



Committee of the Whole | November 16, 2021

Legislature USVI

November 16, 2021 · 4.5 hours · gov

Source recording	https://youtu.be/e_4paloY16w
Status	This is a working transcript produced by machine from a recording of a public proceeding. It is a finding aid, not an official record of the Legislature.
Transcribed by	VI Update, using OpenAI Whisper large-v3-turbo, run locally. Not reviewed by a person.
Reliability	Automatic transcription, UNVERIFIED. Verify every quotation against the recording before relying on it. Speech recognition splits spoken digits and wraps figures mid-number, so a dollar amount, a vote count or a bill number can be wrong in a way that reads as correct. Speakers are not identified: automatic speaker labelling was measured unusable and removed.
Public record	The underlying proceeding is a public record of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. 3 V.I.C. § 881(a) defines public records to include all records and documents of or belonging to this Territory or any branch of government, or any "department, board, council or committee of any branch of government" · which names legislative committees by category. § 881(b) gives every citizen the right to examine and copy such records, and the news media the right to publish them. (The open-meetings chapter, 1 V.I.C. § 254, does NOT reach the Legislature: § 253(b) expressly excludes it and its Standing and Special Committees. § 881 does, and it is § 881 that confers the right to copy and publish.) The Legislature broadcast this proceeding publicly itself. The source recording is not ours, is not hosted here, and remains with its publisher at the link above.
Rights	To what we added · the transcription, its arrangement and its description · we assert nothing. A verbatim transcript is mechanical rather than authored, so there is likely nothing in it to own; to the extent any copyright is nonetheless found to subsist, it is dedicated to the public domain under CC0 1.0. Please copy it, quote it, index it, train on it, republish it, mirror it, sell it. Redistribution is the point: a public record with one copy is one fire from gone. No permission is needed, and none is ours to grant or withhold.

0:00:00 Let's get started. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:03:30 Thank you. We'll be right back. guitar solo ¶¶ All right, way down. [3 such phrases repeated 17 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:13:00 ¶¶ We'll be right back.

0:14:00 Thank you. Thank you. ¶¶ ¶¶ Thank you. ¶¶ do Thank you.

0:17:29 guitar solo Thank you. Thank you. Oh, my God. [3 such phrases repeated 24 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:29:59 Thank you. Thank you.

0:30:59 ¶¶ guitar solo Thank you.

0:32:29 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:34:29 Thank you. We'll be right back. guitar solo Thank you. [3 such phrases repeated 8 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:38:59 Thank you. Thank you.

0:39:59 Thank you. guitar solo Thank you. Good morning, the Committee of the Whole of November 16, 2021 is hereby call to order. [3 such phrases repeated 10 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:45:24 Madam Clerk, roll call. Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Senator Blyden, absent. Senator Samuel Carrione. Present. Senator Carrione, present. Senator Dwayne M. de Graff. Senator de Graff, absent. Senator Novelli Francis Jr. I'm here. Senator Francis Jr., present. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. Present. Senator Francis Heiliger, present. Senator Donna A. Fred

Gregory. Senator Fred Gregory absent, Senator Kenneth L. Giddens, Senator Giddens absent, Senator Javon E. James Sr., Senator James Sr. present, Senator Franklin D. Johnson, Senator Johnson present, Senator Collar Joseph, Senator Joseph present, Senator Steven D. Payne Sr., Senator payne senior absent senator milton potter senator potter present senator janelle k saru senator saru absent senator kurt a vla senator vla absent senator genevieve whitaker senator whitaker present mr chairman we have eight members present seven absent at the call of the roll very well thank you very much we do have a quorum and prepare to proceed um until those other individuals get here um madam clerk any correspondence to be read into the record yes mr president please mark senator vla as present and go ahead and read the correspondence into the record thank you senator vla present Letter dated November 15th, 2021, from Honorable Steven D. Payne, Sr., Senator at large to

0:47:36 Honorable Senator Donna Fred Gregory, Chairwoman, Committee of the Whole, 34th Legislature of Virgin Islands, St. Thomas Virgin Islands 00804. Dear Chairwoman Fred Gregory, due to a previous previously scheduled commitment, I will not be attending the Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 16, 2021 on the island of St. Croix. Please mark me as excuse and forward all documents received in this meeting to my office. I thank you for your tolerance in this matter sincerely stephen d payne senior senator at large 34th legislature of the virgin islands letter dated november 15 2021 from the honorable senator duane m de graf to honorable donna fred gregory chairwoman committee of the whole 34th legislature of the Virgin Islands, 3022 Estate Golden Rock, Christian St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00820.

0:48:37 Dear Chairwoman Fred Gregory, please be informed that I will be unable to attend the Committee of the Whole set for 11 a.m. Tuesday, November 16, 2021 due to a personal family matter. I ask that I be marked as an excuse. Thank you in advance for your understanding. Sincerely, Dwayne McGrath, senator 34th legislature of the virgin islands letter dated november 16 2021 from the honorable senator kennett l gittins to honorable donna fred gregory senate president 34th legislature of the virgin islands capital building st thomas usvi zero zero eight zero two there senator president senator fred gregory please excuse my absence from the committee of the whole hearing scheduled for today november 16 2021 as you are aware i am still under i'm still currently under my doctor's care as i continue my recuperation i note the importance of the agenda item to be discussed and asked that any additional information shared during the hearing be forwarded to my office thank you in advance for your understanding. Sincerely, Kenneth L. Gittins, Senator. Letter dated November 16, 2021. From the Honorable Marvin A. Blyden, Majority Leader, to Honorable Donna Fred Gregory, Senate President, 34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Capitol Building Charlotte O'Malley, Virgin Islands 00802. There, Madam President, due to travel issues i shall be tardy in arriving at today's meeting of the committee of the whole please mark my initial absence as excused and i look forward to an informative and productive hearing sincerely marvin a blyton my majority leader 34th legislature of virgin islands

0:50:31 mr chairman this concludes the reading of the absence and tardy letters thank you very much Madam Clerk, please record Senator Steven Payne as excused, Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff as excused, Senator Marvin Blyton as excused until he gets here, Senator Kenneth L. Gittins as excused, and you know we know that Senator President Donna Fred Gregory as well as Senator Janelle Saru is traveling as well as Senator Blyton and will be here shortly. In the meantime, can you go ahead and read let me get the tally at this point what's what's the tally can I get the tally Mr. Chair, we have nine members present, six excused.

0:51:53 Very well. Thank you very much. Again, we do have a quorum and prepare to proceed in the meantime until everyone else get here. Madam Clerk, can you go ahead and read today's agenda into the record? Agenda for today, Committee of the Whole, Tuesday, November 16th, 2021. The 34th Legislature will convene in Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, November 16th, 2021 at 11 a.m. in the Fritz-Lawitz Conference Room on St. Croix to receive testimony on Bill Number 34-0145, an act approving the conveyance of parcels 5-E and 5-F of VI Core Land, Prince Quarter St. Croix, Virgin Islands, to the University of the Virgin Islands Research and Technology Park Corporation, and for other related purposes, rezoning remainder parcel 5-E from A1 Agricultural zone to A29 agricultural zone, rezoning parcels 5F from A1 to B3, business scattered, and providing for other related purposes, proposed by Senator Novelli Francis Jr. Invited testifiers, Mr. Peter Chapman, Executive Director, UVI Research and Technology Park, Honorable Positive T.A. Nelson, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Honorable Jean-Pierre Rio, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and Honorable Anthony Thomas, Commissioner, Department of Property and Procurement. This concludes the reading of today's agenda, Mr. Chairman. Very well, and Madam Clerk, if you could just record that Mr. Dale Brown, a farmer from Sager Farms, will also be testifying today.

0:53:37 He has asked to testify, and he has been added to the list of testifiers. this time we'll go to the testifiers just to do a quick uh mic check and also to make sure that you're in attendance mr peter chopman good morning senator francis i'm here thank you good morning honorable commissioner nelson uh good morning president morning honorable john peyer oreo

commissioner good morning good morning keith richard assistant commissioner representing honorable commissioner january thank you honorable commissioner thomas morning senator francis morning mr dale brown farmer Mr. Brown. Very well, we'll get back to Mr. Brown.

0:54:50 Before we go to the testifiers, I'd just like to say again a pleasant good morning to everyone. Today we'll be definitely hearing from the RT Park in regards to, as well as the Department Agriculture, DPNR, and Property and Procurement in regards to Bill 34.0145. You know, an economy is a living thing. We often describe it in words like healthy, growing, and changing.

0:55:22 We hope to avoid words like declining or leaning instead of words that signify positive change and optimism. The current circumstances of the territory lend to an urgency to take action and measures that support economic diversity, meaning that we and our economy must continue to adapt in order to grow. Circumstances like decreasing population, as evident by the recent census numbers, which indicates a loss of 18 percent, and the closure of Lime Tree, which is projected to be at about two billion dollars lost to economy make a strong argument to rethink how we are capitalizing on our resources and creating opportunities to grow and expand our economy expanding our economy will take a multi-prong approach through the developments of projects like this one and the st croix south shore enterprise zone new economic activity that creates jobs and revenues for the territory today the committee of the whole would consider bill number 34-0145 a bill designed to fully utilize the opportunity zones which were created to allow for investment in distressed areas and spur economic growth and job creation in low-income communities we will also focus on amendment 34-385 which bifurcates bill 34-0145 effectively removing rezoning from today's discussion and focusing solely on the conveyance of the properties which is necessary to step for the rezoning to occur this project of the rt parks presents opportunity for a mixed-use development dedicated to agriculture research and technology it is a project that we should all get behind it proposes 18 acres of farmland a farmers grant program and

0:57:19 in the first of its kind for local farmers a revenue sharing program other highlights of this project include housing an office space a hotel a training and a solar grid that supports sustainability and green energy this proposal hinges on land on a land swap an acre for acre swap that leaves our territory and our inventory agricultural land intact most importantly this This proposal honors the intention of the use of the Vicora land by repurposing the land that for over 30 years have been used as a parking lot for agriculture fair and for the expansion of agriculture. This is a promise that has not been met by previous use of the Vicora land, such as Castle Burke Homes, the National Guard Armory, or even the Synchro Education Complex. In short, this proposal is filled with opportunity, not only for full utilization of Opportunity Zone, but for a project that shows that development, technology, and agriculture can coexist.

0:58:32 Madam Clerk, if you'll record Senator Blyden as being present, and at this time we'll go to the testifiers for their testimony, and of course we'll start off with Mr. Peter Chapman. executive director of the rt park thank you senator uh again good morning uh senator francis and other members of the committee of the whole my name is peter chapman and i'm the executive director and ceo of the uvi research and technology park corporation i'm honored to be here today to offer testimony in support of bill 34-0145 which conveys local government owned land in the federally designated opportunity zone to the rt park for the purpose of undertaking the tech village mixed use redevelopment on saint croix i'm joined here today by miss sydney paul the rt park's senior manager of business intelligence and marketing and a principal member of the rt park tech village project team and also miss amina selin the rt park's chief of staff and also a member of the project team for Tech Village. This meeting today, Senators, is a most timely discussion because we are rapidly approaching the U.S. Treasury Department's December 31st deadline for investors to place capital into Opportunity Zone funds, like the one being administered by our Tech Village equity provider, Renaissance Equity Partners, which is based in Washington, dc it is therefore critical that we demonstrate progress in moving this project forward now by

1:00:19 receiving the legislature's approval this month for the conveyance of the subject 26 acre property which is located on queen mary highway between the educational complex and the department of agriculture fairgrounds we are extremely grateful for the support and guidance we've received thus far actually it's been over an extended period of time from several senators especially senator francis who is the lead sponsor of the bill and finance committee chairman kurt viola since our last detailed tech village presentation to the legislature back on december 28 2020 we have heeded the recommendations from members of the legislature by incorporating changes into the project plan that could make tech village an even more successful economic development endeavor than the concept we started with two years ago most significantly we have worked with the virgin islands department of property and procurement to identify land that will be used to make the department of agriculture whole by replacing the roughly nine acres that will house the non-agricultural elements of the project small part of the project and also we've enhanced the site plan to increase the amount of parking available to accommodate the needs of visitors to the adjacent farmers market and i just want to point out senator francis that uh sydney paul is going to be showing uh some images shortly to supplement uh this this presentation images of the

existing or current use of the of the site that we're talking about today but today senators we are making an urgent appeal to you to advance bill 34 34-0145 as soon as possible after more

- 1:02:10 than two years of development planning identifying prospective commercial tenants and working to satisfy the requirements of our presumptive financing partners we now stand to lose 18 million dollars in private financing we've worked so hard to line up as you may know we were recently informed by the principal of renaissance equity partners that if we do not secure site control by november 15th which was yesterday that his firm would cease due diligence on their planned investment into tech village and look to place their capital in a different project in their pipeline and we don't want that to happen renaissance is eagerly awaiting the outcome of this hearing today to make a firm decision however as we sit here this afternoon we are operating on borrowed time literally losing our opportunity vote opportunity zone equity mr chapman one second mr chapman one second yes are you following the testimony that you submitted on this morning yes sir yes i am uh the november 16th um correspondence correct yes sir proceed losing our opportunity zone equity would precipitate the unraveling of the entire project because it would also cause our mortgage lender to withdraw consideration of any financing and As a result, the Virgin Islands, especially St. Croix, would be deprived of a catalytic 50 million dollar project that creates 300 permanent sustainable agriculture and clean energy jobs that do not compromise or threaten the public health, promotes economic diversification, supports food independence, which is desperately needed since we import 97 percent of the food we consume here in the vi expands our very limited supply of workforce housing that is accessible
- 1:04:15 to middle income virgin islanders and young professionals generates revenues that will be reinvested into vital entrepreneur entrepreneurial and technical assistance programs especially those benefiting existing farmers and individuals seeking to pursue careers in agriculture and helps demonstrate to national financial partners such as renaissance equity partners which is backed by the kresge and rockefeller foundations that the virgin islands is capable of doing big things and speaking of renaissance equity partners they are desirous of investing in projects on st thomas but a negative vote on the tech village land conveyance will certainly discourage their interest in the Virgin Islands altogether. When we first started working on the framework for the Tech Village Plan in 2019, we were motivated in large measure by the need to address the conditions wrought by the 2017 hurricanes. Today, our economic situation is still very fragile, perhaps even more grim when you look at certain indicators. And Senator Francis touched upon some of these. Most notably, according to the VI Bureau of Economic Research, the closure of Lime-Free Bay refinery is projected to result in nearly 1,000 jobs loss, a \$632 million reduction in gross domestic product, and a nearly \$2 billion loss in economic activity. Additionally, our 18.1% population decline between 2010 and 2020, as reflected in the most recent census, means that we have a mere 87,146 residents, a fact which weakens our competitiveness in attracting certain types of employers and service providers and will also reduce the
- 1:06:10 amounts of our annual formula-based federal economic and community development grants. the rt park tech village redevelopment is one of the most important sustainable agriculture projects introduced to the territory in many years and and could become a national model for sustainable development and economic empowerment of local stakeholders especially existing and emerging farmers the project is designed to promote economic diversification primarily through the attraction and growth of businesses engaged in large-scale food production for Virgin Islands residents and communities beyond our borders. Recent experiences with the 2017 hurricanes and our current economic crisis precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic have reminded us that our over-reliance on tourism creates a significant level of vulnerability that takes a heavy toll on our tax revenue base our families and on our community as a whole therefore we believe that our community must stop paying lip service to economic diversification and instead take thoughtful strategic and aggressive steps toward creating real opportunities for virgin islanders now it is in this spirit that we are pursuing tech village before sharing the details of the project i want to take a moment to explain the rt park's link to sustainable agriculture and agricultural research the rt park was established in 2002 through a partnership among the private sector the university of the virgin islands and the virgin islands government to help strengthen and diversify the economy through the attraction
- 1:08:02 and incubation of technology and knowledge-based enterprises not only did our enabling statute title 17 of the virgin islands code emphasize the tech sector but it also explicitly highlighted agricultural research as a core focus for the rt park thus we will fulfill a vital mandated role prescribed for the rt park in the visionary title 17 legislation passed by the general assembly by undertaking the tech village project sustainable agriculture was viewed by the rt parks founders and apparently also by the 24th legislature back in 2002 as a sector with great potential to help create jobs while also enhancing the territory's quality of life but the rt park unfortunately never took up the mantle of sustainable agriculture until now we've come a long way since our founding in 2002 and are moving along a very positive trajectory in contributing to the territory's economic stabilization and growth our selection as the international economic development council's 2020 economic development organization of the year underscores our progress as this award cements the rt

parks position as best in class among economic development organizations in north america i am also extremely proud that our accomplishments are inextricably linked to a supportive board of directors and the efforts of our senior and core team most of whom are virgin islanders and spouses of virgin islanders i deeply believe

