million outstanding in fees from people who have been issued letters approving their permits.

Minister of Immigration, Brent Symonette says, "If a person does not come in and

pay for their permit, because usually they walk around for months with this in their hand, they will be considered an illegal immigrant and deported irrespective of how many times they have had a work permit.

"You get the letter, you pay your fees or you're deemed to be an illegal immigrant, that will be strictly enforced," said Mr. Symonette.

The Minister

explained that there is a life expectancy of 30 days on those letters.

As for the backlog in work permits, he said that has been shaved down to six weeks.

"One third of them are being emailed to the applicants, the other two thirds obviously go through the mail, so we're pretty caught up on that. We're working on permanent residency and citizenship now.

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DPM: "SINK OR SWIM"

Fidelity's Bahamas Economic Outlook, one-day conference yesterday, Mr. Turnquest said in the face of dynamic change, the choice has to be made to sink or swim.

"We have no intention of giving up any ground we occupy as a premier international financial center. We are adapting to the changing environments and encouraging the industry to innovate and develop new competitive products to meet the demands of the market. Investors can be assured The Bahamas will continue to be a reliable provider of sophisticated, high quality financial services products that meet their needs," Mr. Turnquest said.

The conference, tackled the theme "Dynamic New World: Braving the Turmoil". Mr. Turnquest referenced uncertainty with developments in international and domestic marketplace, particularly as it relates to international trade wars looming, as well as Bahamians adjusting to the reality of The Bahamas' planned ascension to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

"In this respect, we are in the same boat as everyone else. We can choose to

run away and isolate ourselves or embrace change, with all of the turmoil it brings and the opportunity it creates.

"In The Bahamas we don't run away. We adapt. We innovate. We grow. We expand. When The Bahamas needed an economic base in a region known for its agricultural and manufacturing prowess, we pioneered the tourism industry in the region. Today, we are employing different strategies to increase and diversify foreign direct investment.

"We are undertaking several other initiatives to boldly lead the Bahamas into a dynamic future, including preparing Bahamians to take advantages of the opportunities to that we have. We're preparing Bahamians to be business owners with unprecedented investments in entrepreneurship with 25 million allocated over the next 3 years.

The era of finishing school and looking for a good job in the government is over, we want to empower our work force to be highly trained, secure private sector jobs and create their own jobs," Mr. Turnquest said.

With the European

Union Advisory, coupled with a pending blacklisting, Mr. Turnquest said for the Financial Services Sector, "it seems as though the playing field will never be level for small territories like The Bahamas.

"As not to get lost in the up's and down's, we need to remember as a country and as a business, who we are, what we stand for and what we want to achieve. We have to be adaptable and forward thinking to anticipate change and respond quickly to the demands made on us.

"As a country we are striving to do just that. We are seizing the moment to make government more accountable and transparent to ensure that we are financially resilient and fiscally responsible.

"We are seizing the moment to reorient our workforce, away from traditional jobs mindset to an ownership mindset so that entrepreneurship and small business can continue to be the drivers of job creation and economic growth so that there are no limits on the way of work which can now be done at home or from virtually anywhere from around the globe.

"We are participants in a global economic system, where the principle of sovereign equals is not always respected, when you don't have the political clout to enforce it. We are seeing a lot of turmoil in the financial services sector today on account of these factors, but we can hardly call it new," said the Minister.

With the conference bringing together leading international thinkers to explore the local impact of global, Mr. Turnquest

challenged attendees to be creative and innovative.

"We are putting the planning and policy framework in place to shore up our economy. To modernize the way we do things and to leave doing business over all easier, faster and better.

"There's no doubt that The Bahamas will continue to thrive in this dynamic new world, not just braving the turmoil but finding opportunities to thrive through it all

"For us to be effective

and to be sustaining as a financial services industry we are going to have to keep moving our own goalpost. There are risks there; there are challenges there, but there is also tremendous success.

"So, again, as I take that side step just to say to the industry, do not be afraid to be creative, bold; to have courage. I can tell you the government will support you, as long as you're not doing anything illegal," Mr. Turnquest said.

D'Aguilar surprised by US travel advisory

Continued from / PAGE 1...

lent crimes such as burglaries, armed robberies, and sexual assault are common - even during the day in tourist areas.

The statement points out that the vast majority of crimes occur in New Providence and Grand Bahama Islands.

The Minister said, "we thought a lot of the verbiage in the advisory was an exaggeration. The Ministry of National Security is looking into exactly how many foreign

visitors experience some sort of crime activity or crime incident.

"We feel like it is negligible, so we're going to push back a little bit.

