



Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture | May 10, 2021

Legislature USVI

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- 0:00:00 Oh Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back.
- 0:02:30 We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 0:03:30 Thank you. We'll be right back.
- 0:04:30 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Let's go. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Good morning.
- 0:14:40 The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture is hereby called to order Monday, May 10th. Good morning to all. As we commence this hearing this morning, I apologize for the change of venue. However, most of the hearing is being conducted virtually, so we should not have a problem. At this time, what I wanted to do was just ask Madam Clerk for a quorum, a quorum call.
- 0:15:31 Senator Duane de Graff. Senator de Graff, absent. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. Senator Heiliger, absent. Senator Nobel E. Frans, please. Junior. Senator Francis present. Senator Donna Fred Gregory. Fred Gregory. Senator Fred Gregory present. Senator Javon James senior.
- 0:16:02 Senator James present. Senator Milton E. Potter. Senator Potter absent. Senator Potter present, Senator Kenneth L. Gittins. Here. Senator Gittins present. We have five present, three absent. So we have established a quorum and before we begin today's agenda, or before I ask you to read today's agenda into the record, I just wanted to take some time to acknowledge our line enforcement community.
- 0:16:49 This week has been proclaimed nationally as National Police Week, as President Biden has signed a proclamation that May 15th will also be observed as Peace Officers Day. today that we will honor all those who have fallen in the line of duty and May 9th through the 15th is hereby designated National Police Week. Policing is a challenging and oftentimes

thankless job so let us recognize the efforts of our men and women in blue this week. I'd also like to acknowledge the class of 2021 and state that I stand by you and support you on your efforts to push for an in-person graduation.

0:18:04 Hopefully, we can resolve this issue sometime this week as the administration will be reaching out to the various classes and class officers. Today, we will hear from the Virgin Islands Port Authority. This agency serves as a critical role in our economy and literally is the gatekeeper when it comes to tourism. Just about every person and product that comes into our territory passes through our Port Authority facility. There are some major projects in the works and coming online in the near future. and today we will hear more from the port's operations and the status of these projects.

0:19:02 I anticipate that it will be an informative discussion, and there will be much more to follow up on. At this time, I'll ask the clerk to read today's agenda into the record, please. committee on economic development and agriculture hearing agenda chairperson Kenneth L. Gittins the committee on economic development and agriculture will meet to receive testimony from the virgin islands port authority and its governing board to provide updates on the overall status of the authority capital improvement projects and revenue generating projects that are in place or on the horizon for the authority 10 a.m. invited testifiers are as follows. Carlton Dow, Director, VI Port Authority. Leona Smith, Chairperson, VI Port Authority Governing Board. Thank you, Madam Clerk. I see, look good in that seat, I must say. That's Miss Fiona Stokes our clerk for the day and I also want to acknowledge and welcome to our team Miss Risa Bailey today is her first day I think they call it my commissioner could remind me you call it what trial by fire a baptism by fire okay So today's her first day, and she'll be looking on, and I'm sure she will grasp everything quickly.

0:20:45 So at this time, I want to ask our invited testifiers to just do a systems check so that I'm sorry. Correspondent. Oh, I'm sorry. Any correspondence to be read into the record? Yes, Mr. Chair. from who and you may begin a letter dated may 5th 2021 addressed to kenneth gittins senator legislature of the virgin islands 3022 golden rock christian stead virgin islands 00820 dear honorable senator gittins this correspondence is in regard to the upcoming hearing to discuss the virgin islands port authority projects i will not be able to attend a hearing on may 8 2021 due to another commitment however executive director dow and staff will be available to attend and speak on the projects thank you in advance for your understanding and your cooperation warm regards leona smith chairwoman the ipod authority governing board there's not a committee on economic development hearing on may 8th so i'm not sure what she was referring to but that might have been an error thank you for that correspondence any other no mr. chair thank you I will try to do a systems check at this time beginning with executive director Dow if everyone can turn on their cameras at this time and you can introduce yourselves name title etc good morning Carlton Dowd, Director of Virgin Islands Port Authority. Morning sir. You have a deputy assistant there.

0:22:44 good morning and he's hot deputy executive director for general support authority thank you next good morning chief flint i'm port authority police chief of course um sinker district good morning idred wilkes port authority police chief st thomas st john district Good morning, Matthew Barry, Marine Manager, St. Thomas, St. John. Your name again, sir?

0:23:17 Matthew. I'm hearing Matthew, but I didn't hear the last name. Barry. Can you hear me? Barry? Yes, sir, Barry. Okay, thank you. I think someone else just signed on. Ma'am, can you identify yourself and title, please? Hi, good day. This is Anna Penn, Chief Financial Officer.

0:23:50 Ms. Penn, welcome. Thank you. Thank you. So we have six of you up. I want to ask everyone, as the director is making his presentation, to please mute your devices and unmute when you're getting ready to respond director are you ready for your presentation you may proceed yes yes good morning honorable senator Kenneth L Gittins chairperson of the committee of economic development and agriculture all distinguished senators of the 34th legislature of the u.s virgin islands the legislative staff and the listening and viewing audience i am carlton dow the executive director of the virginized port authority i thank you for the invitation to testify before your committee to provide an update regarding the overall status of the port authority capital improvement capital improvement and revenue generating projects and incentives and programs in place to stimulate the growth of our territory's travel and tourism industry for the benefit of the listening public please allow me to summarize our mandate viper is a semi-autonomous agency self-sustaining that that manages two airports and 14 public supports in the u.s virgin islands our objective is to facilitate travel commerce and aid in fostering tourism and economic growth by providing modern and safe port facilities our ports are critical to the economic activity of our territory particularly due to our geographic location

0:25:41 ports support social and economic activities trade our our largest gross domestic product tourism operations construction and maintenance jobs maintenance jobs at the ports provide hundreds of employment opportunities for residents they also simultaneously stimulate our economy by providing revenue for the government of the virgin islands in grocery taxes and income taxes alike the primary source of other of the authorities operating revenues is customer and rental charges to users of our airport and marine facilities other funding sources include federal grants federally approved passenger facility charges added to airline tickets and appropriations for a specific project via the the u.s virgin islands legislature

viper does not receive an annual allotment from the government of the virgin islands while viper is a self-sustaining agency the ongoing covid 19 pandemic has caused significant revenue shortfalls due to reduced travel and a significant decrease in marine traffic to the territory viper's board of governors approved the 150.4 million dollar budget for the authority for fiscal year 2021 which began october 1 2020 and end september 31st 2021 the budget is a two percent decrease over the fiscal year 2020 excluding which includes one million written in for debt

0:27:31 nine million executive director executive director if you could give me uh uh five minutes we We just had a little technical difficulty. It may be resolved in less than five minutes, but we'll take a recess for five minutes. My apologies. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.

0:32:38 The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture for Monday, May 10, 2021 is back on record. Director and others, I apologize for the technical difficulty. We're having some technology challenges this morning with the internet, etc. However, Director, you may proceed from VIPA's Board of Governors approving a \$150.4 million budget.

0:33:29 the budget includes personal costs of 15.8 million dollars fringe benefits total in 9.7 million and utility costs of 5.7 million our finance team has already begun the budget preparation process for fiscal year 2022 and will carefully factor in a significant decrease in marine revenue as well as uncertainty of any increase in the upcoming fiscal year as to weather as to weather this pandemic air arrivals were at a record low when the territory closed to leisure travel to decrease the spread of the coronavirus leisure travelers were prohibited prohibited from march 25th through june 1st 2020 and again from august 13 through september 18 2020 during this shutdown our airports received about around 100 or fewer travelers per day air traveler arrivals to the territory only began to increase in late october of 2020 the territory has since seen a significant surge in air visitor arrival however the effects of the pandemic are still evident when we review our visitor arrival statistics which are still not as robust as our pre-pandemic numbers when compared to february in fiscal year 2020 vipers revenues have decreased by 45 percent during the same period in 2021 the increase in visitor arrivals can be attributed to the current low cost of airline tickets due to the pandemic as well as the increase in airlift to the territory the u.s virginians welcome the inaugural Frontier Airlines flight to St. Thomas on February 19, 2021. Frontier will provide service

0:35:21 between Orlando and St. Thomas twice a week and twice a weekly service from Miami to St. Thomas which started March 7 in December. Viper also welcomed Delta Airlines new service connecting Minneapolis to St. Thomas and a seasonal return of Sun Country Airlines Minneapolis service to St. Thomas jetblue has also announced that it plans to begin flights from newark to st thomas in july 2021 while there has been no new service to st croix there has been a significant increase in air passenger arrival and tourist traffic on st croix this is evident at the hotels and airbnb owners on st croix are reporting that they are limited or has no vacancy cruise ships have not visited the u.s virgin island since march 2020 due to the restrictions on on cruise travel imposed by the centers for disease control and prevention the closure of the british virgin island border from march 20th from march 2020 through april of this year has also substantially decreased our revenues collection while there is a general consensus that crews will be allowed to operate in the u.s in july 2021 we have no definite date when crews will resume in the u.s virgin islands we are hopeful that the territory marine industry will rebound as vaccination programs around the world progresses the federal aviation administration awarded the u.s virgin islands 38 million dollars to maintain the territories airports as part of the coronavirus aid relief and economic security act federal stimulus bill cares the federal funds are available to keep airports in reliable safe operation to to serve the aviation industry the traveling public

0:37:18 and support the economy the funds can also be used to keep airport and aviation workers employed and keep airport credit rating stable the grant cannot be used for any purpose not approved by the fa and cannot be used to fund viper's marine division operations of the allotment 21.5 million is earmarked for syrily king airport and 19.6 million for henry Erolsen Airport. Viper employs 365 residents in this territory and has not implemented any furloughs or layoffs since the pandemic. We have only filled vacancies necessary for us to fulfill our mandate. Some of the positions applicable to aviation operations have been funded using monies from the care act the fa awarded viper a grant in a month of 8.8 million dollars via the airport improvement program grant in september of 2020 the grant provides 4.7 million to rehabilitate 5 305 square yards of failing pavement that's at syrily king airport and design phase two of this project to reconstruct 11 000 square yards of faulty apron pavement the grant also provides 14.1 million for the henry e rosen airport runway 1028 shoulder and electrical valve construction project scheduled to start june of 2021 viper will reconstruct and repair the lighting system at hera runway and taxi a build a new airfield electrical valve and porches and emergency generator and a home run electrical system all runway and edge lights of taxiway a b e and f and g will be replaced viper is normally required to provide a 10 match for each project

- 0:39:24 per aip grant guidelines however the 10 match is covered by the fa according to the terms of the cares act therefore the projects under this grant are 100 funded by the u.s department of transportation the u.s department of transportation awarded viper a 21.8 million dollar for for the reconstruction and modernization of cargo handling and storage infrastructure at the crown bay cargo terminal and st thomas the project includes bulkhead rehabilitation concrete apron restoration reconstruction of three cargo storage areas and security improvements including lighting fencing and fire protection this grant amount is unprecedented and will facilitate more efficient cargo movement both into both into and out of st thomas The expansion will also be essential to improving safety conditions at this often congested port that serves the prime cargo facility in St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands Port Authority Police Division received a \$153,000 grant in 2020 from the Law Enforcement Protection Planning Commission to purchase safety and protective equipment for our law enforcement officers and frontline staff i thank lepc director rey martinez for his assistance with his grant and provided cameras and other security equipment to ensure that viper remained in full compliance with our local and federal regulations via the lepc we also is in the process of receiving kn95 mask surgical mask face shield gloves and hand sanitizers and disposable coveralls vipa has applied to the federal aviation administration to extend the deadline to collect passenger facility charge at syrily king airport while other caribbean destinations institute a departure or hair tax to fund it to fund their airport projects the u.s virgin islands is forbidden to charge a departure tax at the territory of the united states
- 0:41:45 Instead, Viper uses the PFCs as a revenue source for its airport improvement. The amount that we can collect is regulated by the U.S. Congress and can only be increased through that body. Viper currently collects \$4.50 in passenger facility charges for eligible in-plane passenger. while the fee will only be collected from tickets for passengers departing from civil leaking airport the funds collected will be used to support terminal upgrade projects at both seeker and hira the projects will include upgrades to baggage handling systems and new ticketing counters in the departure and whole rooms whole room areas viper's engineering department is currently managing 21 projects in st thomas in john district and 15 on st croix during the first quarter of our fiscal year we are we have expended 51.2 million dollars for capital projects in the st thomas st john district and 55.2 million dollars for projects in the st croix district the hurricanes of september 2017 critically damaged the u.s virgin island and its ports infrastructure and temporarily deferred viper's capital improvement program viper sustained over 85 million dollars in hurricane related damages to 119 port properties we have substantially completed most of our restoration projects most recently we reopened the u.s customs and border protection terminal on sinjan that was destroyed in the storms
- 0:43:31 the new 3 000 square foot terminal is a studier facility made of concrete and should better withstand storm winds this will help st john resume critical marine operations faster in the event of another storm the new terminal cost 1.9 million and was open for public use in september of 2021 other hurricane restoration projects currently ongoing include a rebuilding of our purchasing and warehouse facility and the limburby park and st thomas we expect to have both completed late this summer on st croix a new office and cargo warehouses under construction to replace the building at a wilford bumba alecport and transshipment center that was damaged in the storms the 15.9 million dollar project is being performed by our construction manager at risk lemar tech we also recently paved the operational area repair the roland rolloff ramp at this facility and added another bullard to increase the number of cargo ships we can safely accommodate at this port the syrily king airport terminal is approximately 32 years old and was constructed to accommodate 300 000 passengers however prior to the pandemic syrily king processed over 700 000 travelers annually more than double what it was designed to accommodate seeker was also the most severely damaged viper owned property facility and was our most challenging facility to restore we have significantly completed the storm damages and have also renovated all the first floor restrooms in a terminal the restoration of the terminal was done in conjunction with plans to expand and modernize this facility the sterile king airport terminal expansion
- 0:45:30 and modernization project includes the addition of jet bridges new parking garage facilities and a potential water taxi pair that has a direct connection to the terminal to service our bvi traffic the project will be completed in four stages over a six-year period the first stage is the construction of a four-level parking garage and transportation center our project contractor 80 construction began work march 2021 and expected to be completed in 24 months the parking and transportation center will have 600 parking spaces and a dedicated location for ground transportation and car rental operations removing these services from the existing terminal which give us much needed real estate to expand this 26.8 million dollar project is funded via 20 million dollar grant from the u.s department of commerce economic development administration received in 2019 viper is required to provide a 6.8 million dollar match phase two through four include redesign expansion and modernization of the interior of the terminal to make the best use of the two floors of the terminal and the installation of jet bridges additional lunch and concession spaces to provide more eateries retail stores and contemporary travel amenities tropical landscaping improvement to the flow of vehicular traffic and more while phase one of the seeker terminal expansion is fully funded viper is actively seeking funding sources for phases two to four the

total project cost is estimated to be approximately 250 million. The hero terminal expansion and modernization project the hero terminal is also being expanded and modernized in four phases. The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Authority awarded Viper a seven million dollar grant to fund the first phase of the terminal's