1:09:49 in strengthening the local capacity to plan and execute economic development projects and the rt park is setting a very high standard in this regard it is this team consisting mainly of virgin islanders not real estate developers from the mainland u.s or any other region that has conceptualized and is driving progress on tech village yes the rt park as a virgin islands autonomous public corporation is the developer of tech village and not an outside real estate development firm the tech village project seeks to harness opportunities in the agricultural sector to help expand food production and grow and diversify our economy recognizing that 97 percent of vi food consumption comes from imports and that we have pressing economic conditions including an 11.84% unemployment rate and a limited supply of housing from middle-income residents, we believe that the need for Tech Village is urgent. Tech Village will support the territory's agricultural sector by providing office and research and development facilities for sustainable agriculture businesses and farmland for the enterprises that will occupy the site. in fact 17 of the 26 acres or about 62 percent of the land will be dedicated to sustainable agriculture related activities the anchor business will be an innovative local entity impact traits which is led by an experienced saint thomas based entrepreneur dr richard warburg impact traits will apply its patented technology for growing toxic free crops to the commercial production of selected vegetables one critical feature of impact traits is that it will be owned by a

1:11:49 consortium of local farmers that will share in the business's profits this particular venture's ultimate goal is to produce a substantial volume of products that be that could be consumed locally and sold to communities throughout the caribbean latin america and possibly even africa by tapping into the demand for select agricultural products both locally and globally impact traits will generate revenue that benefits local farmers and virgin islanders employed by the business moreover it places the territory in the position to be a leader a leader in the world of agricultural innovation impact traits will be accompanied by other sustainable development enterprises specializing in food production and clean energy technologies that will create jobs for virgin islanders job creation in the in our territory is always critically important but has become especially urgent in light of our ongoing economic challenges collectively these businesses will create approximately 300 permanent jobs plus another 140 jobs during the construction phase that will be heavily marketed to farmers graduates of uvi's agricultural programs and other virgin islanders seeking gainful employment in a growth sector we further believe that tech village could help guide local efforts to harness the economic potential of other crops including but not limited to cannabis which is the subject of recent legislation that you are all familiar with however because the project will be mixed use tech village will also consist of

1:13:37 other revenue generating components that will benefit virgin islanders these include 66 units of new workforce housing which will help address our severe housing shortage on st croix and in the second phase a teaching hotel geared toward business travelers not only will the hotel create permanent jobs in addition to the 300 projected sustainable agriculture jobs in the first phase of the project but it will also enhance the educational offerings of uvi's hospitality management program by providing on-the-job training and quality experiential learning opportunities it also bears emphasis that the rt park plans to partner with selected area high schools especially the educational complex near the uvi st freud campus local high school students in vocational education programs will have full access to the internships and permanent jobs emanating from tech village and the affiliated businesses right next door another critical feature of the tech village plan is revenue sharing and financial support for farmers revenue sharing and financial support for farmers st croix farmers as a mission-driven economic development organization the rt park is committed to using a portion of the revenue generated by tech village to support investments in other projects and activities that make it easier for local farmers to participate in sustainable agriculture ventures additionally we will use our platform with the social investors and philanthropists and philanthropists to help capitalize a new fund the fund for agricultural progress to provide direct grants and micro loans to individual farmers the funding can be used for equipment technical assistance and other resources to help local farmers become more competitive in the broader marketplace. These initiatives are not intended to replace anything presently being done to support local

1:15:52 farmers. Instead, we seek to expand and strengthen the resources available to farmers. Available U.S. Department of Agriculture data suggests that the number of active registered farmers in the VI has stagnated greatly in recent years, which is a threat to our need to achieve greater food independence. Therefore, because Tech Village will help increase the number of local people seeking careers in agricultural sciences, it is an absolutely essential project. As a mixed-use sustainable agriculture project, Tech Village is targeted to be constructed on a roughly 26 acre parks parcel between the educational complex and the agricultural fairgrounds and that's an image of it right there on the opposite side of queen mary highway from uv from the uvi st roy campus the rt park was guided to this site by personnel of the vi department of agriculture which manages the land because there are no active farming leases on the property This parcel, which by

some accounts has not been farmed since 1972, is the perfect location for Tech Village for the following reasons.

- 1:17:08 Number one, the dominant commercial character of the Tech Village concept is sustainable agriculture. Therefore, utilizing the Queen Mary Highway site, which is zoned for agricultural uses, makes sense. Number two, the proposed site is located within the federally designated Opportunity Zone, which incentivizes private entities to invest in local projects by providing a federal capital gains tax exemption or reduction. The St. Croix Opportunity Zone boundaries encompass downtown Christianstead, downtown Frederickstead, and a vast swath of farmland mid-island moving west. The VI's Opportunity Zone areas were established in 2018 by the previous governor's administration to spur investment in these under-invested areas of the island.
- 1:18:06 Number three, the parcel is across the street from UVI. One of our key funders of Tech Village, the HBCU Opportunity Fund, which is managed by Renaissance Equity Partners, is a qualified opportunity zone fund created to make investments that would facilitate mixed-use redevelopment of areas around minority-serving educational institutions like UVI. The HBCU Opportunity Fund's investments must also be located within Opportunity Zones to support mixed-use ventures, which tend to carry the most significant potential for economic impact. The RT Park is leveraging the federally designated Opportunity Zone to attract the financial resources to make it feasible to pursue this comprehensive project. We anticipate the Tech Village will cost nearly \$50 million across all phases. The vast majority of this funding, except for \$7 million in federal block grant monies to cover a construction gap, will come from private sources. We are not looking to the Virgin Islands taxpayers to cover any of the project's costs. Thus far, we have received term sheets from investors for the first phase, office and operating space for agribusinesses, as well as the residential units, and expect to be able to break ground in the first half of 2022. We have done extensive community engagement, conducting information sessions with farmers and other local stakeholders, and have made a number of improvements to the site plan based on this valuable input.
- 1:19:50 As we approach the deadlines for closing on our financing and commencing construction, we look forward to continuing to have informed and constructive dialogue with all segments of the community. The vital importance of attracting and retaining jobs in growth industries is underscored by the fact that the territory lost over 12 percent of total jobs following the 2017 hurricanes. We have still not fully recovered. This cruel reality, along with the ongoing economic fallout from COVID and some of the statistics I shared earlier, necessitate that the Virgin Islands assumes a more intentional approach to economic development.
- 1:20:37 Tech Village represents a significant step in the right direction, and we look forward to working with the legislature to advance this important job-creating sustainable agriculture initiative for the territory. Because of the urgent need to avoid losing our financing by having the VI legislature approve Bill 34-0145, I want to close by summarizing from members of this body, as well as the viewing audience, 10 critical details regarding Tech Village, absolutely none of which will come to fruition if this legislation is not approved. Number one, we have \$18 million in private financing waiting to be deployed into the first phase of the project. This money is presently at great risk because we do not have site control. Number two, the project will create 300 permanent jobs and economic opportunities, primarily in the sustainable agriculture space. There will be another 140 temporary jobs created during the construction phases number three the queen mary highway road location is essential to the financial feasibility of the project because it allows us to attract private equity from u.s treasury department approved opportunity zone funds like the hbcu opportunity fund administered by renaissance equity partners the project must also be mixed use in order to qualify for financing number four about 62 of the site will be used for agricultural related activities including farming and agricultural research only about nine acres will be used for non-agricultural uses and bill 34-0145 specifically identifies the parcels that will be put back into the Department of Agriculture's inventory to replace those nine acres. The bottom line, the Department of Agriculture will immediately be made whole through this land swap. Number five,
- 1:22:48 the office and research research and development space will be available to local and non-local entrepreneurs and will be heavily marketed to those in the sustainable agriculture sector. Number six, the 66-unit workforce housing component, which will be made available to local residents on a first-come, first-served basis, is the only residential project of this kind presently underway in St. Croix. And this is according to an independent market study by Novogratich in the mainland U.S.
- 1:23:23 Number seven, the second phase of Tech Village will consist of a business hotel that will increase our hotel inventory by 120 rooms while also providing UVI with access to a state-of-the-art teaching hotel that provides on-the-job training for UVI students as well as high school students at the adjacent educational complex. Number eight, the second phase of Tech Village will also consist of a state-of-the-art conference center and outdoor food hall that will be available to local food vendors and retailers.

- 1:24:03 Number nine, the project will serve as a platform for creating the Fund for Agricultural Progress for local farmers. This fund will be partially capitalized through profit sharing and the rest will come from philanthropy. And number 10, the successful launch of Tech Village clears the way for our private equity partner to also continue to explore financing opportunities on St. Thomas, a process which has begun. Renaissance Equity Partners has articulated a strong interest in supporting economic development on both St. Croix and St. Thomas. but if we disappoint them on tech village they will cease exploring investment opportunities anywhere in the territory senators this concludes my formal presentation i welcome any questions you may have for me and other members of the tech village project team thank you thank you very much mr chapman um for making your case at this time um we'll go well madam clerk if you could record senator fred gregory as well as senator soros as present and i think we also recorded senator blyton is present as well at this time we'll go to commissioner nelson for his testimony that's a nelson good good morning good morning mr vice president good morning madam president and chairwoman good morning to the committee of the whole among other members of the The other testifiers present, the legislative central staff, of course, the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture, and to the people of the Virgin Islands.
- 1:25:47 My name is Positive Tia Nelson, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture. I am here today to present on bill number 34.015, an act approving the conveyance of agricultural parcels to the University of the Virgin Islands Research and Technical Park Corporation. On May 3rd, 2021, the Virginia Department of Agriculture addressed a letter of support for the R.T. Parks Tech Village to the legislature through Senate President Donald Fred Gregory. The department believes that this economic development project, which proposes to bring over 400 much needed jobs to the island of St. Croix, is poised to become a conduit for recruiting, attracting, and preparing the next generation of agricultural professionals. While it is important to focus on the farmers of tomorrow, we cannot forget our farmers of today and the skills and assistance they require.
- 1:26:50 Since the RD Park will be sitting centrally on the District of St. Croix, it can serve in a multitude of ways to our farming community, including providing technical assistance and training technology services and fully integrating agriculture into all aspects of the rt park including utilizing the best conservation practices of great concern to us is ensuring that the rt park fully meets the needs of our current farmers and community they can and should have agriculture as an integral integral facet of every part of this community from the teaching hotel to the housing community and even the parking lots in both design and practice thank you for allowing us to testify today on this transformational project we hope that the project lives up to its potential for increasing our budgeting food sovereignty here in the virgin islands and that we can once again become the sustainable bread basket of the caribbean we are open to answering any questions you may have thank you Thank you, Commissioner Nelson. Good morning, colleagues and good morning to the testifiers and good morning to the listening and viewing audience. We will continue to proceed with today's meeting. Mr. Keith Richards of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, may proceed with your testimony. Good afternoon, honorable Donna M. Fred Gregory, president of the 34th legislature of the Virgin Islands, other honorable senators of the 34th legislature present, and members of the viewing and listening audience. My name is Keith Richards, assistant commissioner of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources. I appear before you today on behalf of Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriel, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, to provide testimony on Bill 340145. Bill 340145 proposes to convey parcels 5E and 5F's Prince Quarter
- 1:29:12 St. Croix, consisting of 15.66-acre track and a 9.7-acre track adjacent to each other and both zoned agricultural one, Vicorp designated properties. These maps can be fully shown and described on olg drawing number 9a-152 c021 dated june 4th 2021. both parcels are located within the federally designated opportunity zone the proponents of this bill have met with the representatives of dpnr on several occasions in an effort to gain our expert opinion assessment and overall support for their project to that end representatives of dpnr have offered multiple options to the sponsor that we believe could gain the support from this body including the available mechanism they plan to utilize in the proposal before you today the sponsors of this project have stressed during our meetings that time is of essence relative to the availability of the programs that they expect to utilize to finance the project they have discussed the most expedited avenue to achieve the conveyance of the parcels while ensuring due process and public opportunity and a public opportunity to be heard as the proposal is described and illustrated in the sponsor's presentation the project site would require a zoning amendment to ensure the project can comply with title 29 chapter 3 of the vi code representatives of dpnr have met with the representatives of uvi and the technology park on several occasions to discuss the project and the development requirements for them as well as the
- 1:31:18 opportunities the project represents to the territory in the discussion with uvi and the technology park representative the department described the limitations of the current a1 zoning district and potentially what zoning districts will allow them to develop the site property for mixed use the mixed uses described in the proposal the university and the technology prop sponsors are clear that the re-zoning from a1 to a2 and a1 to b3 would represent the donor the zoning districts that

meet their objectives finally the department concurs with the governor when he wrote on september 16 2021 in a letter to the body quoting number 5e consistent of 15.66 u.s acres and parcel number 5f consistent of 9.7 issue u.s acres both of the vicorp land prince quarter st croix u.s virgin islands property for use in a technology village and agricultural resource and purchasing site such development on the proposed site is consistent with the mission and purpose of the rt park which is to help diversify and expand the economy of the of the United States Virgin Islands through attraction, retention, and growth technology, knowledge-based, and sustainable agricultural-related businesses in the territory.

1:32:56 Madam President, I thank you for the opportunity to provide a testimony on Bill 34.015, and I am available to respond to questions, concerns, or inquiry from the body. Thank you Mr. Richards for your testimony we will now hear from uh commissioner of the department of property and procurement mr anthony thomas commissioner good afternoon thank you uh good afternoon honorable donna a fred gregory senate president honorable novelle e francis jr senate vice president and sponsor of bill number 34-0145 and his proposed amendment by nature of a substitute, all of the senators of the 34th legislature present, fellow testifiers, persons present online, listening and viewing audiences. I am Anthony David Thomas, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Property and Procurement. Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee and offer testimony on the proposed amendment to Bill No. 34-0145 for the approval of the conveyance of Parcels 5E and 5S, all of VibeCorp land, Prince Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands to the University of the Virgin Islands Research and Technical Park Corporation, and other related purposes.

1:34:27 Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to offer testimony on the subject bill. The Department of Property Management supports economic development of St. Croix and the Territory as a whole. Therefore, the Department supports the bill. The Department understands that Section 1 of the bill provides the required legislative approval pursuant to Title 31, Section 205C of the Virgin House Code for the transfer of parcel number 5E, consisting of 15.66 U.S. acres, more or less, and Parcel 5F consisting of 9.78 U.S. acres, more or less. VI Corp land prints quarter St. Croix, Virgin Islands, to the University of the Virgin Islands Research and Technology Park Corporation. Section 2 of the bill requires the Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement to prepare a quick claim deed to convey the property identified in Section 1 of the bill. Through Section 3 of the bill, the Department understands the Research and Technology Park Corporation will be able to develop the aforementioned properties for a mixed-use economic project, notwithstanding the limitations on the Development and Restrictions for Agricultural Use on Bicorp Land, outlined in Title VII, Section 11 of the Virgin Islands Code. Section 4 of the proposed bill, the Department is required to convey Lot No. 13, Estate Mount Pleasant, Northside B Quarter, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, consisting of 8.38 U.S. acres to the Department of Agriculture, which will be used as a replacement for the 9.78 U.S. acres in agricultural use, which will be lost because of the proposed mixed-use development of parcel 5F ViCorp land.