"We are now dialoguing with the US Embassy. We're going to push back and we think that even though there may be areas or pockets of crime, the effect on foreign visitors in our country is so negligible that it doesn't warrant the very strong language that they said in that crime advisory, so conversations will continue," he

said.

When asked if he expects the advisory to impact the country's bread and butter industry, he told reporters, "well it's exactly the same travel advisory as last year and the number of stop over visitors increased by 17 per cent, so I'll leave it there," Minister D'Aguilar said.

The Bahamas last year enjoyed a banner year with every expectation that the numbers coming out of 2019 will be equally impressive.

Commonwealth Bank Announces Extraordinary Dividend to be Paid February 28

Commonwealth Bank recently announced it will pay a two cent per share extraordinary dividend on February 28 to all Common Shareholders of record February 18. The dividend represents the second extraordinary and final dividend based on 2018 earnings and brings total dividends paid relative to 2018 earnings to 12 cents per share.

The extraordinary dividend and the Bank's history of regularly paying dividends since going public in 2000 reflects the Bank's philosophy of sharing its success with its shareholders. Total pay out in 2018 exceeded \$35

million to Shareholders, an amount that stayed in The Bahamas.

"By maintaining these levels of dividends that are supported by the Bank's profitability, we have been able to demonstrate the value we place on our Shareholders and reward them accordingly," said William B. Sands, Jr., Executive Chairman.

"The Bank has a very healthy capital position with more than double the capitalization required by Central Bank and our earnings position remains strong," said Mr. Sands. "Sharing with those who bank with us

and believe in Commonwealth Bank as a valuable investment is part of our core commitment."

With more than \$1.7 billion in assets, Commonwealth Bank draft unaudited earnings for 2018 are approximately \$50 million. Audited results for 2018 are expected to be released shortly.

Commonwealth Bank has eight branches in New Providence, full service branches in Abaco, Grand Bahama and Spanish Wells and numerous offsite ABMs for 24/7 banking available to customers.



PUBLIC NOTICE

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL PLANNING

The public is hereby notified that an application for Site Plan Approval SPA/11/2018 on behalf of The Diocese of The Bahamas and Turks & Caicos Islands is presently being reviewed by The Department of Physical Planning for presentation to the Town Planning Committee.

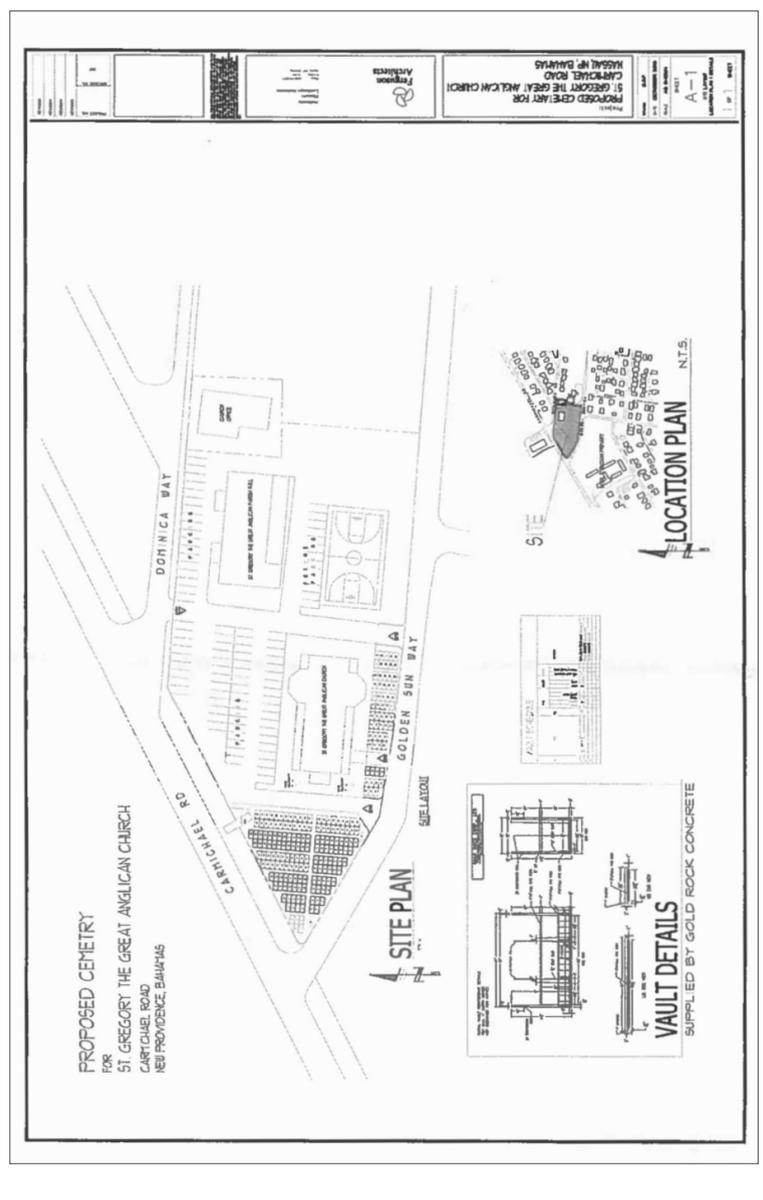
A public meeting will be held on March 12, 2019 at 7pm at Sybil Strachan Primary School (Formerly Carmichael Primary)