0:47:43 expansion which include enclosing five thousand five hundred square feet of walkway space to increase the seating capacity in the launch, refurbishing the existing passenger lunch space and restrooms enclosing 1100 square foot open air-conditioned garden with a new roof structure to provide additional concession space and upgrading the mechanical system for the additional air-conditional area. The project contractor is Jay Benton Construction and completion of this first phase is expected in August 2022. The 33rd Legislature approved an appropriation of 1.6 million dollars for this project as to act as uh as um to act as a funding source to assist us while phase one of the hero terminal expansion is fully funded. Viper is actively seeking funding sources for phase two to four. The project is estimated to cost 140 million dollars. Viper's board approved an airline incentive to encourage competitive pricing and to attract new routes and airlines to the territory. Per federal law any qualifying airline may apply for Viper's incentive program. Airlines qualify for the incentive program if they will provide airlift via a new route or added flights on an existing route already served by the airline to St. Croix or St. Thomas to reduce overcrowding at a Sirily King Airport terminal during peak hours the incentive is also available to airlines that would provide flights to St. Thomas after 5 pm.

0:49:31 during the incentive period landing fees are waived for one year and terminal arrival and departure fees are reduced by 50 percent for a year. The current incentive was approved for the period beginning December 1, 2020 through November 30, 2022. Boston Bay Monsanto Marine Terminal in St. Thomas. My team has recently met with cruise line executives to discuss the operational requirements that will be necessary to resume to to resume cruises in the territory. Viper will work closely with the West Union Company Limited, the VI Department of Health and the Office of the Governor to ensure that our cruise facilities are prepared to welcome the return of cruise visits and Abramson Marine facilities in Croix. The VI Legislature approved bill number 340013 an act appropriating two million fifty thousand dollars from the St. Croix capital improvement fund to fully fund the replacement and repair the existing deteriorated tender landing pair at the Anne E. Abramson Marine Facility in Frederick State St. Croix. The tender pair landing along the south side of the Anne E. Abramson Marine Facility is primarily used by businesses conducting cruise ship excursion and tours, fishermen and other small vessels operators. It was damaged during the 2017 storms and has greatly deteriorated since then as it is exposed to salt water and open air elements. Viper plans to replace it with a new 80 foot by 15 foot pair. Viper's board is also exploring the possibility of expanding the dock's capacity to accommodate the quantum class ships. Muffet and Nickels was hired to conduct a feasibility study.

0:51:32 for this venture for the studies finding the least expensive and most effective solution to expand the capacity of the Abramson pair is estimated at 35 million dollars. The legislature has appropriated 900,000 from the St. John capital improvement fund to address much needed repairs and improvement to the Laredon L. Boys Docking Crews based in John. The project entails resurfacing the entire pair to ensure a smooth uniform surface, installation of economy adjacent to the existing terminal to provide added protection from inclement weather, a unisex restroom facility and an electrical room to first to facilitate a backup emergency generator. The project will be put out on bid and construction inspected to begin later this summer. The dredging of the Schooner Bay channel at the Gallows Bay Marine Facility has stalled pending approval of the permit by the U.S. Army Corps Engineers. The legislature has assisted Viper by appropriating seven million dollars to dredge Schooner Bay channel to help Viper complete a seaside modification needed to transform the Gallows Bay facility and sing sorry and St. Croix into an upscale port for mini cruise ships and luxury vessels. Viper completed a land side improvement and built a dual purpose passenger terminal at this facility in 2019 to transform this port into a passenger and luxury vessel support. All cargo operation will cease at this facility when the project is completed and shifted to the Garden a Finch Molasses Pier. The construction of a new cargo terminal and an improvement to the dock of the Garden a Finch Molasses pair are currently in progress.

0:53:24 this 24 million dollar project is funded via a 10.6 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation Marine Administration matching funds in amount of 3.8 million was appropriated by the legislature of the Virgin Islands during the territory legislature. This project should be completed this fall. The shoreline revetment project at the O. At the Overson Top Seaplane Terminal in Christian Stead St. Croix was completed in December of 2020. This project repaired the shoreline that had been destabilized over the years due to storms, wave action, rain winds and landslide runoff. The federally mandated project entailed a construction of a new concrete bulkhead to provide a safer facility for travelers and the operators of the seaplane service. The project cost was 3.5 million dollars. Before I conclude I would like to thank my staff for their continued hard work and innovation and the members of the Virginia Port Authority governing board for their guidance and support. I would also like to thank the traveling public and the community for their patience as we strive to rebuild our facilities stronger and better and to better solve the needs of our community and the traveling public. My team and I will continue to work diligently to provide safe and comfortable facilities to make the travelers the

travelers entrance and departure experiences to this territory safe and as pleasant as possible updates about our progress are broadcasted on local radio stations and in our in the print media and posted on our website at www.viport.com the public is encouraged to follow viper on our facebook twitter

0:55:17 instagram and liking social media pages i would be be remiss if i concluded my testimony without extending a sincere thank you to the members of the legislature the brian roach administration for the continued assistance extended to the port authority during these trying economic times funding the projects to improve the ports for our residents and visitors is an illustration of the great achievements that are the result of various branches of our government working together for the betterment of the people of the various of the virgin island thank you again chairman gittins for the opportunity to share the accomplishments of the virgin sports authority with his body our stakeholders and our community my my staff and i are available to answer any questions that the body might have for us. Thank you, Executive Director Dow and your team.

0:56:18 And for the public's knowledge as well, we did have a walk-through tour of the facilities with the Executive Director and some of his engineering staff. And we do have some footage that we would like to show you what's happening behind the scenes. Work is moving. And what I'll do is I'll ask the executive director, as the video is being played, if you can just narrate and guide us through the videos. And while they queue it up, I also want to thank the staff who went out there and assisted with this footage. Thank you all very much, as a large number of our community would not be able to see the inner workings.

0:57:22 So, I believe what you're seeing is the expansion of the, um, the, um, the whole room area at a, that's the interior part of what you saw outside. That's the grant that we got from, from EDA in the amount of \$7 million. That project would cost approximately \$8 million. So that's the expansion project being done by J. Benton in St. Croix would give you that Damien Cartwright in the picture. That project that's happening in St. Croix would add additional, about 200 more seating area, I believe, increase the capacity. That's some new seating that we put in there, and the drops are going in so that folks would be able to charge the phone or whatever devices they have.

0:58:11 That's the dropbox that you see in there in the facility. and pottery um terminal design these are brand new these are brand new seats what you see the floor slabs are being cut these are all electrical drops facility we would have at least two new uh restaurants concessions set up in the seating area of the new uh build out area that we're seeing so we're currently putting a new air condition and so forth in that in that area if you were to have two american airlines on the ground right now it poses a challenge would be able to accommodate at least approximately like four jets if they were to be done and the ground three jets at the same time Executive Director, just as we move over to the next one, you stated that this particular project is uh due to be completed when i think august of 22 remember it's all in the court okay okay the gentleman you see into your left that's safari nelson that one of our engineers and the first picture you're that the molasses bear garden finch molasses bear what we're looking

0:59:57 at now and that's some active construction that's um ongoing um well this is sorry the picture you're looking at currently is that of the warehouse where your tropical and your quality would be able to um those new huge warehouse would be constructed there that's the umpire that's been driven there and that is being constructed and it has been constructed by uh lamar tech that would be a improvement on the on the capacity for us to store uh goods and goods when the tropical inequality now what you're looking at in this other picture is the actual uh garden finch molasses pit so that's your billow that's the interior so that project is significant because that is what would stop or close out the gallows bay operation and all gallows bay operation currently would be headed to the molasses um pay and of course you can see we're well underway with a project we expect to have the project completed before the end of this year so it'll be able to accommodate our dockmaster office it'll have cbp in there and um there'll be several cargo bays that's damion giving the tour but you'll have several cargo bays which means that we'll really would be by the end of this year see the whole transformation of gallows bay no longer accepting cargo and all the cargo activity will be this is a significant project for the port authority the people of st croix and the territory at all that would give us the opportunity then to start the transformation of setting up gallows bay for a mini cruise port and also expanding

1:02:04 recreational activities uh stores restaurants and so forth the connection of the boardwalk that the administration had been talking about that project is moving pretty good um pretty much on target that's being done by at construction and that's the project we talk about 15 points some odd million dollars is the cost of the project 10.6 of it being a federal grant we received several years ago this encompasses and in a minute we should be going across the street where the roland rolloff where the actual your inter-island um uh transportation your your normal age your priority rural the area in which that comes in that's what um that's the area where the roland rolloff would would be so within the next two weeks the entire floor there will be paved concrete pouring should be happening within the next couple of weeks and this particular project here uh is slated to be completed when um probably i'll say by october this year i always like to give myself a

little wiggle room but this is pretty going moving quickly it's a big open up area again the offices and the um cbp would be moving all operations down to this area okay and while i'm at it i just want to continue to thank those folks who look after our federal grants you have one of them right there and he's an entire staff who continue to make sure that we do our reporting so what you're seeing there now is um the new bulkhead uh the new roll-on roll-off so that's where the um the the vessels that run from puerto rico st thomas st

1:04:06 croix that in thailand has spoke about all your normal age of priority ro ro your water spirit that that brings with us sometimes fuel and the like so all the fuel stuff that's been stored up in gallows bay will be gone will be a thing of the past and um so both projects go hand in hand in terms of the you saw the building it's just at the street separates them so the cargo would be coming in right here they'll pull up and then you transport them into the warehouses so it'd be a great operation uh in terms of how we move in cargo and the way we're able to operate and taking all of that activity out of the town of christian step and who are the the engineers on this again we have some local engineers uh working on this project correct well the our this uh i think was design we have um some folks that actually did design him but our engineers that oversees all these projects it starts out with damian cartwright who is our director of engineering for the next couple weeks and then we have um we have dale gregory in st thomas he's the assistant director of engineering in st croix in particular we have some youngsters we have um tafari nelson who we hired about two years ago fresh out of school you have a mechanical engineering degree he's been a real asset to the authority along with miss armstrong another young lady who we hired about two years ago and both are young people from st croix that we have given the opportunity to broaden their skill set and they are the ones who oversee these projects on a day-to-day basis you saw both of them in the picture from time to time but really glad we pride ourselves in trying to make sure that we have um you know new set

1:05:55 or a new generation of engineers coming to report authority right i wanted you to highlight those those uh young engineers for real so that uh people could know what's what's happening and that our local people are being put to work in these areas are you with us though yes i i am this is now the seaplane um terminal if you could see that pure new concrete will take concrete and um a few years ago most of the bulkhead were falling off into the water and um and so that was just recently constructed i think gc were the contractor and that one and you could see that was an older picture of what it had looked like before and we also had a um a revetment program because there were some um spill and leaks and over time all the all the water i mean sorry all the oil had and fuel and we had to do a mitigation project there so that project now is completed that bulkhead has since been hardened and um so it's a beautiful project all in all it's over 3.5 million dollars that's mr cartwright or director of engineering that you're seeing there discussing it and um that's safari or marine manager and of course the young lady from your office who accompanied us so all of that concrete you're seeing is brand new what what else needs to be done or will be done here at this facility um well there is some discussion that must be had the parking lot area is not don't look the

1:07:48 best but the port authority let me repeat the port authority we do not own the parking lot the parking lot is owned by dp and r that's a discussion been ongoing but and then also there's some work um uh that that needed that's needed to um to the building but that's some discussion we uh have to have with the the company that leases which is seaborn so so have that discussion uh began yet because that that was indeed an issue just uh if you could pause there before we go to gallusbee um media just pause there yeah we have had some off and on um discussions uh with them and um we've got to accelerate those those talks um so that's that's as much as i probably could say we've had our um you know disputes with them right quite frank in terms of what's going on We're not overall comfortable with some of what the area looks like, and we are to do better.