1:36:26 While the Department supports the proposed bill, the Department has the following concerns. Parcel 5E ViCorp land is referred to as remainder parcel 5E in various parts of the bill. Therefore, for the purposes of consistency and accuracy, all references to Parcel 5 EVI Corp. Land should be revised to match the description in the subject map. DPP understands that through the reconfiguration, Parcel 5 EVI Corp. Land is created. Under Section 4 of the bill, the Department of Property and Procurement is required to convey Lot No. 13, Estate Mount Pleasant, to the Department of Agriculture as replacement for the agricultural acreage, which will be lost through the mixed-use development of the property. In light of the fact that the property is already owned by the government of the Virgin Islands, separate conveyance to the Department of Agriculture is not required. The property is already within the government's ownership. I thank you again for the invitation to appear before the committee to offer testimony on bill number 34.0145 and reiterate the department's support for the proposed conveyance the proposed project is in line with the bryant brooch administration's goals for sustainable economic development madam president this concludes my prepared testimony and i remain available for any questions the committee may have thank you thank you commissioner thomas for your testimony and for your insight uh we'll now hear from mr dale brown of uh seizure farms of the virgin islands One minute sir, I don't believe you have your camera on.

1:38:36 Is your camera on? Mr. Brown, yes, my cameras on, we are able to see you. Okay, let me just close that. Is that him at the bottom?

1:39:09 Yes. The committee stands in recess for two minutes. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. oh We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you.

1:44:41 Colleagues, we are back on the record. Mr. Brown, we can see you, so you may proceed with your testimony. Thank you. Thank you. Good morning, Committee of the Whole and Honorable Senator Nobel Francis. name is dale brown owner of sager farm of the virgin islands i'm a farmer agriculturist local food advocate and environmentalist for the development of a local food system food security and sovereignty this testimony is not in full support of bill 340145 while i'm in support of any agriculture development in the territory i am against having any farmland deemed and set aside for agricultural

production mainly food production to be used for construction or building projects which will be irreversible or to be rezoned for any other purpose the location location remind remainder parts of number five consisting of 15.66 u.s acres and parcel number five f consisting of 9.7 us acres all of vicor plan prince quarter st croix virgin islands is 25.44 acres which i know there is a farmer located at 5e this farm has been there for more than four years were there were there any communication with this farmer to inform him that he would be displaced and no longer be able to continue his operation on the property and will have to be relocated or quit farming on the property this is an economic impact to this farmer and will continue to be the defamation of the industry this is president said this is a president setting issue whenever need arise for land ag lands will be targeted to fulfill the need for whatsoever project it may be because there

1:46:56 is no because there's no leaseholder especially if it is determined that the farmer does not have a lease agreement the rt park is presently on land directly included within the federal designated qualified opportunity zone and has 10.89 acres bill 340145 call for parcel number fiefs consisting of 9.7 u.s acres of vicor plan rezoned to be used for residential and business component of the project and an exemption from strict application of the use of the property exclusive for agricultural purposes there is ample amount of acreage available within the area of the rt park and the university to suffice this project and will be in short distance to the rt park The University of the Virgin Island has approximately 200 acres and there is undeveloped property within these acreages.

1:48:03 The question to be asked, what are the vacant acreage reserved for and why have they not looked at to suffice the Tech Village? There were farmland given to the University of the Virgin Island in 2002 by the 24th Legislature to build the RT Park. This was then protested by farmers in action. This land encompassed farmland with existing farmers, Durant Farm, Hamilton Farm, Dawood Farm, Bermudas Farm, and et cetera. This act was never repealed by any legislature under University Resolve after the protest by farmers in action to build on its own land.

1:48:48 but still hold leverage of these lands for future swap for other lands. Again, this needs to be repealed. Section five, bill 34-015 states. Not later than 30 days after the enactment of this act, the Commissioner of Property and Procurement shall replace the agricultural zone acreages lost from the rezone of parcel number five of Bicorp land. Prince Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, with acres suitable for agriculture on the island of St. Croix. My question is to the 34th legislature, are we looking to swap farmland for farmland? Because that's exactly what 13 acres, number 13, which is below um uh the market which was once plaza extra is located they need to be no further conveyance of for land for the rt park once this is used once it uses own land within the university thank you for the time i'm looking forward to a more amicable resolution of the matter of not having to use farmland already deemed for food production Thank you. Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Brown, colleagues. The testifiers before us this morning has set the stage. What time is it? It's actually noon. It's actually almost one.

1:50:34 So the testifiers today have set the stage for the discussion. Mr. Vice President laid out the intent and the direction he seeks to go in as it relates to this particular bill that's before us. So at this time, we're going to go to a four minute round. And we'll begin with Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. Senator Heiliger, you may proceed.

1:51:11 Thank you. Good morning to my colleagues. Is it afternoon? Good afternoon to my colleagues, to the testifiers, to the people of this territory. I want to go directly to the testifier that just spoke a little bit about the farmer that is still on the property. is the situation around him specifically as to why we were not aware up until now about him being on this farm for the last four years that is a question for the department of agriculture because this farmer sits immediately east of the department so i can't see anyone even passing that route to actually ignore that there's a farmer there okay thank you um commissioner of agriculture nelson could you share about this piece of property and a farmer currently being there for four years the farmer has been there for perhaps for longer than that uh madam uh senator on may 3rd when i sent the communication to the senate president i indicated there on the one two three four fifth paragraph where he says one farmer currently occupying government these farmland came to the office concerned about the impact to his farm operation which is encompassed by the area sought by arty park he has listed that he currently has 60 goats and sheep 40 food trees and leafy green crops he stated that he recently completed a new pig pen which cost about six thousand dollars a gold pen which costs about two thousand dollars nine and a half acres of fencing and recent land preparation costs which he believe is only fear to be reimbursed uh and he was proud

1:53:01 to affirm that he is a full-time farmer and basically wants assistance to relocate i mean he was he had already started working on his own relocation efforts even though i feel if we are going to displace a farmer that it should be our responsibility to help to relocate them and in this instance if rt park is going to do it they should definitely assume some of this cause so has there been a discussion or agreement has there been a discussion currently our agreement to potentially relocate this farmer if this transaction goes through well again the farmer came to me it uh in indicating his concern and i listed it here to the senate president and a correspondence mail to her if this goes through it is it is going to be our responsibility to assist that farmer we have no choice uh just raising this to the public because i do believe that it is

also the responsibility of those who are participating in this place in the farmer to assume the cost he listed some costs which he recently uh uh incurred in developing his farm through agriculture has has there been a location potentially identified um to relocate this farmer one minute that action has not yet taken place what he has done is he has partnered with another farmer i don't know he had partnered with another farm and he's he's fixed the situation what we need to know is what's being said of there's no lease which is might be accurate there's no lease but he has authority to be there okay the idea of having no lease speaks to a bigger long-term problem where most of these farmers don't have a lease i know i had a conversation with you previously where we had discussed lease versing a work permit to utilize the

1:54:48 land and you did share with me some of the farmers have either or and my question is I'm very much concerned based on what you're sharing with me today both of you that this farm is going to be displaced and we need to have a serious conversation about this individual because I'm hearing one person was told another person might have been, and there's no real resolution about a land that is right before us right now to potentially be transferred to do something completely different. So I'm a little bit concerned about that. But I'm out of time.

1:55:26 Hopefully I will have another round to continue with my questions. Thank you so much. Thank you, Senator Frances Heidegger. Before I make any assumptions around this conversation, I think it is important that we establish for those that's listening and viewing, what is the difference between a lease versus a work permit? So Commissioner Nelson, could you please help us to understand that a little clearer for those of us that's not in this particular arena?

1:56:05 It's not necessarily a work permit, it's a permission to occupy the land. In lieu of a lease, which takes time, and there's been a big issue over the years. Could you speak up a bit? We're having a difficult time hearing you. Okay. In lieu of a lease being available, which takes some time because of the process over the years, the most farmers are given a letter of occupancy which allows them to do what they're doing on the property until a lease is executed. I see. So you indicated that the farmer has been on a property for well over, I think it was indicated, four or five years by Mr. Dale Brown and you've served in the capacity as commissioner for what is it this is almost three years or three years right at three years so what prevents you from moving forward what prevented you from moving forward the lease the fact that we were having this conversation around the rt park because that would make sense no no we don't move forward the leases the leases are done through the property and procurement i Deputy Commissioner Cardi is online. She can describe to you that we recently, they revamped the leasing process. There's some new application which should allow it to go more fluidly. Deputy Commissioner Cardi is online. She can explain what recently transpired.

1:57:41 I don't want to take up too much time on this, but while I understand that you don't process the leases you are the overseer if you will of the agriculture property so if there's someone on the property who has a permission to use the land then there should be some conversation about the need for a lease and that's why i asked the question as to perhaps the reason why you did not move forward is because of the work that's occurring around the and the conversation that we're having today, which has been a long time coming, regarding the RT Park.

1:58:23 No, there are many farmers who find themselves in the same situation without having a lease, Senator President. Commissioner Nelson, I understand that farmers find themselves in that situation, but I'm trying to figure out what is your role. I'm trying to understand. You're asking me if there were conversation with the gentleman regarding a lease. We're just talking overall now, because you took it to overall, so what is your role overall as it relates to the permission to use the property and farmers moving to a lease?

1:59:06 Once the revised process, which is now utilized, once they finish this application process, makes it a little more thorough we submit that to property and procurement which then they go through the creation of the lease process they construct the language and then decide the commission the farmer signs up the commissioner of agriculture signs up and then the leases actually come to you the senate for approval yeah i understand that and actually what my rule is asking you what your rule is i just i explained that now i'm not trying to point out yeah so um it just seems as if i guess that's why we have Virgin Islanders that become very frustrated with the system because while that person may have a permission to use, you send information, you are aware of, you know, all of the development that has taken place on that particular parcel of the property, there should have been some conversation as to how R.T. Park, and I'm sure they will be willing to assist how they will assist that particular farmer if it becomes necessary for he or she to move from that property as a result of the direction or the conversation that we're having today i think it's important that and it's not funny it really isn't because that's why we have frustrated virgin islanders because i don't think it is important it is important for us to do our due diligence it's just important i mean there's no up or down around it and there's a point of inquiry senator i think it's senator veille you're recognized for

2:00:52 your point of inquiry thank you madam chair mr brown do you have a lease do you have a valid lease no senator how long have you been on the property 22 years i just wanted to highlight that we have some serious issues when it come to farmers being able to obtain leases and sager is a full-time farm that is worked by himself and also his wife and his family

so we have some serious issues that need to be addressed and we have the private and procurement commissioner and the agriculture commissioner here so perhaps we can get to the bottom of what's taking so long thank you madam chair thank you senator uh did i hear a point of the senator carrion you recognize for your point of inquiry uh thank you madam chair uh i'm just inquiring if we have a visual of the land in question, I think it would be good for also the viewing audience to be able to see committee members present.

2:02:02 You're asking for a visual? RIT Park, is it possible for you to pull up the screen? We could take a quick recess to get that done. We can pull that up, Senator. We have a rendering that shows the agricultural land perspective of the site. So we want to see a visual of the property, not necessarily the rendering? I mean, we could see that, but what's important for us is to see the visual of the property and we could, of course, see the rendering.

2:02:50 I don't think we have that image handy. So you don't have a visual of the property. We don't keep it, hold it, we're. Good afternoon. Someone is speaking. Yes, this is Sydney Paul, senior manager of marketing and business intelligence at the RT Park. I can pull up a aerial photo that would be helpful for the senators right now and share it on my screen. It'll take me five seconds.

2:03:17 Okay, so we're gonna continue with the discussion And, um, once you're ready, just, uh, cue me up once the Senator's time is called. Okay. Okay. We'll do. Uh, thank you, uh, Senator Francis, you're recognized for your point of information. Uh, thank you very much, uh, Madam chair. I think that in this discussion is, is, um, it'd be important for me to mention that in In fact, we have a situation where a farmer and the land that has been identified is certainly going to be utilized for farm purposes by the RT Park. But if there is compensation that will be required for relocation, and I had this conversation with Mr. Brown earlier this morning when he brought the matter to my attention that the onus will be on all of the stakeholders, property and procurement, the government of the Virgin Islands, the legislature, to make sure that there is a necessary compensation and arrangement made for relocation of that farmer. So I don't think that that's a dispute. I think clearly, you know, the onus will be on all of us to make sure that there is a smooth transition in the best interest of collaboration in this matter.

2:04:32 Thank you very much. Thank you for that, Senator Francis. Senator Franklin D. Johnson, you're recognized for your four minutes. Good morning. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning to my colleagues. Good morning to testifiers. Good morning to the viewing and listening audience. Wow, it's afternoon. Sorry. Thank you very much. We normally start out in that morning, and I still think we're there. But I'd like to start out with Mr. Chapman. um good morning mr chapman how are you doing today good morning senator how are you my thanks what's the timeline on this project what will be the starting day and the completion date we anticipate starting construction the first part uh we believe early second quarter of 2022 and we believe that we can finish the first uh phase or the first part of the first phase which is the apartments in uh 12 to 16 12 to 16 months so that would be about mid-year of 2023 when we anticipate getting a certificate of occupancy for the apartments thank you i you know i like progress i like production i like things to happen i don't like the words if i don't i don't do well with if this don't happen at this time i i don't do well with that you You spoke in your testimony, you said, I deeply believe in strengthening the local capacity to plan and execute economic, right? And everyone is talking about we don't have the capacity for just about everything.

2:06:11 Why do you believe that we're going to have the capacity to complete this project and have the workforce that's needed? Yes, we are going to have the capacity because we currently do have the capacity. We have assembled a national team. I myself have over 20 years of large-scale mixed-use real estate development experience. Our partner on the project is the National Development Council. They're not an owner. They're not an equity investor. They're a technical assistance provider. They are a nationally recognized financial services and technical assistance company. And we have major financial partners behind us, including Dwight Capital, which is the largest HUD-backed mortgage lender in the United States, and Renaissance Equity, which is a unique private equity and community development investment firm. And we have one of the best local architects in the territory involved in the project, Rene D'Adamo, and we have done years worth of due diligence on prospective clients, clients that will occupy the real estate led by Impact Traits, which is a local company.

2:07:31 We have completed a market study by Novogratic, independently created by Novogratic, which shows that both the residential component and the commercial component will be feasible. It will make money. And so those are among the things, Senator, that give us confidence that we will successfully launch and complete this project. Now, you put up a drawing of the proposed project, right? I would like for you to put it up again, and I want for you to tell me which part of the land the farm is, which part of the land the construction of the homes and the hotel is. Is the farming closer to the Queen Mary Highway or farther away from the Queen Mary Highway?