The Diocese proposes to develop a portion of the land occupied by St. Gregory's Anglican Church, Carmichael Road and Golden Sun Way, as a burial ground and Columbarium. The project is proposed in two phases, with the in-ground precast vaults comprising the first phase. The construction of the Columbarium is a part of the second phase.

Preliminary plans for the proposed development are available for viewing at The Department of Physical Planning, located in the Aventura Plaza on John F. Kennedy Drive, during working hours of 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Interested persons and organizations are invited to review the information on file and provide written comments prior to the meeting. Comments should be directed to the Acting Director of Physical Planning within twenty-one (21) days of the date of this notice. Submissions can be made via P.O. Box N-1611, Nassau Bahamas or fax (242) 328-3206. Further inquiries can be made to the Acting Director via Tel. (242) 322-7550/1/1 OR (242) 328- 3202 or CHARLESZONICLE@BAHAMAS.GOV.BS

Signed
Charles B. Zonicle
Acting Director of Physical Planning



PM MINNIS: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO IMPROVE GOVERNMENT SERVICES

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“The world is moving in the direction of digital transformation and if The Bahamas fails to prepare or keep up with advances it will be left behind, relegated not to a third world country but a fourth world country,” the Prime Minister said.

Estonia is considered to be the world leader in E-

Government and digital innovation and has become a model for many countries looking to update and improve public services.

Transforming government services through the modernization and digitization of the public sector is a top priority for the Minnis administration, and is one of the key areas being monitored and supported by the Prime

Minister’s Delivery Unit.

A Modernization Unit has been established in the Office of the Prime Minister, and senior government officials took part in e-Governance Training at Estonia’s e-Governance Academy in October 2018, sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank.

Earlier this year, representatives from the e-

Governance Academy visited The Bahamas to hold meetings with private and public stakeholders who will be involved in transforming government services.

While all ministries have made progress to varying degrees, the goal is to streamline government procedures and services by making them available online, increase the use of

ICT’s in the public sector and by the Government, increase transparency of Government, and strengthen auditing and control mechanisms.

During the bilateral meeting Prime Minister Minnis thanked President Kaljulaid for her government’s assistance in helping The Bahamas move toward its goal to modernize and digitize the public

sector.

The principal purpose for the meeting was to strengthen relations between the two countries.

President Kaljulaid was the special guest at the 30th Inter-Sessional Meeting. The President shared with Caribbean Heads her Government’s interest in helping CARICOM build its capacity in e-government.



PUBLIC NOTICE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL PLANNING

The public is hereby notified that a Site Plan Application (SPA/2/2019) on behalf of Tonel Investments Limited is being reviewed by the Department of Physical Planning for presentation to the Town Planning Committee.

The applicant proposes to construct a shopping plaza along with a storage facility on a 2.5 acre parcel located at the intersection of Carmichael Road and Stew Fish Road and immediately west of Cousin McPhee A.M.E. Church.

A public meeting will be held on March 18th 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at Sybil Strachan Primary School (Formerly Carmichael Primary School) located on Carmichael Road.