1:08:50 What about addressing the gut area there? You know, oftentimes the gut there is filled with all the seaweed, and it just hampers operations there at times. Would that be on DPNR's part, too, since the gut flows through the parking lot and driveway, or is that Port Authority? no that that gut area don't belongs to the port and i some time ago for the longest while and i glad we were able to communicate with the commission of public one and it was finally had some repairs a whole big ditch there but no the gut don't belongs to the port authority not even like again not even the parking lot belongs to the port what belongs to us is just that area there where the building is located facility and the apron yes okay so we'll we'll have a conversation with uh dpnr and public works with regards to the parking lot and the gut uh media we could proceed uh with the gallows bay facility you could go ahead director yeah that's our gallows bay facility that that was constructed um a couple years back and um what you're looking at is the whole um warehouses and the reason and i glad that senator that you yourself and your staff took the time out and we use this so the public that normally wouldn't get to see these things because while we're talking about um having for example your inter-island ferry as we speak um your fast ferry that runs from st damas to st croix that's the area that they come come in although they use a different entrance and exit that whole area it definitely has to be rehabilitated when you look at the roadway um and and so forth and so this is the same area that we're talking about we want mini cruise ships to come so when you could see the all the

the plywood two by four whatever you consume from the inter-island perspective that comes right into that facility so it's really critical that we move all the operation down to the molasses pair which is only a matter of hopefully by the end of this year all of that would see transformed will tear down those warehouses and then would like to see the whole area graded paved clean up and then uh whether it's shops stores restaurants and do a

1:11:14 real expansion of a actual port uh you could see the interior that is immaculate that's the new building uh that we that that was done gc was a contractor there it's a beautiful facility is now being used by the the ferry folks with the inter-island ferry folks outside of that we were nice little area whether somebody wanted to set up a little bar and soft stuff we're open for business we had put it out for a bid and we didn't really get no successful folks at the time but i'm pretty sure by the time we transform uh the cargo down to the molasses pair i i suspect folks would want to utilize and so if you have a um you know there's a small function when covet allows it would be more than glad to list it to the public at large that it could utilize a very nice um facility and a beautiful place to hold a event it sits right down the water um for the most part um and um we're in st thomas now and watch you kind of taking some aerial of the parking garage that's a 26.8 million dollar project and um that work has started i think the end of this month we have the official groundbreaking one of the challenges or some of the challenges the territory or we are seeing with a lot of the construction projects is the ability to get the actual concrete mixture that we need from heavy materials at this point so that's been a little hindrance even on the airport side but that's the work that's going on there right now and i continue to thank the staff all who work on it all who continue to monitor it manage it and make sure we

1:13:09 we do the right thing get it dry down when appropriate and so forth um so again the staff continue to oversee these projects what you're looking at is a our purchasing building uh he went a little quick there but that's a new building our purchasing building was destroyed from the hurricane and uh by the end of this month they're telling me that we should be going into our purchase and building uh you're going back but that's the purchasing building again you're seeing so the water park i know this weekend they had a little function there our staff been doing a yeoman's job getting a water park ready putting in a little basketball court that's one of the most used used facility probably recreationally around here and so we're opening up opening it back up for business that the public could could enjoy while they do their social distancing some are coming the young people love it the adults love it we hold weddings there and wherever other parties and so forth and in the background of that that's part of the purchasing building that was just recently rebuilt that's picture there is our new bubble canner maintenance building and now we're done in crowley that's where we just got a grant for some 21.8 million dollars as you could see how badly the surface has deteriorated and all throughout there with the heavy equipment the containers and so forth it's it's a safety issue and the staff we were able to and that's what we talk about putting people together this was a joint application that report was the primary applicant but it was done in conjunction a lot of the leg work and the field work was done by both tropical and crowley mind you competitors coming together for one common goal one common interest so we're able to bring both parties together and we were successful we

1:15:02 work with our consultants in and out of the territory so the design is happening as we speak we hope to get those designed probably the end of this month so that at 21.9 million dollars would be would go to work and i want to take senator um a couple minutes so that the people the public could understand the gravity of that project a lot of the commodity that go from uh that ships into st thomas and in some instances st croix goes on to other islands in the eastern caribbean and so it's not the goods that comes into our territory only but goods that are transported and that's why we need to expand what is happening in st thomas i know there is some legislation that the um senator dana fred gregory has we really need that to happen for the growth of the territory and the port at large we have brought the same parties tropical and crowley um together and along with the port authority and we're now in the face of um jointly trying to do another application and this time before the container port in saint croix to try to see if we could be successful in getting a grant to the tune of 20 plus million dollars for the container port so we're working actively and the only way sometimes we survive is through these major grants and having our staff or consultants and the entities such as crowley and tropical participating and the good thing i want to tell the public about this when we talk about corporate being good corporate partners corporate citizens the matching requirement for that grant and even for the one that we're trying to do in st croix but the grant that we just got the matching requirement was six million dollars well the port authority didn't have the wherewithal neither did the central government the matching grant for that project was born by both crowley and tropical shipping so they are the ones who put up the six million dollars so that the port authority could have them match so that we could get that 21.9 million dollar project going and they are now actively working in the design phase our internal engineers are the ones reviewing and making sure that it's a facility that we want so i really appreciate the working relationship we share with those two

1:17:24 major shipping entities Thank you Executive Director and your team again. Before I move on, let me acknowledge the presence of Senator Duane M. de Graff on St. Thomas. Welcome. Earlier I think I saw the at-large Senator Stephen Payne colleagues will roll right into a seven minute round and we started will be led by the vice president who also has

the bill on the South Shore Enterprise Zone and I will proceed from Senator Francis to senator james and to our senate president fred gregory uh then senator potter and senator de graf seven minutes uh vice president you recognize for your seven minutes thank you very much um mr chairman good morning to you my colleagues a good morning to the folks from the virgin islands port authority and of course good morning to the people of the virgin islands i too would like to start off by extending a happy police week certainly to all of our law enforcement officers and do wish them a very good and enjoyable week and to strongly encourage our community to again when you meet a cop to really just just thank them for the work and the fact that they continue to put their lives on the line for this community it's a good feeling this morning i'm certainly in the room with with um two of my additional alumni from the john jay college uh so i i know that it's a good one as we talk about police week um you know certainly it's a

1:19:23 good day i also want to commend you um director dow for your leadership with the number of projects that's going on with the virginia support authority it continued to be progressive it continue to again make our gateways um one that is certainly profitable uh as well as to be accessible so um and really speak to economic development so i extend my appreciation to you and the team as well as the board who continue to support you in that endeavor uh so my first Last question to you this morning is in regards to, you spoke about the fact that they have not, well, there have been some increased air travels to St. Croix, you have not really seen any additional flights come into St. Croix. Can you speak to any negotiation or discussion that's being had in order to be able to improve and increase our flights into the St. Croix airport?

1:20:27 uh well thanks and again happy police week to all as well um just prior to covid i know that there are some talks the commissioner of tourism mr joe bush shelter governor albert bryan and myself participated in directly with um front air airlines and hence came the flight that we are seeing now what i want to also mention is that in our discussions one of the first things or forefront that we discuss is what we could do in sync right under additional flights and what i would say is that um there are some negotiations right now that i know um that's you know that we've been discussing relative to st croix and in particular front air and what those possibilities are and in their expansion we're discussing their new expansion and um back when they were discussing the expansion st croix was probably somewhere about 10 and 11 and any new expansion that has now bumped up tremendously between um up to i think about number three and they're just saying that when they look for new roads in which they want to expand to that what was um 10 10 now and where they looked at st croix that's no higher what's going to happen i suspect the um the demand will will will drive what really happens there in terms of um and any other uh you know flights that would come in clearly just like sin thomas right now one of the challenges still continue to be um hotel rooms and so forth i know there's some initiative that some senators in sin sincroy have been moving as as to new um accommodation so that's that's

1:22:14 an important part of the growth but i'm optimistic that we will see some um new new movement in st croix um there is what they call routes the port authority participate we were not able to go to routes this year which is the tourism commissioner myself and others we participate in route sometime over in colorado and that's where we have the one-on-one discussion with the various airlines but there's a combination of things and i just hope that we would see some movement and um some more movement at the same quite size very well director that actually added some i have a few more questions so i didn't want you to run all my time you know it is right you only got seven minutes i'm sorry um so in regards to the caribbean though um while we talk about additional flights is there any discussion in respect to being able to move um individual quickly uh you you know dung islands into the caribbean uh while you're having those discussion especially from sinker i think you do have liat back into saint thomas but from saint croix uh to be able to navigate our caribbean islands that's just a short version i just wanted to say we do have we still have challenges even to be honest with you i have to be frank even with liat so um those challenges still still exists what anything more than that we don't have any major development that i can tell you today as to um moving on to the caribbean two minutes very well um my time is running so um in regards to the um seaborne lease uh and the the build out that's required in terms of the passenger lounge up at the the various um seaborne areas is there any plan to to be able to really make that a little bit more appealing um and rather than sitting under a tent and out in the element any plans to to address that situation at seaborne

1:24:11 i would just like to say that there have been discussion we don't like it um and we look at at least carefully and i can tell you that we've been on on the um conference call with their president and we've let our dissatisfaction um be known to them and what we're looking at we have to look closely as to the lease and um you know i would like to probably leave it there i don't want to get in trouble today very well very well i'll leave it there as well so two things real quickly in regards to the schooner bay uh channel dredgen can you give us a short version as was creating that delay in making that happen right and i think i misspoke um that we have uh we are scheduled to have a get a seven million dollar grant from eda for the project and um every entity every federal entity first year we will only deal with army corps when we started out to get a permit we got a local permits already but hence came the problem because every other institution um fisheries um

noah everybody else has to weigh in on this permit so it became a much longer protracted cumbersome um they whatever question they have asked our consultants have answered and we continue to be in um and whole in kind of waiting on until we have escalated this situation with the permitting with our delegate governor and everybody we could talk to but um i don't have nothing um concrete that i could tell you they're telling us they have said to us that hopefully by the end of this year we probably could get that permit and some others we have outstanding i don't know if anything i need to go to add very well and um mr chair if i may just um wrap up you may in regards to firearm enforcement i know that there have been some discussion um by the police commissioner and others that have come before us recently where there is some work that's being done jointly some collaboration between the virgin health fourth authority police and the vipd in being able to document the firearms that's coming into the territory can you um speak to that or have one of your chief speak to what's being done um in

1:26:22 in that regard thank you i know i have two chief on the line and they're getting paid today so some of the coaches could respond please yes good morning senator chief works currently um vipd is manning the location of the airport and when they're not available we will take control of the firearms and do all the necessary paperwork and then turn that firearm over to um the person in charge of the firearm bureau and that's the procedure for now once we get tips on firearms anything we pass it on to vipd or we intervene and of course that's um that have been the enforcement have also allowed for proper signage and notification um you know throughout the the airports that again require those individuals that's coming in with their firearm to be able to um report those those firearms immediately to the police department. Correct, Chief?

1:27:27 That's correct, Senator. Those signs are posted throughout the entire airport. Very well. If I may, I'm Senator. I'm Louis Flynn, St. Croix District. We are currently working with VIPD on the signage on our end. So we, in reference to positioning the signage. Very well. My time has been called, but I can't leave the mic without again. commending the the work that's being done by the port authority especially as they continue to work towards our south shore enterprise zone and really i'm really excited by the prospect of that and putting people to work um simplifying um you know the ability to be able to transport goods in and out of the territory uh so we'll discuss that a little bit later on thank you very much much, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you, Vice President Francis. Next up, Senator Giovanni James, Sr., you're recognized for your seven minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning to the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and thank you, Mr. Chair, for putting together this well-needed hearing. I am one that don't really give people praises just like that, but I must say, Director Carl Tandau, you are definitely doing a hell of a job. You are a mover and shaker. I've seen it for myself. I remember the time when you also assisted us when we were trying to get that property and the leasing agreements for the Caribbean Drug Racing Association. You came through. You helped us. There was another time where a local Virgin Islands musician wanted to use the port for recording a video, and you did not hesitate to approve it. And I could go on and on with the many things that you're doing. But before I give any extra praises to you, I want to say that you have a hell of a public relations officer. The press releases are always on point. The social media platforms are all up to date. Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, everything is on point. And I wish

1:29:31 more government agencies can get on board as far as being digitized and getting that information out there. So kudos to your public relations officer. You're doing an amazing job. But as far as the Virgin Islands Port Authority governing board, I know sometime back last year there was an 8-1 vote to enter into negotiations for a hotel near the Henry E. Rosen airport. You briefly touched on it when um the vice president was speaking but in your testimony or something that you made mention that mr cartwright is only here with us for several weeks yeah he has um indicated and we have no issues um he has indicated that he'll he'll be moving on to do um some other ventures um so it's an employee that we really um he has been very good to report it's been a real mainstay here at the port but um that's why we have to try to continue some kind of some serious succession planning so thank you thank you he's not leaving he's not leaving with any issues he's leaving on a high note thank you mr because that is a big loss the reason why i'm tying in mr cartwright into the conversations with the hotel i know he was the lead person on that along with your legal team so as far as the possibility and the likeness of this hotel coming to the district of saint croix can you just give us a brief status update or is that something you cannot speak on right now well what i can tell you our legal people and the principles are discussing um this what the board authorize and and i'm glad you asked the question because it won't just happen tomorrow what the board authorized us to do is to be able to negotiate um at least with these principles and in those lists would have certain timelines and what they could do and what they can't and within what time would they have to execute based on a mutual agreement so that's where they are now the legal people are having those discussion and are talking what kind of investment um but you know would go forward yeah so i'm hoping i'm praying that

1:31:46 in the meantime well we have mr cartwright somebody's up under him soaking in all that information to make sure that we have that transition so conversations as far as the negotiations with this possible hotel development and saying continues without any hurdles are we doing that yeah i mean with all due respect i uh my mother used to tell me when

one man dead is another man bred but the fact is um we're not going to stop it doesn't stop and again Again, I don't want to minimize Mr. Carter has been an excellent part of our team. However, as a matter of fact, there is nothing the engineering division directly is doing with our project. No, it's all up to our legal and property management side of things.