- 2:08:14 No, farther away. Which one is farther away? I'm going to ask Ms. Paul to put up the image right now. And which one is farther away? The farm is farther away from the Queen Mary Highway or the development of the homes and the hotel? Ms. Paul, excuse me. Do you want to provide an orientation for the senator? Chapman, Chapman, we can't put that up on the screen on the senator's time.
- 2:08:46 You have to answer the questions and then we'll allow you to do that. Please hold the senator's time. Okay. Senator, can you repeat your question, Senator? You put up a drawing a while ago, right? And I was asking you, is the farming is going to be done closer to the Queen Mary Highway? Or is it to the back? The farming is going to be done in the back of the site. So the majority of the footprint is going to be used for farming and agricultural-related activities. And that's going to be in the back. the the buildings are going to be closer to uh queen mary highway for purposes of of access and i want to also point out that the uh the apartments will be on that portion of the site that uh that is currently used for informal unofficial unofficial parking okay time thank thank you very much madam chair may i wrap up here yes you may um commissioner nelson I think you're a man that's have a lot of interest in farming and planting and everything like that and from my line of question the buildings are going to be closer to those mahogany trees and lately I've been seeing a lot of mahogany trees being cut down what will take place with those in front of where that structure is going to go now and who been given permission to cut those trees well everybody that's been cutting trees don't have permission some have applied to departments of agriculture for cutting regarding what's going to happen to those trees i don't know what the intent is of those developers but usually the tree can stay and have a canopy we've seen we've seen where roots are causing some challenges so people are cutting back roots and pruning the
- 2:10:30 trees did you say they come to the department of agriculture for permission to cut the trees But according to the new law, they have to acquire permission from the Department of Agriculture to cut heritage trees, yes. Is there a board in place? Excuse me? Is there a board in place that makes these decisions? There's no currently, there's no board existing in place yet. No. Okay, Senator. Thank you very much, ma'am. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Johnson. um so we're now seeing the aerial shot of the site that we are discussing today and i'm going to ask uh either uh miss paul or um mr chapman to please um give us a overview of what's in front of us sydney do you want to now you're changing this yes right there okay so go ahead sid you're on mute hi can you hear me yes okay sorry about that i couldn't um go off of you you know sharing the screen i'll bring it back up right now So what you're seeing here, Senators, is an aerial shot of the area and parcel, remainder parcel of five. To the east, you'll see some red roofs. That is the St. Croix Educational Complex and Vocational School.
- 2:12:20 To the west, on the west side of the rendering is the Department of Agriculture. offices and the agriculture fairgrounds. To the south, you'll see a road, a long road, that is Queen Mary Highway, Centerline Road. And just south of that, where the S is, would be just in front of the UBI RT Park headquarters at 64 West. So south of this road is the UBI St. Croix campus. And then to the north, you'll see towards the end, have the the end for north that entire section in the back is what we described where there will be active farming happening so the majority of the um the buildings will be toward the south Thank you for your explanation. So the north is where the agriculture activity will take place, and on the south, which we can't really see that well on the view that's in front of us, but that's where the what did you say?
- 2:13:44 That's that's where we we will have the buildings most most of the buildings. That's where most of the buildings will be located. Right. All right. Thank you. Thank you for the information and thank you to Senator Carrion for asking that important to making that important suggestion and recommendation. Senator Javon E. James, you're recognized for your four minutes. Good afternoon to the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Good afternoon testifiers. Mr. Chapman, page two of your testimony dated November 16, 2021. You stated that we, meaning you, well, you stated that we are making an appeal for us, which is the legislature, to advance Bill 34.0145 as soon as possible. I must admit I sat in several of the working sessions between the R.T. Park and the 34th legislature of the Virgin Islands. I, Senator Jovan James, do appreciate your hard work, but I don't want us to paint a picture of desperation here today when you keep using these words that you have in your testimony it just seems like it's like some doom and gloom situation i i don't i don't like that and if that's the case it should have been communicated to us prior to and way before and if you did that with other my colleagues i senator javan james was not included so let's just place that on the record because you mentioned that we stand to lose 18 million dollars in private financing the public is listening and they're making it seem like it's a lack of action by the legislature of the virgin islands so let's not paint a picture of doom and gloom here i'm asking you please um and you mentioned in your testimony about the principle of renaissance equity partners who are the principle who is the principle the principle is robert uh robert k jenkins and we received uh senator a a
- 2:15:46 letter which uh which was shared with some of your colleagues from mr jenkins um indicating that we have until november 15th to uh uh to uh achieve uh site control uh or he will uh shift the money set aside for us to another project so uh so so senator i say respectfully it is a doom gloom urgent situation which is why uh i've used this language and we

have been communicating with several senators uh throughout this this process this has been a literally a two-year a process so you're basically throwing that job at specific senator i just want to make it clear because i wasn't in those conversations i understand you made mention on page 10 of your testimony that 62 percent of the site will be used for agricultural related activities including farming and agricultural research research yes and if i'm not mistaken 26 acres will be dedicated for this site right 26 26 acres correct and approximately 17 acres of that 26 acres will be used for farming and agricultural related activities including research that is correct 17. so let's speak specifically to the 17 acres uh commissioner positive nelson what's your take on this 17 acres being dedicated you are a very brief testimony i would like for you to elaborate some more on your vision and what you would like to see with those 17 acres please one minute it's 17 acres as it relates to what i would like to see

2:17:34 the arty park do with it or what we'd like to see happen with those 70 acres in general whichever one you want to answer well i gotta put in context of what we're discussing here today i know that the arctic park is planning to do cassava research i in particular would have been more interested in them advancing research that was already done by the university and adding to the food supply by having you know uh you know that you're having a um a hotel uh uh created there that you're actually growing food and greens that's utilized by your by your your teaching hotel and actually that can be you know released into this community in some kind of way time because i'm not certain the benefit of cassava research to us right now uh then that was would be my one concern madam chair one final question currently we have discussions going on with act 8404 that speaks to agricultural plan and you mentioned uvi and uvi is a part of the discussion when it comes to the agricultural plan so as we speak about dedicating so many acres 17 acres to agriculture related activities i'm really hoping and praying that at some point because i know there's a committee to hold in just discussion but from now until session some i need to come forward stating what and how the agricultural plan will be incorporated in this rt park and madam chair that is my two cents in this very important conversation thank you uh mr chapman you want to respond to yes the senator regarding exactly what the plans are just you know just reiterating yes so uh thank uh thank you uh uh senate

2:19:24 president so so senator james uh the uh the plan which has been in uh in in development for for several years now it will entail as the initial phase of the agricultural part of the project the institution of a company called impact traits impact traits is based on saint thomas they have a patent intellectual property on a process for growing toxin-free root vegetables the initial crop is going to be cassava but the crops are going to be rotated periodically you know every every few seasons the first is just cassava but it's not the only it's not the only uh crop that company impact traits will be working closely with the agricultural department and professionals at the university of the virgin islands on research to help create additional what richard warburg calls traits that can be used for sustainable commercial scale agriculture so this is a patented technology there's been a lot of work put into this and they will be uh the anchor tenant on the site and they will be using much of the farmland for venture farming for the initial farming of of that of that crop so so that's where most of that 17 acres that you reference will be used and uvi has been squarely in that loop with dr warburg so just to be clear there is uh there is a great deal of synergy between impact traits and the researchers

2:21:18 at the university of the virgin islands i appreciate your question uh mr chapman i want you to take it a step further could you please break down venture farming for the sake of the community and those listening and viewing yes so what what we loosely refer to as venture farming it's simply farming that is related to the research that will be taking place at the site and it's just the first phase of the farming so the farming that will be done by uh by impact rates not all of their farming activity will be done on this site this represents just the first just the first phase their goal is to create value-added products from these root vegetables and the products will be sold locally and throughout the caribbean and as i said in my remarks throughout latin america and also and also africa so this is large scale food production that we're talking about but the research will take place on this site and the initial farming will also take place on this site thank you for your response uh senator caller j joseph you're recognized for your four minutes a pleasant good afternoon madam madam chair pleasant good afternoon to our testifiers colleagues as well as our listening and viewing audience i really find this very interesting and invigorating the conversations that we are having relative to the proposed development and the rezoning of the proposed land to accommodate this development. I believe it's a visionary product to put to use properties for mixed use. I just I just have some questions and those are going to be directed primarily to Mr. Chapman based on my experience in developing mixed-use, mixed-income properties at the turn of this century. I was the project manager at one point for a private development company who started off and kicked off the redevelopment of Louis E. Brown, as well as the Hoffman-Nulliburg

2:23:54 development in St. Thomas. This is a mixed-use, mixed-income property financing. Is that correct, Mr. Chapman? That is correct, Senator. Okay. And you're going to use to lies with this type of structural financing for this project, tax exempt bonds. No tax exempt bonds are being used. No, no. If I may, Senator, I will tell you everything that is in the capital stack for the first phase. We will have equity, private equity from Renaissance Equity Partners. Their fund was set up by the

kresge and rockefeller foundations we will have financing through dwight capital that financing will be backed by uh by the u.s department of housing u.s department of housing and urban development through the 221d program and we will have gap funding on the construction side in the form of cdbg cdbg dr those are the only elements of the capital stack for the first phase okay and so you're not utilizing any type of light tech funding at all as a source okay this this this is not and i want to be clear about this senator uh it's a good question this is not a project that will compete with the uh with the other projects taking place in the territory that really support households uh really uh at 50 of area median income and below this will be workforce market rate workforce housing affordable to middle income people and young professionals which is where the biggest gap exists in the virgin island

2:25:45 and i thank you for the opportunity for the clarification because i do note in your statement on page 7 you mentioned the 66 units of new workforce housing and it's that terminology that some persons may not be familiar with compared to affordable housing so you're not in fact competing against the affordable housing market no we're not we're not it is affordable to our what we call loosely the workforce so middle income middle income people who earn up to believe it's 125 percent more or less of the area median income okay and my questions uh relative to that was of course uh propelled by your market preliminary market study i did a really quick read of it and i noted that in some instances your preliminary market study did have some comparison. Madam Chair, may I do a wrap-up? I wanted to also ask you relative to the issues pertaining to how quickly you anticipate being able to able to produce and get things moving forward on this end on this project i know you spoke about timelines once we approve the rezoning and the conveyance what do you look at as being the timetables to actually fill the the housing and absorb the um have the units filled and be able to be occupied sure so the time the time thank you for the question senator the timeline is

2:27:42 assuming that we can that we can uh cross this threshold we will be starting construction second quarter early second quarter of 2022 and we are looking at a 12 to 16 month construction schedule for the first phase and that is for a project of this uh of this scope and nature that is fairly that is fairly standard yes it is so it is occupancy we think we believe based on the market study based on the keen demand uh that is uh manifest in the uh novogratia market study we believe that we will end up with a waiting list which means that people will have signed up for all of the units before we are even finished construction right and so this would be able to help you generate revenues as well thank you madam chair for the time i appreciate it thank you uh senator joseph let me just ask very quickly um you talked about the first phase of the project and you noted that the first phase will be funded via private equity and um gap funding from CDBGDR dollars, correct? I want to be clear. Actually, most of the funding is coming from Dwight Capital in New York City, and that funding is contingent on private equity as well. So most of \$18 million will be coming. \$18 million of the \$25 million of the first phase is coming from private sources. The \$7 million is coming from CDBGDR.

2:29:27 Okay. So private equity, \$80 million, \$7 million gap funding, correct, from CDBG dollars, correct? Correct. Gap funding. Okay. So where I'm going with this, I'm trying to ask. So the first phase entails, give us, I would like for you to share with us how many phases you're looking at and what the first phase clearly entails? What do we anticipate seeing in the second phase? What is the expectation in order for us to see a second phase? And so on and so forth. Yes, thank you for the question, Senate President.

2:30:03 So the first phase will consist of 66 units of housing. So the affordable market rate housing, or however one wants to describe it, workforce housing. It will also include 18,000 square feet of research and development and office space. It will also include farmland, significant amount of farmland to support the research and development and commercial activity being done in those 18,000 square feet, much of which will be occupied by impact traits of the St. Thomas-based microbiology sustainable development company. And so those are the elements of the first phase.

2:30:54 In order to get to the second phase, we have to complete, we have to begin working in earnest on first phase and in the second phase we will have a uh a business hotel that will also serve as a teaching hotel at no cost to the university it will specifically support the university's uh hospitality uh management program and um and uh director nelson uh said something or other about wanting to to ensure that and i'm paraphrasing wanting to ensure that the hotel is a vehicle for supporting local farmers and supporting local agriculture and that's exactly how the hotel is being is being conceptualized and each phase is and i'm dealing in round numbers senate president each phase is approximately 25 million which is how i got to the 50 million dollar uh total project costs i should also point out uh in conclusion to to your question we will also have as part of that hotel phase we will also have a conference center that will accommodate up to 300 individuals we don't have a conference center like that on saint froy we desperately need one we will also have uh what we call an outdoor food hall which will be a place a small venue that accommodates local food vendors, retailers, it will include open space, and so those are the elements of Tech Village.

2:32:38 Okay, so good explanation. So the second phase is hinged on us, on our ability to move forward with the first phase. That's an accurate assumption? Correct. What would prevent the second phase from moving forward what would be any

pitfalls etc from the second phase moving forward you know there really aren't any obstacles senator to the to the second phase moving forward other than not being able to commence working on the first phase okay that's that's very we're gonna hold you to that okay so that's important information senator Franklin D Johnson you're recognized for your point of inquiry thank you very much madam chair I mr. Chapman briefly kind of answer the question but he didn't tell me how we went from 40 to 50 he just explained that he's to 50 million is in another words his presentation in December mr. Chapman you talk about 40 million dollars to complete the entire phase and in November you know to 50 yes so what what's the difference in your drawing or your project that you went from 40 to 50 yes so the the difference the difference is uh really three major factors perhaps four so number one the cost of the cost of steel has increased considerably considerably which means that our project costs have increased second of all we have uh in in response to a very positive favorable public input on this project over a course of you know year year and a half of being out in the community what we heard from people is that they wanted to see more housing and in the case

2:34:30 of a segment of the business community they wanted to see more office and r d space so we went from 60 units to 66 units we went from uh what was it 12 000 square feet of office and r d space up to 18 000 square feet so those are the factors uh senator for increasing the cost of the first phase in the second phase we uh we completed a market study or we had a market study completed in between our what our last major presentation and this one and based on that market study we went back and we refined our numbers because we thought our numbers were a little bit too low So that's why we increased the price of the second phase to roughly \$25 million as well for the hotel and for the other site improvements, including enhancements to the parking.

2:35:30 We wanted to make sure that the people who have been parking on the site for decades, I believe, attending the farmer's market, had nicer parking. And so we built into our project costs on our dime additional improved infrastructure for parking as well. So all of those things increased our development costs roughly over the period of a year. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Johnson. So it's basically the expansion and costs and supply and demand issues, bottom line.

2:36:07 Senator Carrion, you're recognized for your four minutes. Good morning. Thank you very much. Well, good afternoon. Good afternoon to all my colleagues and viewing and listening audience. This is a kind of complex issue, I believe, because we do have to strike the balance between development and farming. Two things that are kind of dear to me when we talk about food security, food production, developing agriculture, but also economic diversification.

2:36:52 And I think that's the key word in what we're talking about today, is about diversifying our economy without leaving behind the agricultural component, including in that economic diversification, including the agricultural industry and ensuring its development. But yes, I do have some concerns and I do have some questions that I would like some answers to this afternoon. And one of them, I'm not too clear. I heard the commissioner for the Department of Agriculture talk about 400 jobs, but RT is talking about 300 jobs. So what's really the numbers? Are we just throwing numbers out here or what are we looking, what are we really looking into? Right. So we've been very, let me give you the breakdown, Senator, of our numbers. So the 300 jobs are permanent jobs, and those are tied to businesses that will operate at the site.

2:38:03 There will be another 140 construction jobs over multiple phases. And I believe that is where I can't speak for Commissioner Nelson, but I believe that's where Commissioner Nelson got the number of over 400 jobs. He was combining the 300 permanent jobs with the 140 construction jobs during the construction phases. We, I want to point out, we have not even included in our numbers the hotel jobs because we didn't want to plump up our numbers.

2:38:42 We wanted to have good numbers. So we went with what we know right now. it's always better to be conservative and um to puff up the numbers and then not be able to deliver it so thank you for clarifying that no following that same line you know one of my greatest concern is sometimes a lack of opportunity for for local training and workforce development uh what kind of opportunities we would be available now with the new tech village especially for young people and those that might just have a diploma so yeah i would like to yes Yeah. So for starters, I wanted to amplify something I said during my remarks with respect to your question. So for starters, the anchor tenant on this site, Impact Trades, they will operate according to a cooperative model, which means that they will have the company owned by local farmers.