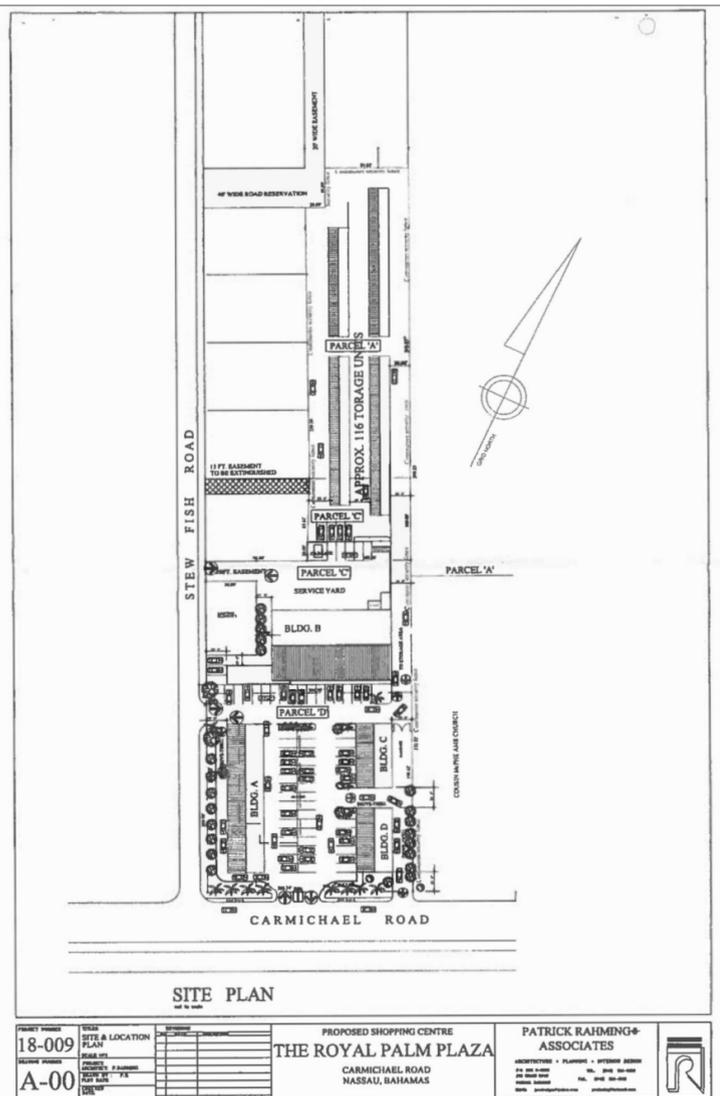
The preliminary site plan and file for the proposed development are available for viewing at the Department of Physical Planning, located in the Aventura Plaza on John F. Kennedy Drive, during normal working hours.

Interested persons and organisations are invited to review the information on file and provide written comments to the Acting Director of Physical Planning within twenty-one (21) days of the date of this notice.

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Signed

Charles B. Zonicle
Acting Director of Physical Planning



Fitzgerald Not Interested In PLP Nomination

Continued from / PAGE 1...

has afforded him a multiplicity of experiences and emotions, “ a journey that has been active and exciting, rewarding and painful, dynamic and challenging, but most of all, gratifying.”

Mr. Fitzgerald’s exit from frontline politics leaves the opposition PLP the task of finding a suitable candidate for Marathon, one of many constituencies it lost in the 2017 general elec-

tion.

The party started the groundwork for a candidate selection during a constituency meeting.

Giving advice to the aspiring candidates, Mr. Fitzgerald, who is a former Minister of Education, told the group that the road will not always be easy, but that they must never lose sight of the fact that they are there to make a meaningful contribution to Marathon and the wider Bahamas.

He added that as with any meaningful career, they must work with strategy and diligence; keep commitments and for refrain from making empty promises.

To whoever is successful in their bid, he assured his total support towards a successful 2022 political campaign.

To all PLPs, he reminded that infighting and petty politics will not win the party the next general election.

Minister Says Grand Lucayan Sale Could Take Longer



Minister of Tourism, Dionisio D'Aguiar

Continued from / PAGE 1...

This is what Tourism Minister Dionisio D'Aguiar indicated during an interview with reporters yesterday outside the Cabinet office.

He said clinching a deal for the 400-plus acre property could take a bit longer.

“If it were just three people, then it would be easy, but its sixty or whatever the Chairman said, and it might even take a little bit longer, but anyway we’ll see.

“We’re continuing the process. What we’re

reporting to the Bahamian people is that it’s a lot of interest,” the Minister said.

“You have to gather all that information, you have to sift through it to see which ones are serious and not serious; then you have to begin a negotiation process to see on what terms they want to do it, this takes time.

“This is not something that you can flip a switch and it happens. This is a very important project, it is very important that we pick a credible partner.

“You know and I know that this thing doesn’t hap-

pen at the flip of a switch and to imply that it does is not correct,” he said.

The Minister’s comments follow those of Pineridge MP Frederick Mcalpine, who on Monday told reporters that Grand Bahamians are not impressed with how many investors are jockeying to own the property, but rather that the resort is actually sold.

Overall, Minister D'Aguiar said the government is not prepared to take a lost in selling the resort, a property it purchased last summer at a cost of \$65 million.