1:32:28 So we would move on. We continue to go forward. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Dow. And I'm a bit concerned regarding our young engineers at the Port Authority. Because as you mentioned, as we brought in this skill set as young Virgin Islanders, I, Senator James, hope and pray that we work towards retaining them and having some level of stability because as of April 3rd, based on the Instagram post, I see that there's a position for senior engineer position on St. Croix and St. Thomas. What is the status of those vacancies or positions? Are they new positions? No, we are just filling some positions that became vacant for different reasons. But we must understand, for example, senior engineer it comes with not just education but years in service in that particular um field and so i mean people that work with me my staff could tell you that one of the things that we really look deeply at is in-house how we can continue to um you know move people within our organization upward but um those engineers that we have we um in sinkhole in particular we have two people left in engineering and they are probably two years on the job right out of school we hire those folks and i mean since i'm with some of the same but we are trying to see how we could uh you know fill some of those positions but the one thing i want to make clear is that the private sector versus government and we still government and what some of those salaries range range in you know ranges are it's it's really far and sometimes in this small community we pay somebody a hundred thousand dollars and then they it's coming like the sky falling but we send our children to school and the fact of the matter is that um somewhere along the line that's what we have to look at in terms of um you know trying to keep people might want thank you at the same time if our salaries aren't competitive then they would opt to go elsewhere thank you

1:34:29 Thank you, Mr. Do. And as we speak about engineering, can you speak to me regarding any conversations with the Port Authority and the Department of Public Works since you are both a part of the Governor's Cabinet? The reason why I'm asking about that, as you enter into the road leading to the airport, and directly right there before you even get your little car to come into the airport the road is horrible it's on level are you having those conversations because i am not one of those individuals i put saint thomas against saint croix but when you come into saint thomas airport is a nice paved road leading to the airport can you speak to what are we doing as far as conversations with department public works to make sure that we have a great experience for visitors and locals alike when coming to the airport i appreciate um uh the the question but i just want to be clear because we're not you know the the port authority executive director is not a part of the cabinet but the one of the board member which is the commissioner of public work is on our board by law so i could tell you we've been having those discussions and my fact when you go down gallows bay i think i mentioned it i'm not pleased with how the whole corridor they are telling us that they expect to start some kind of work down there soon the airport um entrance and exit just for the record um the port authority went ahead and paid quite a bit of money to light it up because it wasn't lighted and we talk about whether it's wapa jab or who jab but we can't take on the paving and i'll bring that again to the commissioner of public work um attention in terms of the exit of the the airport and hope we could do something about us soon i'm pretty sure he will if i can just conclude you you may i have the utmost respect

1:36:20 for avery lewis and i wish some others may take a page out of avery lewis page but every time i go on avey lewis page he's bragging and boasting this road is being paved this is being paved seeing like he calling the shots so we need individuals and saying cry i guess to call it starts to make sure that our airport and the island of saint croix has a good road leading to and from so i know it's not your job but you are appointed by the governor you guys meet on a regular basis i'm hoping so you can have those conversations with the commissioner he's no longer nominee he was approved congratulations i didn't vote for him because i think he's he's um you know but i leave it as that but you have work to do thank you um mr chair for the time Thank you, Senator James. Madam President, are you recognized for your seven minutes?

1:37:15 Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning to the testifiers and good morning to the listeners of your audience. And of course, a special, special good morning to my VIPER family. So I'm gonna shift the conversation just a little bit. I wanna talk about your fiscal outlook because I know that since the pandemic, you've been challenged significantly. And of course, I also want to congratulate the executive director, Mr. Carlton Italdau, for all the work that him and his team, you know, that they've been doing since the storms and before.

1:37:58 so congratulations and continue to ensure that economic development continues to move in the upward trajectory here in the virgin islands but let's talk about your budget so i know in your testimony you made reference to and please make your your responses uh succinct um you made reference to your budget for fy 2021 being some 150 million dollars are you on target to collect and i'm certain that included in that is some federal funds as well but are you in on target to collect the um portion of the budget that was tied to projected revenues miss ben you could respond my time is running

sorry my mute um good day senator um as of right now we're on target for marine for aviation marine we are having some difficulties we're still on the hope that the cruise ships will return it's going to take a joint effort of everyone the senate the government And also, that's where we're at. We've been able to use some of the, I would say, the CARES Act on the aviation side. So that's taken care of, but we're still having issues on the Marine side.

1:39:26 So how do you plan to fill the Delta on the Marine side? Because I note specifically that the executive director spoke about the fact that during the entire situation with the COVID-19, the port authority maintained its employees so how do you intend to continue on that trajectory absent of additional resources is it that you're getting funds from the cares act from the governor or is there funding set aside for operations under the what is it the I forgot the name of the new I I forgot the name of it. The new funding that just became available on the national level. Go ahead, Anna.

1:40:22 Go ahead, Director. Well, what I can tell you, two things we did. One is that we had established a line of credit with a local lending institution just to give us some room to operate. and then secondly yes we expect to we've been talking with the administration we expect to try to get some assistance from the federal legislation that was passed yes okay so you are getting assistance from the god help me with the name I can't believe that it escapes me it's not I can't remember come on mr. though you know the name all right because yes the whole funding rescue funding yes the America rescue funds so you are getting funding to support the marine say because I am concerned about the marine side but let's let's talk about all of the and this is just for the public to understand how things work in the Port Authority so let's talk about all of the the boats that we're seeing in our harbors have you seen an increase in your docking fees on the marine side of course I know that you're challenged with the cruise ship side but have you seen an increase in the docking fees due to the increase of the boats in the harbors and how are you in fact managing that much you wanna respond or Anna quickly as far as the boats in the harbor um marine manager match you can chime in but that is managed by dp and all we do not we only get docking fees if they come to the dock i know i just i wanted to make sure that we put it out there you only get docking fees if they come to the dock so i wanted to make sure

1:42:14 that you know the community understands that there's two sides to this particular coin so thank you for that but let's talk about a dock so why are we not seeing um boats coming up to the dock in the St. Thomas Harbour in particular Matthew quickly mainly because of the electric they want water they would like to have a safe environment to dock up so that's what we're we're in the process of of operating up or equipment defenders and the cleats which have haven't been completed but there's still a need for and water so for the face waterfront project that'll all rectified the resources that the borders are needing you're unable to provide it at this particular time correct because they're they're not okay so they don't we don't have that at all okay all right so that's something that we really need to talk about because I see where we the Port Authority in particular could have been generating some good revenues from that because it used to happen years ago of course things have changed also let's talk about the airport side just a little bit so you spoke specifically that in the month of February of 2020 you compared February 20 and February 2021 as it relates to your revenues for air arrivals and you said that you saw I believe a 45 percent decrease so how does your March and April look are you seeing a decrease still be and I asked the question because you know we're seeing a lot of um arrivals coming into the territory so tell us what your february and your comparison between your february your march and april years look like between 20 and 2021

1:44:20 time miss ben um you may continue we're just finished up march right now we have not got the final figures It still would not be an increase. It will still be on the decreased side. We're hoping that by June we should see it at least even, based on the tracking of how the numbers are going. All right, my time has been called. Mr. Chair, can I ask one last question? I did say you may proceed.

1:44:48 Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So the CARES Act funding, you spoke specifically to \$21.5 million for the St. Croix District Airport. and, I mean, St. Thomas Airport and 19.6 for the St. Croix Airport. Exactly what does that funding entail? What are you doing with those funds? Those funds are basically to augment our operation at the airport. For example, our day-to-day operation.

1:45:21 With those same funding, we could pay some personnel. you see the monitors on there security type equipment so it's just to you can't do no major capital repairs with those money anything operational for the most part you can use those funds and remember it's a on a reimbursement basis and um i could tell you two major purchases that we're doing we have to get authorization from fa but the team and i we went outside the box and we just uh we ordered two new fire apparatus uh a million dollars each for each district because that was one of the big findings or big problems we had with our fa inspection so they allow us to use that for that big capital expenditure for fire apparatus in both district but it's basically all your airport operation outside major capital projects all right thank Thank you for your responses and I'm gonna wrap up by just, and you could answer on the chair's time. You note specifically in your testimony that you're looking to several phrases of renovations to both SICA and HERA to the tune of some \$400 million. And I would like to hear from

you, what are the plans to begin the conversation as to how we are going to fund the expansion, the redevelopment, et cetera, of these two airports to the tune of 250 million at SICA, 150 at HERA.

1:46:48 You may answer on the chair's time. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Are you speaking for the chair now, man? You may proceed with your response. Oh boy, I'm so familiar. Anyhow, how, I think that's an excellent question, but what we expect to do, just like, for example, the transportation center parking garage is one of those phases that we have started that's 26.8 million dollars the other phase the the second phase and both here and in saint croix what we expect to do we put a whole uh white paper together that we um i hope to i think two weeks ago governor albert brian and myself went over step for step on his legal people because we recognize that in the territory itself we'll never get that done like that so that's why in this white paper we have sent it to our delegate and we're looking at the new infrastructure bill that's making its way through the united states congress we have uh worked with a consultant on board that the administration have in washington dc we have provided them that white paper and giving them all the supporting information as to our airport both airports the needs and giving them some design some description as to all those projects because in the scheme of things whether it's going to be two three trillion or what have you we want to make sure that we have brought our concerns to the highest levels of not only the local government uh we have um discussed with the legislature from time to time but also with the um with the united states congress um we have sent this same white paper to two of the congressional people we have also provided this entire document

1:48:43 to our congress lady ms stacy plaskett so we pay attention for my own future i mean past life i know how vital and critical it is to get the dialogue going with the national level and the political people that could bring some assistance to us as um as a territory thank you uh executive director uh a powerful uh rules committee chair uh senator potter you're recognized for your Seven minutes, followed by Senator DeGraff.

1:49:24 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good morning, everyone. Good morning to you, Executive Director Dow and your team. I also want to just extend kudos to you, similar to what was echoed by my colleagues regarding the major infrastructure development initiatives that we're seeing at the Virgin Islands Port Authority even as we navigate our way through a very difficult global pandemic. Executive Director Doe, you mentioned earlier I guess on page one of your report about the PFCs and I just wanted to get a little elaboration on that. You said that that the primary source of the authority's operating revenues is customer and rental fees charged to users of our airport and marine facilities.

1:50:22 Our funding source includes federal grants, federally approved passenger facility charges, PFCs added to airline tickets and appropriations for a specific project via the USVI legislature. Do you, I think you mentioned that you were asking for an extension from the federal government on the collection of these fees. Can you elaborate a little bit on that? okay um anna you want to speak to that if pfc is quick um the pfc is it's still a federal program that's basically another form of a grant you have to apply and get the extension we did have one extended already and so that's complete and it's 450 a passenger for an approved project that is passed through the airlines and the federal government so um so in other words all that happened is somebody i need to meet uh what happens senator is that um if we we identify a project we have a design uh even the design um funding have to be approved by the federal government and we collect uh that that that sum is four dollars and 50 cent that passenger facility charge is um is legislated by the united states congress we can't change it and it goes towards a specific upgrade to your airport normally a safety areas is the priority area that that money can be used for but i'd like to just make it abundantly clear that unlike you and let me just reference st martin or someplace a passenger leaving there you have to pay 35 dollars and um in the u.s virgin islands this is a federal mandate and that the lot that congress passed is only four dollars and fifty cent per ticket so um you could see very well that it's not a whole lot of money that you generate

1:52:35 it's probably about four to five million dollars annually that you generate and if you're talking about having um like like a saint martin a million passengers going through at 35 you know so that's why some of these islands in the Caribbean could use that kind of financing to upgrade a facility versus we having the mandate of 450. Thank you very much for that clarification. My next question, Executive Director Dow, is regarding the talk that we've heard here and there over the past couple years and in recent years regarding the merger of RICO and VIPER. are there active discussions in that regard in talks with the governor of the virgin islands is that something that has been put on hold where are we with that and what are your thoughts on that just for the record when i sit in a very same seat that you're sitting in a proposal legislation way back then so the record is clear where i stand on that however um there are active discussions going going on with the administration his legal folks and um uh so it's just it's just discussion that's what i can say um no but ultimately the the um the politics will have to dictate how far and when we go but there are some active discussion that we're having along with the administration okay and you're confident until you're gonna see some movement on that or that we're gonna get beyond the discussion stages that's that's my question uh it would take at least two or three to tangle or two or three to dance but i don't know um i honestly can't say but i believe something would happen before the end of