2:39:39 And I want to underscore that. So it's not just jobs, it's economic opportunities. So it by definition will give local farmers an opportunity to own a major business or stake in a major business. We will also utilize the platform that we have as a mission-based organization to ensure that UVI students, both current and future, have an opportunity to get trained for the jobs that emanate within the companies that land here, and that is just part of our business model. We will also do our level best to ensure that high school students, particularly at the educational complex, have access to these jobs. Now, the training that will take place will be very, very customized training, some of it more technical than other training.

- 2:40:42 There will be a number of research-oriented jobs that will require a higher level of training. And we'll have some jobs that don't require as much skill and therefore don't require as much training. Well, thank you for sharing that detailed explanation on training and workforce development. I think my time has been called. I hope we have a second round. Yes, I do have a... So what percentage do you think, based on our current workforce and local capacity, will qualify for these jobs?
- 2:41:18 Sometimes you hear about jobs and we have issues and the lack of qualification, and they're filled by people that are not from the territory. Right. So based on, and that's a good question, Senator, based on what we know right now about the businesses that will occupy the site, I will say that 80% of the jobs will be accessible to local Virgin Islanders. And some of that is by definition, particularly as it relates to impact traits. Their model is about local ownership, but we will have some other smaller enterprises that are more technical, and we'll have to do a little bit more work with them to ensure that those jobs are accessible to Virgin Islanders. And we will also be using the platform that we created over the past year called Vista Plus as a mechanism for connecting companies on the Tech Village site with people within the Virgin Islands diaspora. They may be on the mainland U.S., Europe, Asia, Africa. And so we want to define our labor shed as being not just folks here, okay, but also people throughout the Virgin Islands diaspora.
- 2:42:32 Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Carrion. Did I hear a point of inquiry? Yes. Senator James, you recognize your point of inquiry. thank you madam chair i also have a quick point of inquiry to mr peter chapman uh since you're urging us to advance bill number 34.0145 as soon as possible i'm just kindly asking you to circulate the correspondence from robert k jenkins regarding the site that we're discussing here today on the funding please thank you absolutely thank you uh senator james senator sarah you recognize for your four minutes good afternoon to all um mr chapman good afternoon do you consider this the area where we um rezoning for prime agricultural land uh i consider i i consider i'm looking at it right now i consider a portion of it to be uh to be agricultural land or prime agricultural land um a significant amount of it is used for parking there is also a significant swath of it uh that uh houses a vacant uh a vacant uh trailer so no that is not prime agricultural land but a portion of it is okay so so the other question would be act 6836 which is a sustainable agricultural act does this in any way conflict with that existing act no no because the dominant use of the site will be uh will be agriculture and um and i think it's important to look at this site
- 2:44:29 within the historical context of its current uh current use and a big swath of the site is currently used for parking okay so hold a second hold one second so this is in the opportunity zone correct correct okay now frederickstead needs a little life back into it does the the Opportunity Zone extend to Frederick Stead? The Opportunity Zone includes portions of Frederick Stead and also Christian Stead.
- 2:45:02 Okay, so hold a second. So the question for me, I'm not against development, but I just want it to be fair in the discussion and not always be tilted in one direction. So is there a possibility for land closer to Frederick Stead to revitalize the town of Frederick Stead? No, not within the economic realities of this project. So to give you a little bit of background, because we've literally been working on this for years. I only have four minutes. How long is your background? It's very quick. I just wanted to tell you that we looked at probably seven sites in Frederickstead and in Christianstead, and they could not meet the muster of an Opportunity Zone project as required by the financial institutions that we were working with. Nor could we acquire property at a reasonable amount of money. Most of the properties were being sold for well into the millions, and that is not something that the economics of a mission-based project like this can afford. Okay, so let's go to the hotel. What is the, have you done a study on what, what the occupancy rate would be? Because I'm not from St. Croix, but you're surrounded by the school, Golden Grove Prison is somewhere in the area, the university. What is, has a study been down of people that will come and stay in a hotel smack dead right there yes we completed the mark we had a market study uh we had a market study completed and the market study showed that a 120 key hotel business hotel in this location um would have very very high occupancy and that is because
- 2:46:59 We have very limited inventory on the island of St. Croix. So what would your rack rate be? Oh, I can't remember, Senator, but I can easily get that information for you. I'd like to know what the rack rate would be for the hotel and the retirement investment on that. And lastly, let's go to agriculture since I looked at the map in front of us and it looks 50-50 to me, but I could not be seen right. um because you said 70 of the land but it looks like kind of half and half time um may conclude may conclude okay um so on the agricultural component the has a study been done on the types of produce that you'll be um farming do you have a market to sell to has that okay Yes. The quick answer is yes. The most extensive market work, market feasibility work has been done by the principles of impact traits.
- 2:48:08 They are investing a significant amount of money into this project, and the model entails research, but also the creation of the harvesting, the planting and harvesting of crops that will be used for value-added products that generate revenue. And the business will be owned through a cooperative model that will be accessible to local farmers. Okay, and just to conclude, we're having two discussions today, one where the RT Park has done their homework, they have a plan laid out

and they've brought it before the body, but the Department of Agriculture, you cannot continue business as usual, where you have farmers, we really have to address the leases, the permits, people on land without documentation, come on, that has to be addressed. thank accountability um senator nelson because if you were sitting in this body today you would the roof would have blew off because i sat next to you the entire time so you you would have been upset you you got to do better on this um would you like a response or you that's gonna no response needed because every time people come before us time and time again no lease we're paying the lease i mean it's crazy that has to be cleaned up thank you madam chair for the time.

2:49:40 Commissioner, what say you? Speaking of Madam President, I indicated to you all earlier that there's been a revised lease process. The department does not afford the lease. We follow up and try to get movement. The traffic jam is at PNP. they've been recently revised the process and hopefully should move forward better from here forward. The issue we ran into, I didn't create it. We're trying to clean it up. Yes, it's a big mess. And it's, as you stated, there are farmers sitting on this same problem, but over 20 some years. I've met it. We are trying to meet it. PMP has been met with them extensively. My deputy commissioner is on the meeting here. She can tell you precisely what's been done. And we are moving forward it is not the department of agriculture sole problem and i would just like for everybody to make that clear i am accountable for the actions here at the department i take i take opposition to that statement being made i understand the frustration we are dealing with the frustration firsthand it's very frustrating to us as well but it's not solely on the department to move the process forward and those are the things that we need to look at legislatively that we can change including the need to have uh leases come in front of the legislature that's also a process that needs to be changed. Thank you for allowing me to respond.

2:50:59 I was about to ask you that very question. Do you see where the process that we currently have is actually preventing the Department of Agriculture from being successful in ensuring that leases are in fact in place? And I think you just said yes. But the question I still have for you is so you, of course, we have to be a little tougher on you because you were a legislator and we know that nothing prevents if a department or agency recognizes that they are experiencing difficulty with being great, they can put together legislation, work with a particular senator or a number of senators, if they choose, to in fact move that agenda forward. So what's preventing the Department of Agriculture from putting some, you know, language together to give, you know, us some perspective as to what really needs to happen? Just be mindful that we do not do this work every day. So if we don't do it every day then while we may talk about it we suspect or we believe that the entity that's responsible that wants to make that positive impact change etc will work on drafting the legislation or the language and then we could take it from there but you know this has to be a partnership we can't continue to say the legislature can do. This is a we have to you are considered a stakeholder and stakeholders have to also play a role in the process so the Commission on property and procurement mr. Thomas based

2:52:58 on the discussion that we heard earlier from Commissioner Nelson how can we address this particular challenge because I believe every time the Commissioner of Agriculture comes before the legislature, hence the frustration of some of us, we continue to hear the same thing. So clearly the onus based on your colleague is placed on the Department of Property and Procurement. So we need to hear from you what is it that property and procurement is doing to address this issue and likewise if it is an issue why is it that you know we haven't seen some form of a language legislation recommendation etc that we can work with to make this process seamless and accountable I think you're on mute Commissioner. You're on mute, Commissioner. Commissioner Thomas? You're on mute.

2:54:06 Commissioner Thomas, you are on mute. You may proceed now. Oh, you're frozen. Can you- Senate President, may I additionally add some feedback? one one one minute are you can we can you hear us commissioner if you could hear us wave your hand can you speak are you speaking okay so we can't hear you so we're going to allow um uh go ahead um i just wanted to say as commissioner put your name on the record put your name on the record it's hannah carty deputy commissioner department of agriculture um i just wanted to add on to what the commissioner was saying also additionally respond to some of your inquiries it has been a long road but we have been working me in particular but also with commissioner thomas's team we have been working to narrow out the process for farmers and rolled out that program in august with a small group of individuals additionally as part of the ag plan which is mandated by your body and as the chair person for the regulatory subcommittee we have a recommendation that will be coming forward to the legislature for review on the lease process great can you hear me now yes uh thank you for your response uh assistant commissioner cardi uh commissioner thomas you may proceed all right thank you very much senate president um i think what commissioner nelson meant to say was while agriculture managed the process um prior to uh 2019 uh in this last year

2:56:08 miss carty alluded to it is that property and procurement have taken a stance on addressing those inconsistencies that uh have was historical across the territory not only at agriculture but at several other agencies as well as ours and we are we

have been working to streamline the process and create one process in which everyone that is using government property has to go through and that every individual who is on government property will be required to have a document giving them the approval to do so prior to prior to this year the department of property and procurement did not manage all the leases but within the confines of the first island's code all government properties our responsibility and we had uh began the process of consolidating and driving that process to become more uh accountable and more transparent for the version thank you for your response so if i understand you correctly you and you said that prior to this year the leases, for the most part, were managed by the Department of Agriculture, and um...

2:57:32 That's correct, sir. Yes, that's what I heard, and you have taken the process over because of your concerns with the process? They are taking over because of the many individuals who do not have leases, one, or the lack of content in the leases that are being used to manage government property. Not only at agriculture, but at several other, within other departments, there is no substance to some of the leasing processes that exist outside of the Department of Property and Pecum. Okay, I just wonder if you have the capacity to take that on. I think that I heard a point of inquiry, Senator Saro, you recognize your point of inquiry. Thank you.

2:58:29 So farmers don't exist unless there's a lease. And we've concluded just now that many farmers aren't able to receive a lease. So how many applicants do you have outstanding in this process? and Commissioner Nelson part b would be how many of the people are followed in this category have you had those have you been able to interface with those to whom this um develop may the development may impact I can try to answer that question on behalf of Commissioner Nelson okay um the prop the individuals that we have right now exactly that have occupancy permits i do not have that number in front of me i believe it's somewhere in around 100 individuals or so that happen to have occupancy permits that need leases we had a soft roll out of the new application process i believe in august of this year to try and get individuals up to speed on the documentation that would be required for them to get a lease with the government we have the application available on our website if people are interested in acquiring farmland i believe we have about five to ten applications for new individuals interested in receiving farmland um outstanding we have i believe five individuals on the district of st croix and five individuals on the district of st thomas that we're trying to work with to work through this initial process to go from occupancy permit to lease so we can ensure that the process moves smoothly and if anyone else is interested they can reach the department we have the documents available on what documentation they will need but we're going through this test phase to ensure of how long it takes and to figure out what else will be required from these individuals so we have a smooth process in place

3:00:34 part part b was did the um those who are impacted by this development was that conversation did you have a round table discussion with them the commissioners i believe um said earlier that he spoke with the gentleman who was on the land and they had a conversation about moving and he's partnering with someone at this time but the department is also willing to help him move to wherever he needs to be but i believe the commissioner had something he wanted to add commissioner not not necessarily because the the same answer is that most of the farmers fall into this category and with the revised process there are several proposals that's been sitting here many of me several we have about 30 something proposals where people are have submitted uh proposals for use of farmland they will have to now that we are testing the new process they will have to come back in and fill out that extended application to go along with their proposal which will better put them in a position for moving along forward. This is not the first time we've done since coming in here. PMP has been working hard. They've had a few changes that they have regarding the process being slowed as far as revamping and now we finally got it revamped and hoping to get it through the process.

3:02:15 That's all I really have to add to it. Thank you for your response. I think I heard a point of inquiry uh senator francis heliger you recognize your point of inquiry good afternoon once again through the chair to mr chapman when we were speaking about the agriculture aspect of it you spoke to a specific entity being in control of the 17 acres in regards to utilize growing cassava etc what was the process for selecting that entity and specifically why cassava so i want to be clear senator and thank you for your question uh the the only entity that will be in control of the land is the rt park uh the other uh the other the entity you're talking about is impact traits and uh impact traits is run uh by uh a gentleman who has uh a technology business uh in the territory in saint thomas and he's part of the rt park program so our conversations with him go back literally years when he learned about the new rt park model and our focus on sustainable agriculture in tight as you know outlined in title 17 he started to share his vision with us thus began the process of working with him to craft something that would create opportunities of scale and local ownership in this business for uh for farmers for local sink for your phone i just i want clarity in regards to so basically you didn't speak to anybody else he came and have a conversation with you you like the conversation and you stuck with that one person because i'm trying to understand like was it open to others to come and potentially have the opportunity to be the one to provide that service but based on what you're saying it sounds like you only spoke to one person so i i guess i don't understand your your question

- 3:04:17 senator but let me let me take a step back to kind of explain our process as an economic development organization um we do proactive proactive sector-based marketing okay and and through that marketing you know we have the individuals that step forward that we have you know told our told the virgin islands a story to sometimes we have companies that once they learn about the work that we're engaged in they approached us so there was really no reason uh since we had a local entrepreneur based here and willing to uh launch a business that would provide economic impact and that would provide social impact because it would provide for local ownership i guess i don't understand your question because uh based on how we work there was no need to talk to anyone else but maybe you can help me better understand your question well in better understanding it um you're asking us to make all this effort so you could get the property we want to build all these things and i guess for me it's a technology park so i guess i was under the impression that the potential for the individuals to deal with that aspect of it might have been more open so you could have had other options because maybe his vision is only one vision so there might have had someone else that might have had something else that could have been more suited but based on what you're saying once you put out a message if somebody comes to you and you corroborate that person more than likely has been selected to deal with that aspect of this project thank you uh senator is that what do you think? I think the question has been asked and answered. Thank you, Senator Francis Heiliger. We're now going to go to Senator Milton Potter for your four minutes. Senator Potter?
- 3:06:18 Thank you very much. Good afternoon to all my colleagues. Afternoon to the testifiers. Mr. Chapman, I give you kudos. I think you made a strong case as to why we ought to approve bill number 34 as 0145 um but i have i have a couple questions um you know that i think warrant a little bit of clarification and first question really is to assistant commissioner richards um assistant commissioner richards i know we are all well familiar of the one step of zoning of a property from a1 to a2 however there's also proposal to be zone some of the properties in question from a1 to b3 which is a multi-step rezoning action does the department of planning and natural resources have any reservations whatsoever about this Uh, I want to say we have, good afternoon, Senator Potter. Um, I want to say that we have reservation to the extent that we have had, um, extended conversation with the RT park. We understand that concept. Um, we, um, discuss with them the potential for the rezoning of the property at France, Queen Mary highway, and that, that it provides the necessary infrastructure that they would need that would be consistent or compatible with the type of development they want to do in that area so at this point we in general and in principle support the approach that they're using however when the property goes through the zoning process we will be able to hear from
- 3:08:20 all parties concerned and we'll be able to um provide a very specific recommendation um consistent with our process of going through a rezoning hearing okay so you kind of resolve the right for re-evaluate this at a later time say that again i'm sorry so you resolve the right dpnr reserves the right to re-evaluate um this recommendation um at a later time um yes and in general yes but the zoning component of the um project is not before you according to what the um the amendment in the nature of a substitute is so um if the process moves ahead and application is made to the department for rezoning we will carry that through the process and come back with a detailed recommendation to to the body okay thank you mr richard mr chapman i noticed from time to time you strategically sprinkled in some comments about the possibilities of the renaissance equity group doing something on the island of st thomas as a senator from the st john district was that just to just to pique our interest as st thomas senators and garner garner support for the initiative no is there something that you can talk to us about you know right possibility right thank you for the question senator so so no we those who have worked with me like senator francis senator villay know i'm a very straight shooter so this this was not intended to pique your interest that was a statement of
- 3:10:11 fact renaissance equity is a company that has a virgin islands wide strategy and that means saint froy and saint thomas they've started with saint froy because that's where i asked the principal of the company to start and so he is uh very engaged in the saint croix project but he ultimately wants to get to saint thomas because he wants to do deals of greater scale there to that extent senator he has started talking through us um we don't have a uh at this point we're not uh we're not an owner or a developer of anything on st thomas but he has started talking to two different groups okay one is engaged in uh hotel development the other one is engaged in uh residential and mixed use uh development both within the opportunity zone of uh of st thomas so those are those are real conversations they are not as advanced as the work that's taking place uh in st croix obviously but i highlight that because i want to ensure that i'm stressing the sense of urgency about all of this okay thank you thank you for that um i know you mentioned hotel and just to piggyback off of the hotel uh proposal now st thomas is the hotel and tourism center basically just a factual you know factually looking at things here in the virgin ireland was saint thomas ever considered for that hotel development project wouldn't that have been a more strategic and prudent step to actually have the hotel portion here on saint thomas you said
- 3:12:04 it's a teaching um sort of teaching hotel also no i wouldn't i wouldn't say that it's uh that it's that it's uh uh that saint thomas is more prudent for that asset the the fund that we are working with uh hbcu opportunity fund run by renaissance equity they're a mission-based organization okay so they look at double bottom line they have to make money but they

