

Sarah elected new Parliament Chair in spite of De Weever's cancellation

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PHILIPSBURG--Democratic Party (DP) leader Member of Parliament Sarah Wescot-Williams is again at the helm of Parliament. She was elected Parliament Chairwoman by the new National Alliance (NA)-led coalition in an extraordinary meeting of Parliament on Thursday evening.

Wescot-Williams was head of the legislature for just one month after the now-crumbled United People's (UP) party took office in October 2014. She resigned after differences with former party member, now independent MP Cornelius de Weever and subsequently withdrew from the coalition. She sat in opposition until the new NA-led coalition was formed as of September 30.

She is joined in the presidium of Parliament by veteran politician MP George Pantophlet (NA) and United St. Maarten Party (USP) leader MP Frans Richardson as Parliament Vice-Chairman and Second Parliament Vice-Chairman respectively.

The new coalition used Article 6 of the Rules of Order to relieve MP Dr. Lloyd Richardson (UP) of his post as Parliament Chairman and Second Vice-Chairman De Weever of his. The coalition also acknowledged receipt of MP Leona Marlin-Romeo's resignation as Parliament Vice-Chairman in the meeting that initially was chaired by Pantophlet as the longest-serving member in Parliament.

After voting by secret ballot took place among the MPs for the election of Parliament Chairman, Pantophlet suspended the meeting briefly to hand over the post to Wescot-Williams. She

continued the meeting with the elections that saw the appointment of Pantophlet and Richardson to their new posts.

Prior to closing the session, Wescot-Williams thanked the new coalition for having faith in her and the staff of Parliament for cooperating with the holding of the meeting at the unusual hour. She also thanked the former presidium members for their contributions.

The country is in “turbulent times,” she said, adding that with the leadership of Parliament sorted out at least one part of the governance of the country was back on track.

While still Second Vice-Chairman De Weever had sent out a letter to MPs earlier in the day stating that the 6:00pm Parliament meeting called by the new coalition was cancelled, citing “the current safety and security challenges” as one of the reason. However, the coalition ignored this and continued with its meeting that had the majority of MPs present – eight of the 15.

With none of the secretaries-general of Parliament available to take the minutes of the meeting, the new coalition appointed Ed Gumbs to take notes.

The new coalition had bypassed De Weever by not submitting to him a request for the extraordinary meeting, but instead had sent out a convocation letter directly to all MPs on Wednesday to attend an “urgent meeting” yesterday, Thursday. The meeting had as its main agenda point the appointment of a chairperson, and a second vice-chairperson.

The letter, signed by the eight MPs of the new coalition, stated that “in view of the recent developments” during meetings of Parliament, they had “all agreed” that the meeting would be chaired by MP George Pantophlet.

In his letter to the MPs, which also was sent to the press around 2:00pm, De Weever said he took note of meeting time and requested the new coalition MPs to “please explain the reason why the meeting is scheduled for such an uncommon and late hour. Given the current safety and security challenges I am cancelling this meeting.”

He also requested that the new coalition submit its request for an urgent meeting “within our normal working hours and it will be convened within 4x24 hours, according to the Rules of Order.”

The new coalition, which comprises the Democratic Party, United St. Maarten Party and independent MPs Silvio Matser and Maurice Lake, passed a motion of no confidence against the Marcel Gumbs Cabinet in Parliament on September 30. That cabinet, put in place by the now-

crumbled UP-led coalition, has refused to demit office and instead sent a national decree to dissolve Parliament to Governor Eugene Holiday for his ratification

http://www.thedailyherald.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59261:sarah-elected-new-parliament-chair-in-spite-of-de-weevers-cancellation&catid=1:islands-news&Itemid=54