- 1:54:21 this year i honestly believe something will happen okay thank you very much for that um what is the nature of your interaction with the virginia police department i mean do you have regular interaction um with with vipd um we we do by the nature of our job but the board chief to speak to to that and what we do could um any one of you chiefs we we um respond please um chief works um i could respond for saint thomas side um on a daily basis we interact with vipd um to the point where you know if accidents or anything happen on the road anything close by we respond and we take the reports you know we do whatever wants us in the vicinity thank you for that chief to flynn yeah good day the same here um we communicate um on a daily basis and we assist each other as needed and i think we also have meetings that we are we attend um senator i believe what what what was uh in terms of our interaction i think what was a pretty good one and i want to commend our office at the time natalie joseph and all these other folks because when the incident that recently took place up in st john it was vipd communicating with us at the airport our folks at the airport getting information working with cbp so we don't have a choice we all have to be this together and you saw that it came to a successful end yes definitely um my last question that i have really well before before i go on to the
- 1:56:14 last question regarding the canine units do we still have active canine units in each district Time. More chiefs could respond. On campus, I have three explosive, one drug. Senator Nsingh, we are training.
- 1:56:43 What? You said you're training? I think we might have some issues with Chief Flynn's microphone at this time. No, I couldn't hear you, Senator. I couldn't hear you, Senator. Okay, no, I was asking you about your canine units, the status of your canine unit on St. Croix, and I didn't hear your response clearly. Currently in training with VIPD.
- 1:57:20 Okay, all right, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you, Senator Potter. Senator DeGraff, Minority Leader, you are recognized for your seven minutes. Testifiers, please mute your mics. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, testifiers, all of you enlisting and present. Director Dow I.T. would like to say thank you to you and your team for the hard work you're doing and transforming the Virgin Islands as a whole.
- 1:58:09 And to Mr. Cartwright, thank you. I've been in, you know, several times, you come before us to testify, you represented yourself well, you represented Viper well, and thank you in your future endeavors. I do appreciate what you have done. Director Dow, I like to address issues in terms of personnel, infrastructure, equipment, logistics. your personnel you said you had i think 365 employees uh and you were able to hire some on off of cares act money how long would that employment last for based on the case act monies well um the cares act uh money i think is uh spread over a two year a two-year period but that don't mean that if it's something that we really need that we wouldn't in our upcoming budget try to see how we can do it um and uh we got the care money one way we got additional i think it was um anna maybe you could have me but i think about three million dollars because they have grant programs from time to time so so um you know we we expect to continue to try to to get grants but remember it's not when kovid goes away some of what we had to do might not be necessary anymore okay right uh and and i guess those employees will you address them at that time now in regard to employees again your personnel uh do you have unions in viper how many unions do you have certainly if my memory saw of me correctly i think we are fine and how does the negotiation process go with them uh uh do they have uh existing contracts or do they have contracts that have been expired what is the status on the unions and anna you could help me out but i know
- 2:00:05 we have two that's already finished completed there who those two that are being placed on step getting any money that we owe them and so forth and i think we name uh hopefully reaching the tail end of another two or three but anna or anis maybe you could respond to that before before uh you respond uh director this chair usually don't allow the i i don't like the first name calling because i want the public to know who our leaders are and their positions so that if they have any questions they will know who to call in these respective agencies so i just want to ask everyone to please refer to each other by their titles and last names please thanks all right thanks um the deputy director miss annie's hodge could you respond to that please good afternoon um executive director is correct uh we have i think two outstanding i believe you may need to come closer to your device uh because you're uh having a feedback and and we can't see you in a camera now the executive director is correct we have two outstanding unions that we're currently in negotiations with the others have settled and we are um making payments are beginning to make the payments to those units everything should be completed by the end of the
- 2:01:51 summer everything meaning those that have negotiated any money is due to them you should start to see something by the end of the summer that's what that means that is correct um we had some ritual activity included there so everything we're trying to pay everything including the ritual amounts by at least the end of the summer if not before okay great great great before sounds good now uh because director you're as great as your personnel and and i think you have a old school uh great set of people that work for you and work with you and bringing in the new talent that you're bringing in is a collaboration you can't go wrong um the infrastructure the work done in the airport what is the status of that for the employees in the in the facility the airport in particular right now okay um the you know the airport is a work in progress

uh again this a 32 year old facility we have our kind of union contract that we have to and most time when you talk about the people in there you're talking about the users who work in there because most of all people don't literally work in there they might walk outside but anyhow two minutes those folks are they have contracts for example if it's employees of tsa we have to meet their contractual mandates we have issues sometimes with air condition all kind of stuff happens like in any other process but we try to address them and accommodate them we've done a lot of work in terms of uh fixing up those areas all restrooms have been replaced in in in um at a facility uh we're still doing some construction in there and it's a work in progress okay and again it's good information to have because again you know sometimes you have employees who may have issues and if we put it out that is being worked on and at a reasonable time frame you know um i think is fair to the employees themselves now for the police uh the rank structure

2:04:03 for the police uh what what is it we have a chief on each aisle on each island uh how many captains how many lieutenants sergeants right down or what is the rank structure um right now we have we also have um uh lieutenant it's in time we have a lieutenant opening now i believe chiefly and then we have we don't have any captains we have folks assigned to k9 and the likes but just when i give the port authority the structure was one chief one lieutenant sergeant who created since i got here just for the record and we expect to try to grow some more but at the same time grow within the confines of what we could literally afford to do time and and and i agree but again uh you know some of the issues uh if i may mr uh chair you may fine okay good uh and some of the issues again uh there's so many other issues you could address but being former police law enforcement myself and yourself director uh i i just want to make sure that um vehicles you have updated vehicles i'll just i'll just end with the vehicle portion of it vehicles and what is the starting salary for viper police officer and you can answer in the chair's time thank you for the time mr chair fine um vehicles we a matter of fact i believe chief

2:05:57 you could tell me when uh when we'll be changing some out quickly and then um annis uh or anna talk about the starting salary but what i can tell you that we are in the middle of negotiations right now in terms of what those starting salaries are going to look like so as soon as we could have our agreement that's when that will change but please between anna and i mean sorry the cfo miss anna pen and then the deputy executive director and maybe the police chiefs go ahead please uh yes chief works um on st thomas we are expecting um four new vehicles for saint thomas st john um within the next um 90 days and um i also budgeted for a few more the only thing we need over here is that will be the two canine um additional vehicles have uh once we hire the k9 internet the starting salary annie so i mean anna sorry i'm sorry miss pen the cfo um this is annie's hard again the starting salary is only 30 000 but we are trying to work with the unions to basically um come to the same starting salary as um the government of virgin islands because that's one of the areas that we're um losing officers one of the reasons so we're trying to make sure that our starting salary is comparable to that of uptown thank you mr chair thank you mr chair thank you uh senator de graff uh executive director you you

2:07:58 in your testimony you made mention of uh the port managing uh two airports and 14 public seaports in the territory you have your marine manager there correct mr berry it is correct can he identify uh these marine facilities please good afternoon i could identify the ones in st thomas st john as those are the ones that i am directly responsible for um starting on the on the west end here we have the crown bay cruise terminal and we move over we have the cargo facility that's currently tropical then we have sand fill um the waterfront is is uh also under our jurisdiction the blighton marine terminal do do me a favor mr barry slow down for me because i'm writing as you uh say what the facilities are so you're in the district of st thomas you're speaking specifically to those for now crown be go ahead crown bay the cruise terminal um the crown bay cargo terminal the crowley and tropical docks as you move forward towards french town you have um the sandfield terminal and then over past french town we have the blind and marine terminal which is our bvi traffic as you know um then the waterfront all the way down to the legislature in the east end we have the uh the victim marine terminal the ferry terminal and the uh barge

2:09:49 terminal in st john we have the um the ferry terminal as well and the creek which is also our jurisdiction which is the new customs facility and the the doctor that was being operated as the customs facility um and then we have the uh the pond which is the barge terminal for st john those are the the marine that i am under i am in charge of as the marine manager for st croix i have to refer that to the marine manager in st croix who i don't believe is with us executive director who is the marine manager on St. Croix that's Mr.

2:10:35 Constantine he's not on okay can I ask for you to submit to us a listing of the the 14 seaport terminals or seaports that the that you referred to in the in your testimony please. Senator Gittins, this is Anis Hodge. If you go on our website www.viport.com, all of them are listed there. Thanks. However, I'm requesting that through the the director still. Thank you so much. No problem. We'll get it to you today.

2:11:19 And I ask that too because specifically into St. Thomas, and this is my fault that I don't have the diagram as I change my bags and seem like I left the document in another bag. But in the St. Thomas district for sure, where the seaplane comes

into land, There's a safety concern there because just like the airport, there's supposed to be a landing strip there designated.

- 2:11:55 And oftentimes the seaplanes come in there and they have to change the angle of the manner in which they land because of how these boats are in the harbor. Who is monitoring these sailboats in the harbor? And this happened up to late last week. And when we landed, I had to ask the captain, why did we land in that direction or in that angle that he landed? And I knew what the answer was going to be because when I looked out, I saw one or two of those catamarans right in what would have been the runway, and I took a picture of it from the air.
- 2:12:45 But who specifically would be responsible for the enforcement of that seaport area? I'll speak to that, Director, if that's okay. So go ahead, Matthew. The harbor is a general anchorage, as on the navigational chart. So all those vessels are actually in compliance, anchoring pretty much where the chart stipulates. A seaplane, per the United States Coast Guard rules of the road, has to stay out of the way of any vessel on the water.
- 2:13:19 So it's up to the seaplane of where they're going to land. We would have to then go to the Coast Guard and distinguish, or DPNR would have to go to the Coast Guard distinguish in the chart where is going to be the seaplane landing area but the rules stipulate that the seaplane has to stay out of the way of any uh vessel on water so it really is is a it's a very gray area for the seaplane you know that that's i i really that's why i wanted that document because that was a faa document that i actually printed that there is an established uh area there that the seaplanes are uh have the right to to land there and i i just i really don't believe uh and i'll further check this again with uh dpnr and we could also follow up with with you port authority being in the conversation but those boats in the harbors especially since COVID-19 have been all over the place and we need to ensure that the safety and security of all our passengers are of highest priority. So we'll have a further discussion on this matter. I see our senator at large, Senator Stephen Payne you're recognized for your seven minutes good morning good morning thank you for the time mr. chair good morning executive director and your team good morning to the listening and viewing audience our executive director though very few minutes before I get you I need to kind of guess I'm doing off me The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. There have been a lot of conversations recently about a resolution that was authored by yours truly.
- 2:15:32 I am not ashamed or afraid to say it. Yes, it's true. I, Senator Steven Payne, the at-large senator, decided to take a stand on behalf of the countless Virgin Islanders who now live in fair in their homes and communities, where gunshots ring out like it's carnival fireworks. Text message that came in to my phone on Sunday saying, My Senator Payne, my God, it's Mother's Day, and I'm here with my children, huddled on the floor of my home, hiding from a rapid gunfire here on St. Croix. Yes, it's true.
- 2:16:17 I single-handedly decided to take a stand and draft a resolution for Ray Thomas. Ferdinand Marshall, Jassy Shiveron, Carlos Ingalls, Andrew Montero Bacilli, and 66-year-old Edsy Ruiz, who was shot to death in her home in St. Croix. The mothers, sisters, brothers, cousins, grandmothers, grandfathers of the 110 Virgin Islanders who were brutally and violently murdered in the Virgin Islands since 2019 when Police Commissioner Trevillano took the helm of the VIPD. Yes, it's true. I said at his confirmation hearing that Trevor Villanuele was not the right fit for the position of police commissioner. Yes, it is true that I am even more confident today than I was back then that he is definitely not the person for the job.
- 2:17:24 Yes, it is true that I asked Commissioner Villanuele at his confirmation hearing in August of 2019 if he had a plan to address the violent gun crimes that have been plaguing our communities for years and he confidently and vehemently stated no I do not yes it's also true that even in his editorial in the daily news dated Thursday May 6 2021 23 months into his rule as commissioner he stated I still do not have a plan to address the brutal gun crimes that are plaguing our communities.
- 2:18:05 It's still being worked on. Can you imagine all the fuss and discussions and conversations around five pieces of paper? Not one discussion or comment about 16-year-old Kimani Perdomo, who was brutally murdered on Sunday on St. Croix, or the nine-year-old child who was injured in a crossfire. And it's true, yes, that the Department of Energy, Public Works, ODR, the Hospitals, Department of Education, Sports, Parks and Recreation, WAPA, Licensing, Fire Department, none of these agencies are charged with the responsibility of eradicating our communities of gun violence. The only agency charged with the responsibility of public safety and protecting the people of the Virgin Islands is the police department, which at this time is headed by Trevor Villanue. And finally, yes, it's true that I stand alone, I stand alone in my belief.
- 2:19:12 No one else feels this way. That Trevor Villanueva's contract with the government should not be renewed. Commissioner Villanueva's mantra is that if you see something, then say something. well i am seeing that through his inactions and lack of a plan that he's not the right person for the job so i'm saying something yes it's true that a while back we were suddenly

thrust into a planet-wide pandemic the lights of which none of us have ever experienced people were getting sick people were spreading the virus and yes people were dying can you imagine where we would have been today if the commission of health did not immediately work with her team and the cdc to come up with a comprehensive plan to combat this virus yes it's true there were hurdles that stood in her way yes it's true that people were upset at her plan and took it to social media and talk radios and call her odd types of derogatory names yes it's true that some people lost their businesses their livelihood yes it's true that some people lost their lives during the implementation of her plan however can you imagine where we would have been today if she had not drafted implemented and executed her plan for the betterment of the entire territory she drafted a plan a plan that all stakeholders could follow and be on the same page one person can make a difference if they have a plan look at what card on dow is doing with the port authority look at the multitude of projects being executed under his leadership does he piss off some people along the way of course this is what you're talking about does every person like his leadership style of course not but because he has a plan and a vision for the port authority things are moving in the right

2:21:22 direction everyone has heard this before if you fail to plan then plan to fail excuse me Mr. Chair, constantly remind us that proper planning prevents poor performance, and as I stated in my opening remarks, the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in a moment of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. I chose a position, I took a stand on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, and I'm sticking with my position.

2:22:03 Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dow, Executive Director Dow, I think you're doing an outstanding job at the port. Keep up the good work. Thank you, Senator At-Large. Back to the topic at hand. And Mr. Executive Director Dow, there was a multi-million dollar project approved by the National Defence Authorization Act of 2021, a project on St. Croix. You're familiar with what I'm talking about? Not very often. It's one that is a 30-acre lease at the Henry Rolson Airport to build a \$39 million Army Aviation Support Facility. You familiar with what I'm talking about now? Yes. Can you tell us the status of that project, please? That's someone we're working with with the National Guard. currently we have solicited and we've got contracted somebody to do this so via there we had to survey the property so that they could have the exact boundaries that they wanted to put in this release so that's happening now as we speak I think I remember something correctly we should be getting a survey back by Friday if we didn't get it back already okay I'm hopeful that we could get this project moving because my understanding is that this could be like a five-year military

2:24:01 construction project. You know that going to translate to jobs, and it will also enable the Virgin Islands, particularly St. Croix, to be a strategic force project or force projection platform in the defense of the United States and this project will not only provide military operation support but will also bring new monies to the territory and our coffers where and these soldiers will be spending their dollars here and once they come here and they experience our food our culture the beaches, et cetera, they may, once they return back and not on active duty or whatever, they will return on vacation with their families. So I'm hopeful that this, I'm told that it's in the tune of some \$39 million.