also want to uh support projects that will make an impact especially on areas surrounding uh hbcus okay so they they don't look at this as an either or proposition they are looking uh broadly strategically uh not to embarrass mr jenkins but he's a visionary uh guy so he wants to do a number of things in the virgin islands because he recognizes our value okay so chapman you mentioned the term transformational a couple times i believe in your presentation and i just wanted to give you an opportunity to elaborate as to what is really transformational about this project for those who may not be very familiar with the details yes thank you for the question uh senator potter so for starters okay and i want to be clear about this this is an agricultural and agricultural research anchored project okay so what that means is there will be research that is done here in the virgin islands okay that creates products that help feed virgin islanders and and which can get exported to other places and that's ultimately how you how you create wealth the other aspect of this that is transformational is that the anchor tenant the anchor business okay will be locally owned okay

3:14:00 so dr warberg is seeking to engage local people local farmers not just through a traditional employment model but through an ownership model that is transformational the other thing that's transformational about this is that it is mixed use okay it will include the office space which helps to attract jobs because you need a place for companies to land and it includes housing for our workforce we don't have any any market rate workforce housing multi-family housing rental housing in the pipeline on St. Croix. The other aspect of this that is transformational is that I believe this will be the first project of any scale that harnesses the opportunity zone. So I want to make sure that folks, the viewing audience understands that we didn't draw these boundaries. These boundaries were drawn by previous governor's administration because they saw the potential and the need for economic development in huge swaths of St. Croix, including the area that we're talking about. So there are a number of aspects of this that make it transformational. And finally, getting private sector investment. I've lived here for three and a half going on four years and what i see is a lot of publicly funded projects mostly publicly funded that's not what the rt park is doing we are using our platform we are using our relationships to bring private capital to the territory that is how you send a positive message to the investor to the investor community so this is transformational on all on all sides there is nothing in this that represents a net loss for virgin islanders thank you

3:16:08 thank you madam chair for the extra time thank you uh senator Senator Kurt Avila, you're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon to the people of the Virgin Islands. Good afternoon, colleagues. Good afternoon to the testifiers. St. Grant needs some hotel rooms, too. Let me just start with that.

3:16:35 We do need development on this island, and we need it even more now with the loss of lime tree so we must expand our economic base on St. Croix. I am a supporter of this particular project. My concern was the utilization of agricultural property and we made sure through this bill that there is a direct swap so that we don't reduce the amount of agricultural property that is available for farmers in the Virgin Islands. So there is a direct swap of the 26 acres only nine acres are going to be rezoned for business or be tree scattered. So the rest of the land always being transferred will remain zoned as agriculture. However, there is one or two concerns that I know we have to deal with. One is, and it was pointed out by the good farmer NATO leave. So we do read your comments in which there is concern that one of our warehouse classes say that there are no existing farm leases on the property, which is true. Farm leases, but there are existing farmers on the property because of the work permit.

3:17:53 So we're going to delete that particular warehouse clause because we don't want the legislation or or what is in the words clause to be the impetus for that farmer not to be um fairly um dealt with so we're going to remove that particular clause now mr chopper an easy direct question i think that you know we are going to hopefully um this will pass in session on thursday and my biggest concern is a farmer who exists on the property he has made substantial investment in erecting pens and putting up fences, et cetera, for his livestock. Is there any way that directly through the RT Park, when this conveyance is done, that direct assistance can be given to that particular farmer in reference to the losses that he's going to incur? I heard \$6,000.

3:18:50 Absolutely, unequivocal, yes. We don't want something like that to derail a project that we desperately need and we also don't want to see uh an innocent farmer um uh placed at a disadvantage so we're committed to working on a solution that works for that for that individual absolutely senator okay and that would give us a financial um where it all to be able to help the farmer to utilize another property now mr commissioner nelson would the department of agriculture fully assists with the transition for that particular farmer and that transition would mean the preparation of the land being able to get a next land the same size and the preparation of that particular land Mr. Chapman I've said that he is going to help the farmer with the financial aspect as to what he's already put in because he'll have to erect new fences etc would you be able to assist in terms of land preparation identification of a of a not a property uh yes uh mr senator viola we can uh i want to keep in mind as we talk about uh compensating the gentleman for money spent he did give me a precise list of his costs which included which included pay that he made towards the department for land prep okay that's what i'm saying

we excuse me mr chapman have said that he is willing um to have those discussion in reference to um assisting the farmer financially for what was already spent so i would like to know if you and mr chapman can coordinate the transition of the farmer from the property both property wise and and financial part will be taken care of by mr chapman so that we can have if it's six acres he's on another site with six acres that's built out with fences pens etc so that we can transition that person yeah he's on 10 yeah so we don't mind and hopefully rt park will also pay for the land

3:20:55 prep because we that would be doing it twice yeah well the just the key that we have to do the key is that this body can displace somebody okay we don't want that we don't want to displace a local farmer so we have to make sure that the one person that is farming there we take care of what's time call madam can we can you guys formalize a document that can be shared with the farmer as to because we don't want to move him off the property because we begin into start construction and he don't have any place to put his 60 sheep and goats and pigs so if you can try to formalize something so that can take care of this individual. Now, there's an agreement back from the 24th legislature that Mr. Dale Brown spoke about in reference to farmland that was given to the University of the Virgin Islands. And when you go back to the warranty deed, it speaks that that land in collaboration with the University of the Virgin Islands Resource and Technology Park, etc. would have been utilized for some of those uses. The land is that directly across from Castle Bourke and the East Airport Road by the satellite. So from Durand Farm go all the way back to Golden Grove is farmed. If you pass Complex you come in East, you pass Complex you take the right as if you're going to the airport. There's farm from there all the way across from Carr that is farmed by local farmers and some of those property has been turned over to the University of the Virgin Islands and there's a clause in the warranty deed that says that as long as the land is being farmed that the University cannot

3:22:49 utilize the land but now since we are taking care of the RT Park it is time for us to turn back over the land to Department of Agriculture from Durant go all the way to Carr because we are now satisfying the need that existed for the RD Park and it was some 200 acres that was deeded to the University of the Virgin Islands the back portion isn't really agriculture because it has a gut this is from the territorial court to the corner by the stoplight go back to the highway. Okay, so that's 200 acres. A good portion of that is farmed by local farmers that have been farming there for 20-25 years. The land is needed to the University of the Virgin Islands because there were plans years ago to do something similar. So with us getting this conveyance over to the University, it is time for us to convey the land back to the farmers so that they to run the car the bermudis and all of those farm um farmers um don't have to be displaced at any particular time would you agree with that mr brown yes senator i agree with that okay thank you mr commissioner nelson uh yes senator thank you so much madam chair thank you that's all i oh my last question do we have an executed agreement with impact rates mr chapman uh we are we have a term sheet we expect to have their agreement executed uh at our november uh board meeting which is in a couple of weeks would the tech village be available to other entities that want to conduct farming research

3:24:51 absolutely and that is a critical sector of ours where we aggressively market uh our resources and capabilities yes thank you so much thank you uh senator really senator johnson you recognize your point of inquiry thank you very much madam chair uh commissioner nelson i would like to ask you a question about the land especially direct that parking lot let's make it clear that cars have been parking on agriculture going up on what 50 years now the agriculture fear yeah yes so so it's going up on 50 years and that year that's going to be be constructed with the homes and the hotel and everything.

3:25:35 Have we done a test on that soil to prove that that's soil has been contaminating all of these years? We, the department has not done a test. It was not the department's interest to develop that property of such. No, we have not done a test. I think that would be important so that people could understand that that land for the last 50 years or plus, cars have been parking there, oil have been leaking. Some of your equipment been leaking right there too.

3:26:05 So chances are that soil is not fertile, especially where they're going to be doing the project. They're going to farm on the next piece of the land, which is a better piece of land for farming. So it's important that we try to share that information so that I guess some of the farmers will be a little more comfortable knowing that the soil just might not be even good for farming, where the building structure is going to be placed. So I just wanted to make that clear. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you for that, Senator Johnson. I think that's very, very important information. Senator James Sr., you're recognized for your point of information, you said? Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the point of inquiry. Inquiry. On page six of Mr. Peter Chapman's testimony, he made mention that the Tech Village could help guide local efforts harness the economic potential of other clubs perhaps including but not limited to cannabis which is the subject of recent legislation i just want mr chapman or somebody here to be able to expound on what you mean by you further believe and are we having those conversations right now when it comes to this specific project thank you yes thank you for the question senator So Tech Village fosters what we call sustainable agriculture, which is a fancy term for

commercial scale agriculture, agriculture that can create jobs and economic opportunity. And in the case of Tech Village, also help feed the territory.

- 3:27:37 OK, so we think that it can be a model for how we basically commercialize other crops, including but not limited to cannabis. i highlighted cannabis because i know that there's been a lot of attention paid to cannabis so as we look at how we how we harness tech village to create new agricultural industries yes we think that it has applicability to other crops including but not limited to cannabis and we we've not had any deep discussions about cannabis in the context of this project because we're focused on food production thank you uh thank you Thank you for your response, and thank you, Senator James.
- 3:28:25 Senator Francis, you're recognized for your point of information. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to kind of respond to Senator Johnson in respect to his concern about the contamination of the parking lot, the lot that's used for parking during the agriculture fair. And in fact, it is the intent of the RIT Park. um you know certainly mr chapman can speak to it where we intend to maintain that parking lot for the purpose again of providing for the first in a while in um ever a pave or a gravel parking lot for those individuals that we parking in the future we know traditionally every agriculture fair day there's tremendous amount of rain that falls and presents some real um mud issues in that parking lot and you know in our discussion our working meetings we want to make sure that that has paved and better be situated for adequate parking for the agriculture fairgoers. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.
- 3:29:28 Are you expecting a response? Okay, understood. Senator Blyden, you're recognized for your four minutes thank you madam president madam chair good afternoon to my colleagues viewing listening audience staff central staff good afternoon testifiers and thank you so much for your testimonies mr chapman um most of my questions are going to be related to you if you can be pleased succinct we responded i'll be appreciated i have many questions but in respect to because that was one of my questions cannabis i know it's mainly focusing on food production but is cannabis part of the business plan do you know no cannabis is not part of our business plan for tech village sir very well thank you for that um in respect to your presentation and i i can agree in terms of the you spoke to the risk of the in the first phase of 18 million dollars being at risk. It spoke to the 300 jobs, 300 permanent, 140 temporary jobs, agricultural related in terms of the land, 60%. It spoke to the workforce, housing, the hotel, 120 hotel room, etc. All pluses in terms of why we should approve. But let me ask, since most of it is with agriculture let me ask in respect to the type of jobs for that industry what's anticipated in terms of agriculture related jobs so so the jobs will be uh research jobs they will be actual farming jobs they will be managerial jobs connected to to impact uh traits so people who supervise uh farmers and there will be a lot of internships available uh to ensure that people from uvi's agricultural programs have a platform from which to to enter uh enter uh uh impact trades and other businesses
- 3:31:41 occupying the site and i know it's all private private investment um have impact trade applied for edc benefits uh no they will be an rt park company and what type of um wages are we speaking to in respect to um unscathed labor jobs etc for um farmers etc for those individuals yeah we we have a scale they will be livable wage jobs but we can actually get you the scale because we there's there's a fair amount of detail on that so we can get that for you and what is um impact trades um business record do we know uh impact traits uh is run by uh richard warburg who is a microbiologist and an intellectual uh property attorney and he has he has decades worth of experience uh investing in companies that engage in various scientific related uh uh endeavors and new and new technologies impact traits as a specific entity is a new entity it's a startup startup entity but it's run by an experienced entrepreneur okay very well and i know uh we're speaking to a hotel on st croix which is needed on the Big Island, but my question is in respect to UVA and their management program, do we know the status of that program here on the Big Island?
- 3:33:10 One minute. I'm sorry, Senator, I didn't get the last part of your question. The management program that UVA has, do we know the status of that program? know that the program is um uh is is re-evolving uh as we say but we meet regularly with the dean of the business school uh dr kendra harris on um uh the plan for uh the teaching component of the of the of the hotel i can't speak to the specifics of uvi's program but i do meet frequently with with dean harris and in in terms of impacts um to the infrastructure um at that side do do we know if there are any uh impact projected time of the result of the project uh any uh are you talking about economic economic impact infrastructure infrastructure oh infrastructure right so we we are as part of the project this is separate from impact traits we are going to be investing in uh in particular uh new uh new parking uh to accommodate uh not only the occupants of the site both commercial and residential but also uh people who visit the farmer's market so what is presently usually a muddy parking lot when it when it rains uh that That will be replaced through Tech Village in the form of infrastructure. We will also have solar array, so the solar array is one of the things that factors into the agricultural components of the site and makes it 62% of the site. So those are the two critical elements of infrastructure that we will invest into the project, into the site.