2:25:02 We can't afford for this type of money to go back. So I'm asking that we address this expeditiously, and I'll ask that you submit, through the Chair to this committee, the status overall and a timeline as to when the project will begin. Well, let me just say for the record, Senator, that's not a project being executed in terms of the work our only nickel and a dime is the lease of the property right when the project is going to begin i i can't say okay but we'll provide you a timeline you're absolutely correct so i'm talking about to let us know this committee how soon that lease will be completed. The Port Authority Police Chiefs, good afternoon.

2:26:17 Good afternoon, Senator. Good afternoon. Happy Police Week to both of you and your team. I want to ask specifically about the wearing of uniform. We're talking about safety and security at our ports, whether airport or seaports. your officers have full uniforms? Yes Senator, they do. And are they required to wear uniforms?

2:26:56 Yes sir. And I'm asking this because I've repeatedly had to ask about the appearance of some of the officers and particularly in the St. Croix district where one can hardly identify a port officer because we're wearing jackets that doesn't say police it doesn't have on the patch or anything and maybe you might see a firearm exposed on the side but you can't identify these officers easily how are we or what's your plan to address this and ensure that anyone coming into this territory is able to identify a police officer on the airport. Senator, Chief Wilkes, you kind of lost you there for a minute, you went in.

2:27:54 That's why I stated your last because I stated I specifically, I'm specifically seeing this in the sink hold on chief hold on chief it's your mic yeah you okay it might be the technique technical stuff but uh how about st croix st croix can you hear me the st croix chief because i'm speaking speaking okay because i'm speaking specifically yeah i could respond um in a reference to the the wearing of the jacket we rectify that because i know you mentioned it in the past and um we the uniforms we modified um where we put the police logo on them now so we just recently issued some new um uniform shirts with with police on the back and on the side um so you could clearly identify um the officers and the jackets them

that we are that we issued do have um the patches and they clearly mark police on it also thank you and and this is for not only the safety of the public and the public is able to identify a police officer but it's also for their own safety as well and for the agency's liability as I see this bad practice quite too often. Thank you for that. Port Director, you spoke about Frontier providing service between Orlando and St. Thomas twice a week. What, if anything, can you tell us a bit more in detail with regards to the plans to increasing air traffic to St. Croix?

2:29:54 Senator, what I can say is that once we have the interaction with the airlines, one of the first up is trying to get more traffic into St. Croix. That's why even the incentive, one incentive for folks to fly into St. Croix for the year for basically free and 50 that same incentive incentive wasn't even offered at the time to st thomas because we saw the need to try to get more traffic to st croix but at the end of the day that's the plan demand issue it's where the traffic where we can do our part by trying to sell and educate and that's what i suspect you know tourism um you know try to do but um the hotels issue it's somewhat it's not just a one once you fit out it's the issues of hotel room stay i know the airbnb seems to be a big thing popping up and even our own and our on the airport side we've got to that's why we're doing the expansion room because why we say we want more traffic if three jets right now or four jets at the same time in st croix the passengers have nowhere to even sit and so our expansion room we we actually provide that to the airlines so they could see the upgrades that we're making uh we've been selling the 10 000 square um the 10 000 feet runway that saint croix have and so forth but at the end of the day it's it's selling these kind of packages and us educating the outer world as to um why um more you know more traffic should be heading into st croix but outside of that it's normally tourism who is doing all those promotional ads and so forth so i understand and i concur uh with your response however one of the things that i i always

2:31:46 say is that i i hope that we're not just looking at visitors uh to the territory where we keep saying we don't have hotel rooms. Oftentimes it is locals or people who are from here, people who are coming to visit family and friends here, still can't get to St. Croix. So it's not that it's everyone that's coming to the territory is trying to get into a hotel. So hopefully, and of course that's more discussion with with tourism which we did ask them the question but I know I wanted to ask that specifically of the board especially since oftentimes we always hear that there was some controversy with landing fees so I saw your and listen to your testimony regarding the airline incentives and I'll ask you to submit a copy of the airline incentives as well that was just voted upon by the board if you could submit that to the committee and also also you spoke to the the cares act funding you answered one of my questions as I as I wrote it down, but you did answer it as you went along, and you spoke about the FAA awarding the \$38 million CARES Act funding. You also stated that the grant cannot be used for any purpose not approved by the FAA, which is understood. However, what I'll also ask for is a copy of that uh grant so that we can take a look to see uh what is approved and what's not approved especially as we're going into the budget season at this time no problem uh the committee will take a 10 minute uh recess and and resume uh i'm asked to to just

2:34:06 take a 10 minute recess and we shouldn't be here uh much longer as we go into the second round and then we'll conclude there so director and your team will break for 10 minutes We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Oh, my God. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. I'll be right back. Thank you. Oh Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

2:54:13 The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture for Monday, May 10th, is back on record. We'll do a five-minute second round and wrap up. But before I move to the next senator, Executive Director Dow, I wanted to ask about some recent footage that we've seen, and it's not the first time we've seen it either, with the long, I mean, the exceedingly long lines to go through customs, especially on St. Thomas. I know on St. Croix, I've seen it a couple of times.

2:55:04 However, what happened there was customs was not open yet. But what is the reason for those long, long lines that we've seen at the St. Thomas Airport? You're hearing me, Senator? Good afternoon. I am hearing you now. Okay, fine.

2:55:40 um what i think the question was the long lines yes we we we've been seeing some footage of some real long lines i've seen it on st croix but of of course it's it's not as long as what we've seen on st thomas where it actually wrapped around the airport uh the whole outside there but what what is the the reason for that and how is that being addressed well it won't be addressed until um the facilities could be upgraded as long as we have the amount of um traffic that we're seeing only because um the the airlines we try to we just had recent conversation with them and trying to move like 45 minutes in terms of the scheduling but most of the airline um want to do this return and if they have to go like out to the midwest or what have you there's a certain window in which they want to come and be able to turn around and go back stage side

and so um as much as we have tried it in terms of asking them to move all of them want the same window and that's why part of the incentive in particular in st thomas you see where we tell them if you come after five o'clock you could have a discounted rate even with that they still don't want to to come after after five except for the one or two that sleeps over overnight so i don't see us until we could um improve the uh the infrastructure at the airport being able to use the second flowing sin thomas and break up that break up uh that that traffic sum we're not going to be able to because we're still operating in a footprint that was designed for 300 000 people and over we have seen as as much as close to 900 000 people move to the same facility so that's a challenge in of itself But I still must tell you that it's not a challenge that is bad, because the volume is good for the territory right now.

2:57:32 So this has nothing to do with the time that customs open up? Because, I mean, that was what was said, that people were actually waiting for customs to open. Correct. That's only the first flight leaving out in the morning. But there again, and even referencing that, we have to tell people all the time the virginia port authority neither does the virgin island government control the hours of what cbp work we can only sometimes request and i tell you the the honest truth is that even the folks that's working and wrong here for cbp these decisions oftentimes are made between sometimes puerto rico washington no we understand that so so So the question would be, are we talking with anyone within the federal government to see if we can address this, even if we have to utilize the context of our Congresswoman?

2:58:33 We have done that over and over and repeatedly trying to get those things. But they'll tell you, they'll talk to you about their manding and their, you know. we have we have done it before okay so something that we will need to address again and I'll see what angle that I could assist in this area as well and you stated that this is just on the morning flights correct no no no what I'm saying is when what time the actual opens up for operation that's the morning flight that's a challenge so let me let me let me let me let me let me try to be a little clearer sorry what what time does uh cbp operations open in both districts to your knowledge if you know um chief wilson uh and chief flint could help me 7 a.m depending on the flight departure I'm sorry let me let's go back to St. Croix you said depending on the flight departure time dude I mean I'm trying to figure out if they have a standard time to open period I think I'm seasonal and like what a director mentioned They have the unions that are getting involved, and so sometimes when we meet with them, depending on the departure of the jet, they don't make a chance.

3:00:13 I'll make an inquiry on my own. I think we're trying to guess the answers, and I really don't want a guess answer. Well, I think right up is like 6 in St. Thomas, I believe 7 o'clock in the morning, but it all will vary, especially in St. Croix. Because it's not every day Sinkoi have an early flight, so they make the adjustment based on that. Okay, so I'll make an inquiry from here. Thank you for your responses. Senator Javan E. James Sr., you recognize for your five minutes?

3:00:49 One, two, yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, once again for the time. To Director Dow. I recently traveled to the U.S. mainland in the month of March of this year and I saw something that we definitely need to practice in the U.S. Virgin Islands and as we speak about gun control and police presence I realized when I was in the line for Spirit Airlines an individual declared a firearm at the front gate, or at the front desk. And once the individual working behind the desk declared a firearm, they had someone escort them from the desk to a specific spot by TSA, and from there, TSA took it over and put it on the plane, whereas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, you declare your firearm, And you can still be able to walk up and down the airport with it, all with the customs. You could get in an argument sometime in between from going there to get checking into your flight. And then when you finally reach the customs, once you declare it, then they take it. Is there any way that we can fix that, address that, have some conversations with the airlines and change the policies and the way how they conduct the declaration of firearms in the territory?

3:02:17 well again i'd have to look into that i'm not aware of that process that you just described i know normally when a person go to the counter and declare to have a firearm i think at that point is when they secure it and take it from them but i don't know i'd have to look into that senator that is incorrect i don't want to say too much on the senate floor but when i get a chance i will let you know some personal experiences and things that i've seen and witnessed for myself i don't want to get the loopholes out there we have to tighten it up but I just want to make sure that we change the way how we do things when it comes to the declaration of firearms in the territory and I know VIPD has a checkpoint at the airport on St. Thomas I'm not sure St. Croix because I never really saw a checkpoint there what is there some kind of collaboration between VIPD and the Port Authority law enforcement officers when VIPD is not present present here Chief Lynn St. Croix. VIPD office is by baggage claim on the east side for the declaration.

3:03:24 We, like I said, we recently assist them in installing some signs. We still have some more to put up. And yes, we communicate. Once VIPD is not there, we continue to assist them. And we will be the one receiving the firearms and doing the procedure. Would you say that Sierra Leaking Airport is a 24-hour airport? Well, yeah, it is a 24-hour airport.

- 3:03:59 The reason why I'm saying that, I don't want to put too much information out there, but I just want to make sure that our checkpoint is manned in the absence of VIPD. I know you guys go to the same police academy, so in the absence of VIP not being there, when we have communications between the airlines and individuals who declare firearms and coming into the territory that someone can be present there and be able to hold those individuals accountable and make sure that they follow the law, which is the Virgin Islands Code. I've recently had a conversation with Commissioner Villanueva, and these things that I'm telling you is not he say or she say. These are things that I've witnessed with my own two eyes. And I also want to make sure that we control the influx of guns, whether they are legal or illegal, when they come into our ports.
- 3:04:45 Because it seems like there is some miscommunication between the U.S. mail and once individuals declare the firearm and individuals come in here. I know that we are counting on citizens to do the right thing and call VIPD before they get into the territory. But let's be honest, if individuals can circumvent the process, they will. So we need to have a better conversation with the airlines that once individuals declare a firearm and coming into the territory, just like how we have the VI portal, the USVI portal. Because when I was in Orlando, Florida recently in March, I could not have gone on a plane if I wasn't declared or had the green light from the USVI portal.
- 3:05:22 So I'm saying the same thing with the declaration of firearms. that communication needs to be had and making sure that when individuals touch down here with their guns we hold them accountable and that vipd checkpoint is not empty because if individuals once again can circumvent the process they will and we know recently and in the in the many years we had we saw individuals who were able to traffic illegal things to the airport so individuals could get more than they will so let's just tighten up on that and i'm not blaming anyone i'm just saying let's just have better communications with the airlines and vipd and making sure that our ports are safe time um mr chair i would just like to say this one last thing if i if i may you may um you're not tooting your hand enough mr though um you have the career portal that was recently launched on may 3rd 2021 that is a big deal it speaks to improving the process when it comes to individuals who want to get hired at the port authority so i just want to remind you to toot your hand i know you're not running for uh what you call an elected position you're appointed but individuals need to know what you're doing because you're doing a very great job mr dow and i will just end by saying i hope at some point you can have a conversation with u.s congress since we are a territory and we're small that we can be able to adjust our passenger facilities charges that is tied into our other airports on the US mainland the ratio when it comes to the population is in the millions whereas we're only a hundred thousand people and we don't generate as much when it comes to those airports on the US mainland so hopefully you can get an exemption and we can lobby as a government to change the passenger facility charges thank you mr.
- 3:07:10 chair for the time thank you thank you senator okay I thought you wanted to respond okay thank you Senator James before we move to the Senate president executive director though you are you always stated that we have to do what we have to do to make sure that we are in position to do certain things and expand on our tourism product now with regards to the we had an opportunity some years ago to have that Marriott I believe here and it went to another Caribbean island but for the future and especially the one that you spoke about about with the possibilities of having the hotel built there near the airport. Where are we exactly on that? And are we doing everything humanly possible to make that come to reality?
- 3:08:25 What I can tell you is our legal folks and the other individuals are talking. that's where i know we are in terms of actually executing on a lease but i don't know anything that the port can do or should be doing and folks we have an open process if folks think that there's something we could be doing in the meantime um and i could just tell you the difference is for example in that same situation in saint croix the fee that appears on a monthly basis is very small compared to what one would have paid in St Thomas so right there and all the board of directors took into consideration um how we could try to lessen the impact so folks wouldn't sit at the fees running them or anything like that I don't know what else um what else the port can do but if there's any issues they they need to come forward and tell us what those issues might be i don't know approximately uh how much acres uh does the port have for for large projects uh such as such as that one or any other we have we have about 400 acres in that specific vicinity right across the road from the airport then we have another i think across the um over by yellow cedar area we do have about another 30 some odd acres and so we are probably in the airport proper probably 70 some odd acres across the street over 400 plus acres and the 400 plus acres you're talking about on the water side yeah um yes that is okay okay thank you uh madam president you you recognize for your five minutes.
- 3:10:15 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know that you've been challenged with the Marine side of the Port Authority for the past year and a half, literally. Are you up to date on your bond commitments and payments? Yes. yes great good news that's called good management um mr chair i'm echoing um i'm not sure why i'm not sure why because they have the two mics on in both districts one needs to be turned off all right um let's talk about the expansion of the conquering property or the use of

the expansion of the conquering property for the expansion, rather, of the transshipment business. Mr. Dow, could you please share with us what the vision is on that?

- 3:11:17 I know that I have the legislation to allow the Virgin Islands Port Authority to either transfer or lease that property from the government for the purposes of expansion of the transshipment business here in the saint thomas saint john district but i would like for you to share with the um committee and uh the listener viewing audience what's the vision around that thanks um senator the movement of the legislation but what we have now we're bursting at the seams we have no place really to put containers and a big part of the territories business is that of um trans shipping commodities to the eastern caribbean when the cruise ships start up again we we see the problem square in our face only because a bulk of the containers that comes into the territory is then lay aside and then sent to other islands in the caribbean for the cruise ship um you know um for the cruise ship industry but more than that uh your bvi traffic and everything else is we kind of stymied and how quickly commodities goods and services could be moved from supermarkets to this to the store shelves all of that impact and the inability for us to have good laid-on areas and so forth so that's desperately needed uh containers are stuck sometime four five height which is not the safest way but because they don't have any other means that's what and everything we consume in this territory look at what you're eating what you're wearing comes into our ports and therefore the need for expansion is great not just the transshipment but even the commodities that are used in this territory and we could look at how it impacts the cost of the commodity because when you have to how when you can store the item properly or you have a short window of storage put on and then get to the shelf all of that impacts the cost that residents would pay in in the in the territory so um it's very very necessary that we expand to that concrete property and in as much as it's clear fema indicated that that cannot no longer be used for a school and are they are they uh is there an appetite for other uh businesses other um port type businesses shipping businesses to also come here to provide similar services
- 3:14:03 because there are a couple more um shipping entities we know of the big two or the big uh two or three are wrong here but there are other people who have that interest in trying to uh come on to the to the property and expanding uh you know all of that would impact uh what prices we pay for goods and commodities supply and demand and competition at the same time i'm coming here once we are able to move that legislation forward definitely definitely okay great i have one last question and this is tied to economic development uh the eda actually and the relationship between yourself i think i had a brief conversation with you about this a couple of weeks ago regarding the uh the jet the uh private jets that are coming into the territory i know that just recently we um we had the ribbon cutting of the um largest hangar in the eastern caribbean uh right here in the st thomas st john district but what is important to me is that we don't lose those individuals coming here on those jets and we are in fact engaging with them to have discussions around our EDC programs and I did have a brief conversation with the tourism Commissioner yourself all separately but I want to know as well as the EDE committee director CEO I want to know if there is any discussion in earnest around how do we provide information once those private jets, the individuals and those private jets land here, information to them as it relates to our EDC program and how we can have meetings with them so they can explore, they can possibly establish home offices here, et cetera. Is there any discussion in earnest to make sure that that is going to occur at the jet centers here in the territory in saint thomas st john in particular and in the territory eventually when
- 3:16:06 the other one is built out i i glad that you are that senator you um you uh encourage a provoking thought in terms of that whole concept and uh as we discussed a couple weeks ago it is something that between eda and tourism whether we we set up the kind of communication and packages that these folks come in because what this territory see and i could tell you that most recently some of the wealthiest folks in the world not in the u.s but in the world has continued to traverse through these areas and we must take advantage of it i think it's a good thing that you started in terms of the dialogue and the port will be more than glad to participate with um those those folks one of the challenges now that's happening is um and i hate it is that uh these jets are landing the price on the private side they're coming in and because even in sin damas now we don't have the requisite um accommodation in terms of hotel rooms that they're dropping our folks now and going back down to puerto rico and waiting until the the guests are ready to come back up so that's revenue that generally the territory is using so it's a holistic thing that we really need to look at as a territory but more direct what you the discussion you have started with ourselves and tourism and hopefully eda that's an area that we definitely need to um need to really press harder on in terms of the kind of folks that comes into this territory from a business standpoint well thank you for your responses and i think it's so important that we ensure that they not only come to visit but this they find interest in setting up uh back offices back office businesses etc here in the virgin island so mr chair thank you for the time and thank you to mr dow and his team for
- 3:18:06 your responses thank you uh madam president senator potter you recognize for your five minutes thank you very much mr chair um i know that eddie dow the marine side of the port authority has really historically been the cash cow for the organization and you have undoubtedly taken a very heavy heavy hit as a result of covert 19 and the loss of the cruise

ship traffic in the territory and you did unload to that in your presentation i i know that the cdc guidelines they apparently have been um i guess easing some of the restrictions somewhat and you mentioned that the projection seems to be, or the general consensus seems to be July 2020, but there was still a level of uncertainty as that date, you know, seems to be a moving target in your, but I know you have been, you and your team have been in conversation with the cruise lines, and I wanted to know how, just give us some insights as to how those conversations have been going and you know just your best guesstimate as to when you expect to see cruise ship traffic here in the territory again and what are some of the some of the restrictions and changes that we might envision when uh the cruise cruise traffic resumes in the territory again um my best estimate would be probably sometime in july maybe some test cruises um yes the staff and i have been in communications with them and i can tell you that in a meeting i was with the governor and the cruise ship executive i think he made it clear and at least i could tell you about royal caribbean because that's the folks that contract with the port and that's the folks that took the most people to st croix and they are telling us upon their return they expect to we expect to see more traffic in st croix from royal caribbean so that that's a good thing uh there's been discussion about this bubble concept we don't know how that's going to play out in the

3 : 20 : 29 other jurisdiction that's happening mean just meaning that there would be an initial uh rollout that can only uh there's certain locations that they'll be confined to visit or to go but i don't know what would happen i you know the governor made it clear he's not interested in a budget concept but i don't know we're thinking that hopefully by july we could see some movement but a part of the traffic that we also miss on the marine side is that of the bvi hopefully in may i know they start with some limited movement because of the seven to eight hundred thousand people that land in king airport at least 250 to 300 000 go on to the british virgin island which is very helpful to us because every time they move through our airports that's revenue that the port gets as well so it's not uh the cruise ship is a big big piece but it's also a good chunk that comes from the bvi traffic as well very much ed dow regarding um frontier airlines and i know they've been it's been timely having them um you know commit to uh landing here in the territory on a regular basis what's the terms of that agreement i mean as far as timelines are they committed to be here a year a year and a half two years no um they have a list right now i believe um i i don't think i think it's about for a year but remember what's going to determine that they didn't give us any indication that they wouldn't be here regardless of how they do it but remember what's going to drive that because they started with a direct flight from orlando to st thomas shortly thereafter they made announcement that they're going to do miami st thomas the matter of fact more recently they said that

3 : 22 : 19 they want to start a flight now from puerto rico to st thomas so the reason i'm saying is because the volume the passengers is what's going to motivate them and drive them as to what they're going to do one second any it's like any once they know that they can make money on a row that road will continue um for some time even if it became uh become sorry seasonal for some reason but we believe they'll be around the demand will definitely dictate their presence here the continued presence here i understand my final question executive director dow is as the executive director of a significant operation here in the territory a major economic driver for this territory what keeps you up at night uh besides the trip i glad you asked a question i'll say from coven things change what kept me up and my management team is making sure and i want to be deliberate about what i'm saying here making sure that the 365 employees that the port authority have that each of them maintain a job and got a paycheck to take care of family and that's what kept us up for the last year while some people and even sometimes you're discussing with unions some people don't recognize that i have to be frank it it has not been easy but we've made a decision along with our governing body while other people you know follows downsize and so forth we had to think and those people who had a mortgage to pay have children in college and these kind of things for over the last year i've had to say sometimes even to employees

3 : 24 : 12 the easiest thing would have been for us to decide how many people probably need to be cut but we couldn't do that we didn't do that and i think that we are seeing some light at the end of the tunnel um you know making a lot of sacrifices away along the way making decisions sometimes that some folks didn't like and um i want to wrap up by telling you that and we do appreciate those unions who recognize what we're doing and we held back on uniform allowances we held back and some of the things that union had already agreed to receive and um i'm glad that we're in a place now that we're able to go back now and tell them hey hey we appreciate what you have done in terms of um you know working with us through this difficult period so now we can go forward give you a uniform allowance or whatever um you know whatever we had but that's what kept me up for a long long time the other stuff okay thank you very much uh executive director down you're frozen you're frozen in time but i agree with you at a 45 drop in revenues and to be able to maintain 100 employment i think it speaks volume to commitment and and to management so mr chair thank you very much thank you very much uh executive executive director dow and your team for all that you do thank you uh senator potter uh senator the graph you recognize for your five minutes uh thank you thank you for the time mr chair uh that last question on my colleague that's a segue into what i always say personal first and director to hear that uh you you didn't lay off anyone and you you're talking to the unions and you're able to work things out

- 3:26:12 that's what i want to hear because to me that's what makes a difference uh director uh uh let me see you mentioned 5.7 million dollars for utilities how much of the infrastructure build out that you're doing the capital projects have you taken alternative energy into consideration um yeah um one of the projects that we got back in line that we're receiving some grants from now i mean some benefit from is the solar project at the king airport uh we are in discussion with wapa we would hope that that could happen real soon that we could do a major um solar farm right outside of the hero airport there is another discussion we and these are real that we've been having with wapa we have the parking lot up in sinjan right close to the substation so we we hope that we could the port would benefit as well from those large operations that we discussing but our buildings um themselves any new any new construction coming we expect to try to incorporate some level of uh solar energy with it okay that's great news to hear now also for your your ports um uh base monsanto port and abramson and molasses doc are you providing any uh shore power where the the vessels could come in and come out for their engines and then plug into show power again a revenue generator for port authority any word on that um no nothing nothing that i know i know that uh matthew and the folks and we've been talking with public work that when when the second phase of this waterfront project comes in what we're doing now is brand new fendering going in there the administration is a pledge another set of money for that for the fendering but we need to do in any expansion that we have the water and shore power available there that's that's a big thing a big thing that where we could generate some revenues um from okay great uh uh now for for vessels that dock along the waterfront um icd million dollar yachts and stuff where do they dispose of their waste uh how is that being done with the boats i guess in the harbor or the boats that tie up to the dock
- 3:28:31 watch you go quickly um all the vessels have holding tanks and they would pump out like right as regulated by the uh the law or if if there is a situation they could pump to a truck we don't have any operating vessels in the in st thomas that could pump out right now uh yacht haven grand has a pump out station but i believe it's down so it they'll go offshore 12 miles and pump out oh okay so does does that apply to the vessels docked in the harbor or did they come under dpnr um all vessels that that have a have a holding tank um they have to go offshore and pump out if there's no other available means to pump out their their holding tanks and that applies for all vessels in harbor any yachts anything in that nature okay all right thank you for that um do any of your your docks provide uh fresh water um and and trash facilities where they can dispose of they can fill up fresh water or dispose of their trash when they pull up yeah yes our cruise ship has a um a water uh facility where we meter it and we sell water to the tug boats that are local here and then any vessels that need water and then any any vessels that require trash they'll they'll have to um contact a local trash vendor as that's regulated waste so it's not just normal household trash they have to follow certain rules um and the trash has to be um kind of segregated away from from any local um you know uh facilities it's uh vessel trash is different from any kind of um onshore trash so it has to be handled in that way but that that's a very common uh request from
- 3:30:21 any vessels okay that's great news now director uh i've heard you spoken about several grants are you default in any grants presently or do you ask for any extensions for any of the grants um i remember the the project that we did at the molasses pair we did actually extension which was granted uh we might ask for extension but we have not to my knowledge since i've been a defaulted on any grant or have we been found to mismanage any grant and that's one of the reasons we continue to get quite a bit of federal funding and that's just testimony to the people that that manages these things starting with the deputy assistant director annie serge and um miss anna pen the cfo her staff that works in accounting and that's always easy it's not always smooth sailing but we we manage to to um be be responsible towards of all these grants we have i i i love to hear about great personnel man and final question if i may mr chair you may yes and in regards to the so base properties uh there were um donkey air mechanic shops and body shops in the so base area uh i was told they were being evicted from the area what is the plan for that so base area there where those um businesses are being uh moved well we did a entire master plan of the area the fact is those places are not even habitable to be honest with you it poses a hazard we have insurance issues and the likes and um that please if you go down there um we hadn't been kept best but all
- 3:32:09 in all we have our entire development project that we um the board that authorized us to do a study on and i think we're moving forward a plan part of that is um under discussion that we speak we've been communicating with the folks and um we hope we're hoping that we could have a soft landing uh with mechanics i don't know but we'll see how that plays out but then we did tell them that they have to they have to uh vacate okay thank you director again to you and your team continue doing what you're doing uh and a standing full support of port authority thank you sir thank you mr chair Thank you, Senator DeGraff. Senator Payne, you're recognized for your five minutes.
- 3:33:02 Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the time and good afternoon to Director Dow and your team. Director Dow, you made a reference in your testimony to a home-running electrical system. I'm pretty familiar with most electrical systems, but can you explain what is a home run electrical system? Okay. Well, all that means is, like, if you're, let's say, wiring a house instead of the wire going to two or three or four different avenues to connect and interconnect and interconnect, that it

goes directly from the source of the power straight to where you want to get it. And they call that, in their terms, a home run.