- 3:35:03 And in closing, because my time has been called, how many agricultural jobs would you see is anticipated um are the result of this investment so it will be close to close to 300 and that's you know that's over that's over several that's over several years but it'll be close close to 300. all agricultural jobs uh uh agriculture related jobs and that is research that's farming that's um you know that's the full build out of of impact of impact traits thank you so much for your response thank you madam chair thank you thank you uh senator blighton and i'm hearing another point of inquiry but i must share with my colleagues that it is important that the points of inquiry that we're making is germane to the discussion at the time i'm trying my best to be as cordial as possible. I'm making sure that, you know, we work together here, but it must be germane. Okay. So I want to make sure because I've seen or heard a number of non-germane discussions around your point of inquiries. And what's happening is the senators that are further down on the roster, they're sitting here forever waiting to get the opportunity.
- 3:36:31 Senator Joseph, you're recognized for your point of inquiry. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Of course, my point of inquiry is on point. I wanted to inquire about your statement, Mr. Chapman, on page six, relative to the expectation and the goal of being able to utilize impact traits to actually feed and provide this level of vegetables, selected vegetables to feed the virgin islands the caribbean and latin america can you in any way produce any type of feasibility study that you have done relative to this to say that these types of vegetables that are going to be produced by impact study which is headed by dr richard warburg is going to be able to fulfill this goal thank you so much yeah yes so uh so so senator uh and again thank you for the question so we would be glad to facilitate a discussion between dr warburg uh and his team uh and uh and any any group of senators to give you to give you those uh those details so so he is the scientist and he he leads the scientific team so i think they are the best ONES TO BE ABLE TO TALK YOU THROUGH THOSE DETAILS. OKAY. THANK YOU SO MUCH. I'LL BE REACHING OUT TO YOU FOR THAT. THANK YOU. THANK YOU, SENATOR JOSEPH. SENATOR WHITAKER, YOU RECOGNIZE FOR YOUR FOUR MINUTES. THANK YOU, MADAM PRESIDENT AND MADAM CHAIR. GOOD AFTERNOON TO YOU. GOOD AFTERNOON TO MY COLLEAGUES. GOOD AFTERNOON TO THE TESTIFIERS. I WANT TO SAY WE'VE BEEN ON THIS JOURNEY FOR QUITE some time, Mr. Chapman, in terms of the presentation made to this, you know, to this body and different occasions. And I want to just kind of just jump right in. I want to really also highlight, when we talk about sustainable agriculture, sustainable development, we have to have the infrastructure in place. The, right now, the vision, what's going on in the Virgin Islands with farming, we have a Department of Agriculture that is very, very open Lincoln State, has, does not provide the proper supports in order for there to be a true industry. So we know that as we move forward with this project, we're going to have to ensure that our Department of Agriculture is situated to really help support in the connection with this project. Because one of the things that's going to come out from this project as we work with farmers to tap in, there has to be that commitment from the leadership at the Department of Agriculture. Commissioner Anthony Thomas, you know you and I have been on this line for years now about revolutionizing property procurement so that we are not we move away from the paper process to a more digital process, a more streamlined process. Can you explain to me now as you as this connected to this project, what supports would you render as it pertains to your role as a Commissioner of Property and Procurement? How would you quickly really identify how you and your team would not put up a lot of the, what I find in different, they're important, they're important aspects of contracting, I get that, but there's a lot of unnecessary back and forth that I've found. How would you cut through that so we can,
- 3:40:03 this project we put if approved we put on a proper timeline i i think um if it's relating to leases with agriculture um the leasing process is electronic however i think the nuances lie in the challenges with the law because the law does not allow for farmers to build structures and there in lies a lot of the issues that we have with the agriculture property and farmers some of them are erecting uh residences um and and structures on the properties which is not allowed by the law so with that nuance out of the way i think the agriculture process was very smooth the problem is again it's either staffing and following up and keeping up with the documents which we are able to assist by streamlining that process but it's going to take some legislation to correct some of the inefficiencies that exist i mean as it relates to the arty park the arty park itself is self-sustainable i would not have anything to do with the arty park as it relates to procurement but we did speak earlier about helping organize a different approach to leasing That mechanism does not mean it's going to be as entrenched as it is with a person that has a business. But there are some nuances that needs to be corrected, which is the building a physical building, and that now in turn comes back to the legislature to streamline those processes. And we will work, we're working towards that. So I foresee you getting legislation in a very short period. Let me hold my, because my time is 30 seconds.
- 3:41:48 Yeah, that's exactly what I was going to say. Commissioner Thomas, so you said that this legislation, you are a commissioner in a policymaking capacity. By now, these challenges between you and the commissioner should have been brought to this body so that we would have moved that legislation forward in contemplation of the challenges. I just

wanted to now turn my last few a few seconds, a few seconds I have, to Director Chapman concerning one of the issues we have. You mentioned that one of the, one of the, you're going to work with the University of Virgin Islands to promote agriculture and interest agriculture. And you said the high school students. We've gone over this a number of times. How would this project really work on developing the pipeline for the elementary, middle, and high school? speak right now with farming, we have a broken system. We have at the middle school and high school levels, the actual infrastructure for farming is broken. Basic supplies that the teachers need to teach farming, they're not available. So when we work with these individuals who are coming to get the benefits and they're going to also, they benefit, we benefit from their partnership, how would you work to better ensure that we're going to really be the stewards of ensuring that we get the interest in farming so that the persons who will be involved in this project and benefit will be, in fact, the local people of St. Croix and the wider Virgin Islands?

3:43:25 Sure. So by definition, thank you for the question, Senator. I'll be concise and we'll we'll continue to have our offline very uh interesting and enjoyable conversations about this so we will use um our platform as we have for a number of years whereby we will be that bridge between the private sector and the university we will also uh serve in that role as it relates to high school students starting with the educational complex i want to be clear about what we can do and what we can't can't do i want to uh i want to over deliver and under promise i think the expression is something like that so so for now what we are keenly focused on is how do we harness this for the maximum benefit of of college students at uvi in their agricultural programs and also area high school students starting with the educational complex so we may end up creating a pilot on the high school side that can then get exported to other to other high schools in the community, but that's where we would start. We would start with a demonstration, a demonstration program. I don't know that I'm answering your question, but I'm sure we'll talk in more detail. Thank you for that. And, and with that, what, what confidence you have in working with the university in terms of this? And I, and I mentioned this, just to put out the challenge right now, there's also concern that the farmers have raised that the university, instead of supporting them in farming through the research, it's been more competitive. I'm just reaching out to you and through this whole effort to see how we would really see and if you can even help champion as part of the UVI Tech Park and part of the board leadership as a director to see how you can bridge that gap between University of Virgin Islands Extension Service and the support staff there and the farmers who do truly need the support when it comes to farming. They feel in many ways, not just feel, it's evidence, UVI is more competing with them and not supporting them in their farming efforts. Thank you.

3:45:31 Zip, did you want me to respond or? Sure. I mean, how could you help Champion work with, you know, farmers like Mr. Brown and others? Yeah. So we have a swimmingly good relationship with Dr. Peterson, Lewis Peterson. We have a great relationship with Dr. Adamu at UVI, and their doors are always open, and they've been a part of this process for the last couple of years. So going forward, we anticipate that we will have very positive discussions with them about how we can create synergy among ourselves, them at the university, and the private sector for the benefit, maximum benefit, of students and other local Virgin Islanders.

3:46:22 Thank you, Senator Whitaker. Senator Novali Francis, Jr., you're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for all of the testifiers and their testimony today. And, you know, talking about broken system, right? You know, if we're not really preparing for the future, and I'll tell you that my children tell me all the time we have to break the cycle. 1846, my great-grandfather was a king in Qatar. You know, my grandfather was a fisherman. My mother was a nurse working for the government.

3:47:02 I became a police officer working for the government. My children don't want to come back here unless there's something to come back to. and that's what we're really trying to address in in terms of driving the issue of of what is the creativity and innovative way to be able to address attract our children to come back home and when we're talking about farming if we're not talking about conveyor belts if we're not talking about technology if we're not talking about hydroponics if we're not talking about some form of a joystick or a drone or something, then certainly it won't pique their interest. Our children don't want to go through that mundane type of going out in the hot sun to plant seeds and weed bushes and all these type of things. Hence our ability to really work with the technology, RT Park, to really create and be innovative in our approach here. We created a Catalyst Fund, again, to support economic development. South Shore Enterprise Zone to attract economic development. This is a perfect multi-use of a facility right in the middle of our island.

3:48:23 UVI, the education complex, the simulation center. You know, just imagine next to the agriculture fair, a hotel next to the ag fair. We know how much people that didn't refuse to come here because they couldn't even get a hotel room to stay to. We're really opening the doors of opportunities here. Talk about being transformational. Talk about revenue sharing and giving the farmers a seat at the table. I truly believe there's a win-win here. There's an opportunity here for us to work with. and we wanted to make sure that we didn't decrease the inventory nine acres you know we have over 2 000 farmland or more how much farmland do we have um commissioner acreage of farmland about 2700 acres or so 2700

acres today we're talking about the use of of less than nine acres, eight point something of non-farming use or non-agriculture use. And we're still making sure that we backfill that by providing adequate acre for acre replacement there.

3:49:41 We really gotta look at the long game here. You know, we were talking about the here and the now, but we really looked at the long game, we could be transformational and really change the narrative around here so i wanted to ask you peter chapman how do you believe that this project will intersect between the tech village and the rt park you know what is the intersect that you believe that could happen here and how does the catalyst fund even um apply here yeah so senator francis has laid it out very uh very articulately as if he's a member of the development team so the project represents really the intersection of technology agriculture and community development all critical things okay that we need in the virgin islands including on st croix we don't present this project as being the panacea but we want this project to serve as a model that informs other projects that have the potential to promote economic diversification and hopefully food independence which is a big uh passion of ours at the rt park and with respect to its relationship with the catalyst fund the catalyst fund is a critical resource okay to support projects of scale businesses that will create critical massive jobs for virgin islanders and also capital investment okay through the projects that they that they undertake and so we imagine okay envision that going forward that the catalyst fund will be a resource okay for supporting businesses and entrepreneurs that are occupying the tech village uh the tech village site again transformational is a word that i've used over and over to describe this project and it is for all of the reasons that senator francis uh outlined and

3:51:40 I underscore the fact that we've worked closely with the senators, particularly Senator Francis, on a strategy for backfilling that portion of the site that will be used for non-agricultural purposes. Making the Department of Agriculture whole, we don't see any negatives associated with this. We are ready to perform, but we need your assistance to get to that point. That's why we're here today very well none of this has been done in a vacuum um you know i believe that it started back in in the in january we have had this discussion we have had a number of working sessions uh you have had town hall meetings and met with the farmers and various stakeholders all of the government agencies to bring this all together you know 10 months later we're still having this conversation it's a moment in time every time we delay these projects the cost goes up so correct um there you have it ladies and gentlemen um you know colleagues i truly believe that this is a win-win i believe that everyone should be on board in supporting this initiative i think is is critical it's needed and again we're talking about not putting all our eggs in one basket but diversifying our economy uh thank you very much to the testifiers and um um Mr Brown you support this project I am still not convinced at this point that having that construction on that site is best what is relevant here though is that the property that is willing to be exchanged is adequate to meet the same amount of acreage that's been removed, which is 25 acres and not just the back portion

3:53:43 of the 17 acres and so far information that I have looked at is only talking about 8.3 acres so where is the additional farmland is going to come from or lands are going to come from to suffice this furthermore i do appreciate the fact that center valley have spoken about repealing the law to put lands back under the department of agriculture and i do appreciate that the that there will be an effort for the purpose of making this farm a whole so that he could get back to his business as he should.

3:54:35 All of this has been overlooking over quite a period of time, and it's now that we go forward. But if we're going to exchange land, it has to be equivalent and not just a portion. Thank you very much, Mr. Brown. Let me conclude by stating that, again, department of agriculture and farming is getting the attention that is deserved you know we approve a budget that allow for agriculture to get an increase again for land security we come up with an agricultural plan and you know so again we're we're working with agriculture and you know collectively uh together shoulder by shoulder we will continue to make this happen thank you very much and i thank you very much for all that you do on the behalf of the farmers uh mr brown and agriculture thank you very much madam chair for the time thank you uh senator francis and um you know i rise in support of this particular measure however it is so important that we ensure that um us, as legislators, do not play politics with this issue, okay? A lot of times we, so there's a particular section of our community who has issues with whatever the measure is, and we kind of lean into their concerns, which is appropriate, because I've heard Mr. Brown's concerns today. But what's also equally important is economic development. We are behind time when it comes to economic development, particularly in this district. And we've lost a lot of opportunities in the U.S. Virgin Islands as a whole. I could count a number

3:56:38 of them that we've lost and we are now, we've regretted the decisions that we've made. But I believe that it is important that whatever direction we move in with this, and as I indicated that I am most definitely in support of it, we have to make sure that we make the farmers whole. And I note specifically, Mr. Chapman, you talked about a dedicated funding for farmers, and I would like for you to end profit sharing. And it briefs well, but we need to know that this is actually going to happen. I heard Mr. Brown talk about one for one.

- 3:57:27 And I think I agreed with much of what you said, Mr. Brown, but this don't necessarily need to be a one-for-one situation. And you know why it don't need to be one-for-one? I mean, I would love to see it being one-for-one, but it don't necessarily need to be one-for-one because we are not utilizing the property now in the manner or for the purpose that it is on the books in the Virgin Islands. I think that we have to have some balance with economic development. So I appreciate all that you indicated because you have some valid points. However, we have to have some give and take here.
- 3:58:13 So I would be happy to hear from you offline what else it is that you don't necessarily agree with. But I want to hear from Mr. Chapman He talked kind of fast and I want to make sure that he understands that what he's selling us as legislators and Virgin Islanders is in fact something that we are going to see come to fruition if this body makes that this decision that we are about to make in the next few days.
- 3:58:47 You talked about dedicated funding for farmers, you talked about profit sharing for farmers with the, whatever the build-out is, the various businesses that we're looking at for this particular area. I need the confirmation, and I don't need, usually need affirmation from anyone, but I need that in this instance as well. Absolutely. I mean, this is, this has been part of our very detailed project plan uh almost since almost since day almost since day one and let me answer your question specifically about the fund for agricultural uh progress so we are going to use some of the revenues from this project to benefit the farmers for everything that i said in my remarks technical assistance uh tools the per principal purpose is to help farmers make the transition okay from subsistence farming to commercial or what we call sustainable agriculture we will also use the platform that we have to engage with foundations with social investors and foundations remember renaissance equity is a social mission enterprise with relationships with global foundations and so we have already begun the process we've stopped those discussions because we didn't know where the conversation where this process was going to go but we want to leverage those relationships in a way that will help to bring philanthropic money not just revenues from the project but philanthropic money into the virgin island specifically for the benefit of farmers and the and the and the task of of sustainable agriculture in the territory
- 4:00:37 specifically St. Croix. Okay, so it appears to me that there hasn't been much conversation, and this is just based on an assumption based on Mr. Brown's testimony around with the R.T. Park and the farmers, if you will. And there's a specific question that Mr. Brown asked that I think needs to be answered today. And he said in his testimony, the University of the Virgin Islands has approximately 200 acres and there is underdeveloped property within these acreages. The question to be asked, and he's asking the question, what are the vacant acreage reserved for and why have they not looked at to suffice the Tech Village? That answer, that needs to be answered. So the first question that I want to address, or the first point I want to address, is our engagement of the farmers. There has been substantial engagement of the farmers and people interested in sustainable agriculture over a period of a year and a half, including during the COVID quarantine period. In terms of UVI's agricultural land, a lot of that land, and I can't speak for the university, we're a separate entity, but a lot of that land is currently being farmed already. The university also has, as per their master plan, they have other needs that they've identified for that land. But I think they are the ones who can give you the best information on their own plans. I agree with you. I just believe that you approached the university as the rt park and the university does have a partnership and um the university was clear as
- 4:02:32 to why um portions of that acreage could not be used so that's what i wanted to hear from you absolutely we we had that conversation with them and that is when we learned that they have other they have other they have other plans okay um i think i have one more question I believe that I probably have kind of my four minutes, so let me just wrap this up. So, of course, you know that we, everybody knows that most recently the territory leaders went out to Denver, Colorado, to explore cannabis in the U.S. Virgin Islands, or explore cannabis adult use becoming legal in the Virgin Islands, but we also know that medical use is legal here in the territory. And I think a question was asked earlier about the, I think my colleague from St. Thomas asked about whether or not the RT Park has any relationship around cannabis in the territory, and you said no. But there are different components to cannabis, right? Because all of us, we think, and a lot of this is what I've learned since going to Denver most recently. So there's a technology component, there is the data collection, and there is the testing, et cetera, and on and on. So is there an appetite for the RT Park to assist Virgin Islanders interested in developing or becoming a part of a cannabis industry even in the just just for what we have right now the the medical component there should be an interest yes we definitely have an
- 4:04:26 interest and as you point out senator um it is um kind of a multi-pronged multi-layered uh industry and there is a strong research and development and technological dimension to it so we would absolutely be be open to exploring those opportunities but i also want to add that we are already looking at hemp which is very different um but hemp has certain industrial uses and so we have companies in our pipeline that specialize specialize in hemp based products so i wanted to just uh put that out there while we're on the topic thank you for your response but i think that's an important discussion because one of the things that we definitely learned is that the cannabis industry is not a light industry and it's an industry

that's very involved and it requires a whole lot and if um you know we're going to move in the direction of cannabis in in earnest and stand it up in the appropriate way even from the medical component it's going to require the rt park to get involved there's no question around this so um you know we have to really have the conversations as to how as a territory we intend to move this along and this is why we have some folks that feel that we are not ready for this because we are not putting our heads together to figure out how to make this a truly viable and truly regulated industry in the virgin island so i just wanted to make sure that i put that on the record i think i heard a point of inquiry from point of information from senator veilly thank you so madam chair the commentary made me want to change my point of information but i'm going to stick with my point of information we need to remember colleagues the census 87 000 individuals now residing in the virgin islands down from 106 000 which is a 19 000 drop 9 000 drop on st roy

4:06:42 we got to factor in this is from 2010 to 2020 the impact of the closure of juventa in 2012 the hurricanes in 2017 the pandemic in 2020 that caused a number of families to relocate because of school closures and we also got to remember that the numbers that were given to us for the census on St. Croix is prior to Lime Tree closing so then we not we have lost a next set of individuals living on the island of St. Croix so we must be able to generate economic development so that we can have opportunities for people living in the Virgin Islands and people living on St. Croix. Every person that live on this island can feel the difference when Lime Tree close their doors in May, June. You can feel the economic difference across the island and we can't just sit here or stand here and hope that stuff is going to fall out of the sky. This is an opportunity for us to bring some development to St. Croix.