3:33:42 It just means that the power that you're supplying is not going to three or four different places before it gets to where it needs to be. That's my lay description of our home run. Okay, 10-4 on that. Are you in the process of building a secure office where individuals traveling with firearms into the territory can be processed on St. Thomas and on St. Croix? Well, what the law had required the Port Authority to do, the attorney general is one of our board members is that we the losses that the port shall provide a space for these folks we have done that okay could you have one of your chiefs explain the process when someone um boards a plane from the mainland traveling to the virginals what's the process for declaring a firearm and having a process uh the chief Lynn um synchro district the process um that i know is you declare it they they put the note in the bag um so when tsa see it they will show that it was properly declared uh i guess when they arrive here if they don't contact us or bring it to our attention we won't know the airline won't share that information with us okay but what happened in the instance if they make contact with you guys what happens in that instance they'll actually make contact with the port authority okay so if they make advanced um um communication they they probably communicate with vipd uh then vipd if they're not here to receive the weapon then we'll be the one receiving it when we receive the weapon we give them a report number if we receive it and give them the information that they'll be continuing the case with vipd in reference to carrying it or how it will be stored and so forth okay and you said that this has to be done prior

3:35:44 if they don't communicate with vipd prior to arriving we have the signs that helps and um or they approach us because we we're the one that receive them by the gates and they can bring it to our attention and we do we deal with it if they don't um if we don't know in advance when they come to us directly we go ahead with the procedure we go ahead and contact vipd let them know we received the weapon and gap a case number for them and give it to the passenger okay um thank you very much your response uh executive director though uh has it been in the talks relative to purchasing a possible jet breeze uh for st thomas and st croata can we utilize in the helping with the planing at the airports yes um that's part of the third phase of our airport expansion project i spoke earlier that that we're talking about millions of dollars we are now um talking to everybody who would listen i talk about we have some consultants in dc that's working on it it's an expensive proposition yes there are talks as we speak today 90 seconds both yes um last okay thank you very much um that's very good to hear i recently reached out to your chief of staff miss judy solar uh to ascertain the possibility of a billion of fishermen's market for the fishermen and saint john and i want to publicly thank you for your speedy response that shows your solid commitment to the local fishermen the bill has been drafted and should be sent to your office before the week is over and on behalf of the fishermen and saint john i want to say a hearty lobster and kank thank you as they will have a brand new facility where they can sell their first catch of the day continue your good works for the people of the territory executive director Do on your team. Thank you for the time Mr. Chair. Thank you at large Senator.

3:37:44 Executive Director Do, we've been talking about safety and security at the ports, we've been talking about customs, we're talking about the importations of firearms, etc. Through all the renovations that's happening at both airport facilities, are we looking into possibly having our own X-ray scanning machines that even our local officers can scan bags? whether it's port officers or VAPD officers assigned to the airport that's to be honest with you senator that's more a kind of technical issue that you venture in after because it comes down to the the authorization and legal authority for these things to be scanned and what are to write one legal authority we have to scan these things the charge of x-ray and scanning equipment or what have you and the airport proper it's a federal obligation it's not the port authority proper in terms of scanning equipment we normally do joint type operation and just recently just recently it was the third circuit reversing an earlier ruling that's saying that even cbp couldn't scan certain uh when when planes come in couldn't scan certain um luggage and so forth in in the rear of the facility so it's just a reversal um within the last few months maybe about the third circuit

3:39:39 ruling so the port authority does not have to me as far as I know the legal authority to go in the back and when stuff coming off of a plane to to to screen it or sort it so can we research this and and be certain because I was about to ask you about the coexistence of the local and federal authorities you just spoke to the joint operations and I'm saying if we are responsible for the ports and the safety and security of all going through these ports then i mean i i really don't see it but i understand your concern what i'm asking is can we look further into this and see how we could assist from our local end because evidently there's much more to be done and much more that could be done to continue to safeguard our territory um certainly we could always you know look and see how we could better um provide you know security and safety issues for the public at large yeah certainly thank you the um do we still have the assistance of the uh VA National Guard at the airports conducting a COVID screening or tests?

3:41:01 The Deputy Director could speak to that, Ms. Hajj. Good afternoon, Anis Hajj. Yes, we do, Senator. Okay, thank you. And how is the lighting now in the St. Croix District? I know the night flight, because of the renovations that's taken

place, it was really dark on the outside with passengers coming in.

3 : 41 : 38 You couldn't even see the National Guard employees there. I've been told of some some frightening things there is there what's the lighting like now coming in there have we addressed that coming into St. Croix yes you know when you come out of the plane you standing in that line now to to come in to be cleared by them it's a it's dark on the outside i'll have to look into that i don't know i i have not received some complaint that um there's an issue i'll look into it today wow okay not the most and the worst case would be that we might be able to set up some mobile um lamps okay i'm hopeful that this could uh be addressed um and i'm even sorry that i took so long to ask about this because this is like months now I remember picking up some family members and they what was described to me I couldn't believe that that was happening but the basic thing was it was so it was like pitch dark on the outside and And lastly, we spoke about the Gallows Bay project.

3 : 43 : 06 Are the engineers also in talks with public works engineers with regards to the runoff with the water in that area? Because you see how it gets once there's a heavy rain and all that dirt come off the hill. of the hillside down into gallowsby what public work indicated to us that they're working on according to them and again that's that's from years of back and forth they told us that they are now working on a design a comprehensive design to do that entire roadway they talk about just like you describe the amount of water that comes out the hill and where they're going to channel it but um there's nothing to be honest with you i don't know for our engineers to do it that's a complete project of public work from outside um okay and um i i we know that there's been some chatter and we're gonna have a discussion with waiko as well but from the port standpoint especially with regards to The cruise industry, we see what's happening in Florida and the problems that they're having.

3 : 44 : 35 So some of the cruise lines are actually going to be departing out of, I believe it's the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. Where are we, if any, in any of these talks, if ships are going to be returning to the territory? well as far as i know i i um just last week i think the staff myself we we met face to face with royal caribbean representative that flew down and um we expect that they'll return and um this would be this the port here in the territory they expect to carry more traffic in koi one and that's what the conversation centered around and and and more so that this is one of the priority um uh destination um destination sorry thanks one of the priority destinations that they want to start roll out and they wanted they were discussing first just going to those ports that they could hit within three days but i think the cdc had some discussion with them and the cdc um of kind of uh tell them that they probably need to do whatever what is a week tour whatever they're going to do the rollout need to be the actual way in which they're going to operate does that expect that once the start of sale we expect that we'll be right there among the um the destinations okay and does that include any um uh stops on st croix and abramson pier it what the i could only tell you what um our direct discussions and we have the list of priority items and one of the priority items as soon as they start the sale again is increasing traffic to saint croix but just for the for the public's um edification and the senators part of

3 : 46 : 32 what the poor authority and its staff and its governing body had been able to do and um is is leverage some of what we're discussing in sin thomas right now to assist with the increased traffic to st croix can you repeat that one more time for me please what i'm saying in the discussion we've been having with the with royal carving in particular because that's what we contract with right we have been able along with the administration in discussions we've had with them even face to face is the leverage the strength of st thomas to see that more traffic goes to st croix and i'm talking about from the port side now and they have agreed that they will in fact um take some more traffic than they were taking in the past to uh st croix great so do we have a contingency plan in place uh if these uh cruise ships do uh come back to the territory and that's miss um the director the deputy director that's her sole responsibility so annis could you speak to that please sure and he's hard deputy executive director senator gettins we have been working for several months in conjunctions with the department of health department of tourism and waiko to develop a marine protocol for the territory so we have basically completed that um with the input of all those entities and as well as government house we are now on to the stage where um royal korean is asking us to meet with them to go over those marine protocols as well as cdc guidelines that have been recently imposed and updated so we're in talks to ensure that when they do return that they meet the protocols that we as of origin islands have developed as well as the cdc um guidelines and protocols that are in place

3 : 48 : 33 excellent so that's the one uh if they were to return do we have or are we putting in place a contingency plan if they were not to return um we haven't really discussed them not returning because the impetus has been placed on making sure that we do everything that we need to do in order for them to return but i would like to answer it in this way in that the cdc is requiring certain requirements or agreements that they must have with us as a port destination those requirements would be an agreement for medical provision of medical services vaccination services as well as housing so we are making every effort to work with the administration to make sure that those agreements are in place in order for them to return and They are in favour of, you know, I said, meeting with us to make sure that those items are in place.

- 3:49:33 If those are in place for the summer, they won't be including us on the simulated voyages that they're trying to put together right now to meet CDC requirements. And if we are on those simulated voyages itinerary, they will definitely be returning to the Virgin Islands because that's one of the requirements. Thank you. and and i didn't i don't mean to put you all on the spot uh with with that question if they were not to uh return but i i need to make sure that we're thinking about um that possibility as well and that uh you know we know uh what route we would want to take because there's no guarantee as we've seen with this global pandemic at this time I'll allow for I want to thank you all for your testimony and responses today we still have some discussions to do on the marine side I'll be in touch with you executive director Dow and your team and I'll allow for you to give a close out at this time thank you I'd like to thank the administration I'd like to thank the legislature and you mr. chairman for all the collaboration with the port authority and they help we couldn't do all these things alone so i really want to thank each and every one of you in that body in the legislature for the assistance that we continue to receive i also want to recognize and thank all the employees that work with the port authority work with us and um trying to make this job happen i tell them the port authority is not carlton though but it's the 365 people that makes up that um that in the institution and i want to also i glad that uh machu this is the marine manager this is a young man who went to school here locally went to the marine institute graduated and was moving cargo and vessels the biggest of the vessels all over the pacific he is now our marine manager we have a bunch we have a few youngsters that we brought in in our engineering department and we continue to applaud them and thank them for becoming members but we have to continue that building process where when dow leave miss hard leave miss penn that there is that uh that next group of people who any day can run
- 3:52:11 and step into these jobs one of the best kept secret and i'll end here is that all these projects we talk about five percent of whatever these projects are comes back or goes back to the government at the virgin hands so the port authority is a good bet to assist with capital projects because i think last year we we paid from the port authority directly on the projects over four million dollars to irb and so um i just say that as part as people understanding the impact on our capital projects and our infrastructure improvement that we have that the central government do benefit again I thank you guys for your time I thank the the members of the body and most of all I thank the governing board who give me the guidance every day to do this job thank you thank you so executive director I want to say before I ask the clerk to read our reminders I want to really and sincerely say happy police week again to all our line enforcement officers in the territory and I want to ask the public to please extend simple thank you for your service to these officers especially During these trying times, I know it's really trying for law enforcement at this time, as we've seen the recent shootings and whatnot on the mainland.
- 3:53:55 Thank God we have not experienced anything like that here. We are a small-knit community. Most of the officers we know personally went to school with may be a relative or somehow connected, and I'm saying just let's extend that thank you for your service to these law enforcement officers. And at the same time, I want to say, Chief Flynn, I know I've been complaining about the proper wearing of that uniform, but just know it's about tough love and it's about the safety and security of all involved. So I want those officers to not look at it as a complaint, but look at it from a standpoint that it's also for their own well-being. Madam Clerk, I'll ask that you let the Port Authority team be reminded of what we asked for during the hearing today.
- 3:54:53 Senator Gittins asks Director Dow to provide a listing of all airline incentives that have been approved by the Virgin Islands Police Authority Governing Board. Director Dow has been asked to provide a copy of the \$38 million CARES Act grant that VIPA was awarded through the Federal Aviation Administration, specifically the approved spending guidelines. Port Authority was asked to provide a list of the 14 public seaport properties managed by the Virgin Islands Port Authority broken down by district. And finally the committee has requested the status of the lease agreement for the 30 acres of land at the Henry Rolson Airport to be used for the purpose of building an army aviation facility that's the end of it thank you and again executive director will just send you a short email of those reminders as well okay three of them you'll get today and the other one probably before the week over so you'll get three of them today thank you thank Thank you so much.
- 3:56:11 Thank you and thank the team again for all that you do with the port and again this is our gateway to the territory and we appreciate all that you do and continue to do. This concludes the Economic Development and Agriculture hearing for Monday, May 10, 2021. Hearing adjourned. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.

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.

6x	Senator Dwayne DeGraff heard in this transcript as: DeGraff, Duane M. de Graff, Duane de Graff
6x	Senator Steven D. Payne Sr. heard in this transcript as: Payne, Stephen Payne, Steven D. Payne Sr, Steven Payne
5x	Senator Kenneth L. Gittens heard in this transcript as: Gittins, Kenneth L. Gittins
5x	Senator Marise C. James the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr heard in this transcript as: James
5x	Senator Milton E. Potter heard in this transcript as: Potter
3x	Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger the surname alone also matches: Alma Francis Heiliger heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Heiliger, Heiliger
3x	Senator Javan James heard in this transcript as: Javan E. James Sr, Javon James
3x	Senator Novelle Francis heard in this transcript as: Francis
2x	Senator Fred Gregory the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
2x	Senator Giovanni James Sr the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Marise C. James; Neville James heard in this transcript as: Giovanni James Sr.
1x	Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory heard in this transcript as: Donna Fred Gregory
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.

Bill 34-0013	Act 8447 · An Act appropriating \$2,050,000.00 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund for replacement of the existing, deteriorated tender landing pier and repairs at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Terminal in Frederiksted, St. Croix ---0
Act 8447	Act 8447 · An Act appropriating \$2,050,000.00 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund for replacement of the existing, deteriorated tender landing pier and repairs at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Terminal in Frederiksted, St. Croix ---0