4:08:02 We need to make sure we have food, sustainability, food that you can consume and nourish your body. Food. Sustainability. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Thank you very much, Senator Viale. If you think the business is also impacted severely by the closure of Lime Tree, as a matter of fact, many of them are considering closing the doors as well. I just wanted to add to the discussion that in fact we're moving the whereas clause to make sure that the RT Park will be responsible for the related costs as determined by reasonableness and necessary to relocate any farmer displaced by the conveyance of this property for the purpose of this project so that will be written um into the legislation as well so that we can make sure that there is a level of accountability uh to make sure that this happens any um my colleagues have any burning um issues any burning questions senator carrion you you had a question I do. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do. And to the Commissioner of Agriculture, you said something in your testimony that really hit me, a few things. And one of it kind of resounded. And I quote what you said, while it is important to focus on the farmers of tomorrow, we cannot forget the farmers of today and that really hit me and i would like you to elaborate but before you do that i just want to ask you was or has been the department of agriculture at the table in this process because you you did stated that in your testimony that you had a great concern and you shared that concern you said Within your concern, you said, let me see if I quote correctly what you said.

4:10:10 What is the concern, what is of this great concern that you had? Let me just say, or, okay, let me go back. You said you had a great concern. What I want to know is where does this concern originate from? What's the reason for this concern that you have? If you could share with us, please. i suspect you're talking in the con in the context of the farmers but here's my concern period but one is agland there the development of agland right there next to us it pretty much cramps closes in the department from the department's ability to develop later on um the concern i may have had and i don't know in what context i'm trying to see where you've seen my testimony about that well one the farmer being this place is also a concern and if i had one just from a children perspective and i did speak to someone afterwards and i said okay i i yield and that concern is a a hotel right next to a school can be a safety concern that we need to be mindful of especially in this these days of weirdos okay i'm not we got to be careful that there's enough of a barrier that people can be in their hotels talking train on our young people but i the there's no other real concern other than uh us being able to ensure that farmers can participate because usually what's happening is this most the average age of farmers is 67. uh when you talk about technology and farming you have to be talking about encouraging younger people to participate in the process also so those things have to go together let me

4:11:58 commissioner let me bring to your attention to your testimony right on it's a short testimony it was just basically one page the ending of it you said of great concern to us is ensuring that the rt park fully meets the needs of our current farmers and community and i kind of connected that with what you mentioned about that it's important to focus on the farmers that while it's important focus on the farmers of tomorrow we cannot forget the farmers of today and my question one of my direct questions also was was the department agriculture at the table during this process because you did mention that in your testimony also that they can refer into the department culture it said they can and should have agriculture as an integral facet in every part of this process so that's where i'm leading to so you had a great concern so i want you to kind of elaborate and explain for everybody's viewing listening that heard your testimony okay so i wasn't involved in some of the initial conversation and we did uh express some of our uh our interests early as far as what we'd like to see as they continue the development i must say that they did incorporate some of our our interests in it as it relates to them the uh

more of the the development regarding the the agricultural implements there and the components so those were relaxed uh we we got a little more comfortable with it uh um the idea of the farmers is that the research and i think i mentioned it with cassava i don't know how cassava research is going to benefit us right now i would have preferred to see more development of food that can be utilized now uh you know in moving forward and collaboration with the research that happens at the university of virgin island because the truth is university of virgin islands company extension service does some great research as it relates to agricultural uh as it relates to agriculture so you know i i don't know what type of companies we talk about bringing in specifically but they should uh work in collaboration with our university as well because the concern from over

4:14:10 the years with the university and you heard it mentioned here today is that a lot of research that the university of virgin islands have done it was not implemented here in the territory it's implemented other places so it's time that we the local farming community benefit from research done here and are given that research to implement on farms here and not just all over the territory i mean all all over the world and missing us um so that that's where my concern comes in development that's what should happen here should just go to some of the farmers here for utilizing uh so we can now be at the front end of this you know surging uh academy and i thank you for sharing that and in closing uh because we can't have all this research taking place here the territory regards to agriculture and have our farmers excluded from that intellect from that knowledge and that information research if someone should benefit from those research that are taking place at uvi and their extension it should be our local farmers number one the priority should be our local farmers so i thank you for sharing that and i would like to also hear that from mr uh uh director chatman then what's the role because here we're hearing the commissioner saying that he is expecting or hoping that our team meets the needs of the current farmers for our community so i would like to see how all that would take place sure so thank you for the question senator and as i as i laid out as part of the comprehensive um rt park tech village uh plan um we will we will have as our anchor tenant and this is something that we've uh articulated out in the community department of agriculture has been part of these uh conversations with us our anchor tenant if you will our anchor business will be a company that has individual farmers as owners of their business very very unique i don't think that exists anywhere in the virgin

4:16:11 islands perhaps not even uh perhaps not even in the uh in the region we will also have to support local existing farmers we will have a revenue sharing uh model that will benefit them in terms of their immediate needs we will also use our platform with national and global philanthropies okay to build a fund for agricultural progress that will benefit existing and future farmers it's not an either or proposition so those are three critical elements of the plan that we have discussed uh publicly we have discussed this with a number of uh public sector private sector stakeholders over a period of you know easily a year a year and a half we have no shortage of information um we are very data oriented we're very research oriented we have a number of different market studies that we've shared with members members of this body so i welcome uh any questions um that the department of agriculture may have going going forward and i'm pretty sure we can address all of uh all of their concerns about the more substantive uh aspects of the project uh thank you very much mr chopman at this time i think we have no further uh questions from my colleagues um i'd like to allow for each of the um testifiers to give a 30 second wrap-up and we could start with you mr chopman uh thank you senator francis and thank you to the other senators uh up present uh we we really appreciate you providing us with yet another form

4:17:58 for educating the community about tech village and the benefits uh that uh it portends for the virgin islands in terms of economic impact diversification food independence local uh economic empowerment and all of those all of those good things we are at a critical juncture uh and i want to make that very clear we have to uh successfully get this legislation passed in order to secure our uh financing and going forward uh we look forward to continuing the dialogue with all critical stakeholders this is not a static process this is going to be a multi-year uh process and we uh we are very open to making uh additional modifications in the project plan uh going forward where uh where feasible and we are also committed to problem solving around the individual who is uh currently farming uh on on the site so i thank you uh senators and look forward to you being meaningful partners uh in this endeavor going forward thank you thank you very much mr chopman um senator nelson um correction commissioner nelson thank you thank you thank you senator uh the i want to impress upon the people of the territory is the need to shore up our food source there is food scarcity in the world and we can't emphasize enough how important it is for us to increase our our our food production here in the territory um we've we're seeing what's happening with the with the ships and staying out in the ocean right now and we're talking about other commodities if that commodity was food think about the state of affairs here in the territory that should be enough of a of a sign that each and every family each and every person who is capable whatever piece of plot you have to be part of the food supply process even for your own personal reasons and to the extent that we can support entities of such which proposes to advance uh food production one we have to hold them to it and two ensure that that that productivity goes into our local supply and of course with any excess then we can look at some type of export

- 4:20:16 market i want to thank the senate for allowing us this opportunity and i want to thank mr chapman and the rt park and even the university of the virgin islands and look forward to our continued collaboration to ensuring that we have uh we're increasing our opportunity for food sovereignty here in the in the virgin islands of the united states thank you very much thank you very much commissioner nelson next we'll go to assistant commissioner richards dpnr okay thank you senator francis and i thank the 30 the 34th legislation the rest of um the committee members for the opportunity to testify on this um proposal to convey land to the rt park and uvi um just want to let you know that the department of planning and natural resources is committed to sustainable development and we recognize this project at its base is agriculturally based and um hence we are supportive in principle to the project also just want to remind the senators as well as all those that are listening that as we talk about preserving agriculturally zoned land um i believe the 2700 acres that is consistently mentioned is land that is in the public sector and so there are hundreds if not thousands of other acreage that is in a private sector that is zoned agricultural so i think it's part of the department's responsibility to ensure that there is agricultural land um territory-wide available for um all types of farming and we continue to look at our agricultural land base not just in a private sector but in a public sector
- 4:22:12 and not just in a public sector but as well as in the private sector so when we do our assessment we are very conscious about how much land is still available for agricultural development territory-wide and again once again i want to thank you for the opportunity to testify on this specific proposal thank you very much thank you very much senator and that's a very salient point that you have just made and thank you for that um at this time we'll go to commissioner thomas property and procurement thank you senator um i would like to reiterate that the proposed project is in line with the brown roach administration's goals for sustainable economic development and therefore the department supports uh the proposed conveyance thank you very much thank you commissioner and next we'll wrap it up with uh mr brown dale brown seizure forms thanks again senator and the committee on the whole for inviting me even on short notice this plan given by the rt park if it's passed by the latest by this legislature unanimously the rt part need to be held totally accountable for what is supposed to be done because if all that is said does not come to fruition then this process has actually been a waste of time economic development is paramount to the virgin islands agriculture development is part i believe can be one of the mediums for developing our territory economic social and economic development now surrounding all of this in response to senator fred gregory's of one-on-one the department of agriculture has not been the greatest store of land or managing land over the years since 1995 when the department of agriculture
- 4:24:33 has gone on its own it has not been given the opportunity to actually bounce the way it needs to be this commissioner has the worst in order to bring this department back to fruition the agricultural plan that is being developed hopefully will address those weaknesses to give this commissioner if he's still there the opportunity to implement this plan to the fullest extent so therefore land taken now should be given back in its equivalence so in order to give whomsoever is responsible of directing this department the opportunity to actually flourish and to make agriculture grow in the territory and become that economic stability that this territory needs on that note senators i thank you for the time and again for short notice and hopefully if you all have decided to make this go forward that the rt park be held in full responsibility within the next two years to make sure this come to fruition now cassava if that is your first product professor has a three-day lifespan so i would like to know how the processing is going to go is going to happen in order to transport or to provide that product to virgin islands and the world and hopefully i do believe you may have a plan for that so i will listen forward in the future so how that is going to be completed yeah um so mr
- 4:26:28 brown thank you very much and i think that the onus is on every single one of us uh to you to include you as a farmer as a citizen to make sure that we're holding rt park responsible for what um you know they have committed to i'll tell you that i am committed as the bill sponsor one of the bill sponsors on this particular piece of legislation to um to make sure that at least that there will be a fair exchange a fair swap one for one um in terms of returning whatever acreage that's being utilized for non-agriculture use back to the inventory of um of the farmers so that that is that is a commitment um from from me in that respect i want to thank everyone again for their testimony uh we don't take a vote in this this committee and um you know we'll we'll certainly uh you know address this in in the very near future but i want to thank all my colleagues i want to thank central staff and um you know everyone that was involved in making this committee of the whole uh possible today again it was um you know it was very very info informational so we want to extend our appreciation for to everyone on the behalf of the chair uh senate president donna fred gregory thank you very much and have a good day the committee of the whole of november 16 2021 is hereby adjourned Thank you.

People named in this transcript

SUSPECTED, and a finding aid only. Names were matched by machine against the spellings used across all 426 of our transcripts, and the title is the one used in the room. Being named here is NOT evidence that a person attended or spoke · only that the name was said. Speech recognition mishears names, so a spelling may be wrong even where no alternative is offered.

11x	Senator Novelle Francis heard in this transcript as: Francis, Francis Jr, Nobel Francis, Novali Francis Jr., Novelli Francis Jr
8x	Senator Franklin D. Johnson heard in this transcript as: Johnson
7x	Senator Marvin Blyden heard in this transcript as: Blyden, Blyton, Marvin A. Blyden, Marvin Blyton
6x	Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger the surname alone also matches: Alma Francis Heiliger heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Heiliger, Francis Heiliger, Heiliger
6x	Senator Samuel Carrion heard in this transcript as: Carrion, Carrione, Samuel Carrione
5x	Senator Marise C. James the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr heard in this transcript as: James, James Sr
4x	Senator Athneil 'Bobby' Thomas heard in this transcript as: Anthony Thomas, Thomas
4x	Senator Javan James heard in this transcript as: Javon E. James, Javon E. James Sr, Jovan James
4x	Senator Kenneth L. Gittens heard in this transcript as: Giddens, Kenneth L. Giddens, Kenneth L. Gittins
4x	Senator Milton E. Potter heard in this transcript as: Milton Potter, Potter
3x	Senator Carla Joseph the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph heard in this transcript as: Joseph
3x	Senator Dwayne DeGraff heard in this transcript as: Dwayne M. DeGraff, Dwayne M. de Graff
3x	Chairwoman Fred Gregory the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
3x	Senator Janelle K. Saro heard in this transcript as: Janelle Saru, Saro
3x	Senator Steven D. Payne Sr. heard in this transcript as: Steven D. Payne Sr, Steven Payne
2x	Senator Collar J. Joseph the surname alone also matches: Carla Joseph; Clifford Joseph heard in this transcript as: Collar Joseph
2x	Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Fred Gregory, Donna Fred Gregory
2x	Senator Francis Heidegger heard in this transcript as: Frances Heidegger
2x	Senator Fred Gregory the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
2x	Senator Genevieve R. Whitaker heard in this transcript as: Whitaker
2x	Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriel heard in this transcript as: Jean-Pierre L. Oriel
2x	Senator Kurt Avila

- 2x **Senator Kurt Viale**
heard in this transcript as: Viale
- 1x **Senator Donna Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Frett-Gregory

Bills and acts referred to

Matched by number against our own acts corpus. The number is what the recognition heard, so it may be wrong; where it resolved, the title is the one the Legislature gave the act.

- Act 8404** Act 8404 · An Act requiring the Department of Agriculture and the President of the University of the Virgin Islands to develop a territorial agriculture plan; and for other related purposes ---0
- Act 6836** Act 6836 · An Act repealing and reenacting 7 V.I.C., chapter 1 to provide for a sustainable farming industry, amending 19 V.I.C., section 2301 to provide for the designation of a territorial veterinarian, amending 33 V.I.C., chapter 111 relating to the Agriculture Revolving Funds and making appropriations ---0

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 34-0145, Bill 34-0015