



| Committee on Housing TRI-ISLAND TOWN HALL MEETING

Legislature USVI

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0:00:00 Music Thank you. ¶¶ Oh, yeah, man.

0:02:00 Thank you. I love you, I love you Oh, my God.

0:03:30 ¶¶ Thank you. Thank you. Oh, my God. Thank you.

0:06:00 I love you, I love you Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Thank you. [3 such phrases repeated 11 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:12:00 Let's go. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I love you Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Let's go. Thank you. I love you We'll be right back. Let's get started. Thank you. We'll be right back. Let's get started. Thank you. Thank you. It's the intro of mine It's the earth mine

0:23:29 Rastaman. And the slasher first. The rest of man not skip a beat, the rest of man unique We not got tech defeat, the mission not be complete Through the humble and the meek My lyrics is my gun, no boy can't tell me no Anywhere he goes Anywhere he goes What is that, Empress? She rise above the race Empress no beg no friend, real Empress no ban

0:25:22 Transcription by CastingWords We'll be right back. Warrior is a warrior anywhere we go Warrior Burning fire That's not for irony Warrior Warrior I'll be right back. Oh, oh, oh How can I say goodbye?

0:28:21 Every time I see a red rose, a red wine I can't get you out my mind If I If I had a second chance to spend with you I'm so sorry that I broke your heart to me Let's see You see me you're like a red rose You might come back my way Every time I see a man walk, a man wide Oh, I've been waiting, yeah Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh Getting before, you know Let's go. Thank you. You're all that I'm thinking of

0:32:11 You're more than just a friend Love I pour like summer free range hour I'm in sleep when it's only been in an hour We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Let's go. Let's go.

- 0:35:31 Good evening to my Vice-Chair, Senator Maurice James, Committee members, Senator Cardione, Senator Joseph, Senator DeGraff, Senator Boquez, other senators present, Senator Capehart, Senator Gittins. Staff representatives of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority, those in attendance at this Tri-Island Town Hall, the viewing and listening audience, and to the people of the Virgin Islands.
- 0:36:31 On behalf of the members of the Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications, I would like to welcome you to the Town Hall on the Virgin Islands Housing Authority Annual Plan and to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate in this important process the purpose of this town hall is to bring the details of the plan before the public and maximize input this will give the housing authority the best opportunity to hear the views of the public housing community residents housing choice vulture recipient participating and potential landlords and the general public and to take them into account before finalizing its plan why you may ask if the committee on housing doing this after all this is a housing plan not the legislature's the short answer is that i believe this is a way to assist the housing authority and the public in developing a plan that best meets the need of our people the virgin islands that the united states in general is in the midst of a profound affordable housing crisis that severely impacts the quality of life for working families. Moreover, it cripples our effort to rebuild and further develop our community without safe sanitary and affordable housing in which to raise their families. People will not stay here and they will not come here and if they neither stay nor come here, where will we find the workers to rebuild our homes, to care for our sick and elderly, and to carry out the various functions needed in any healthy society? So in my opinion, the present and future plans of the VA Housing Authority for
- 0:38:27 affordable housing are of the highest importance, and we must do everything in our power to move towards our common goal of ensuring that every family in the Virgin Islands have a safe decent and affordable housing and I believe that paying attention to public inch input is critically important this is why the committee has expanded resources and energy to make sure that you have an opportunity to understand the territories present and future plan for affordable housing and that you have a chance to make your voices heard first my staff will give a brief presentation which summarizes the plan and then we will open the floor to the public to provide feedback or to ask questions my vice chair senator Maurice James will be coordinating affairs on st. Croix and senator at large I'm her book with the committee member will be coordinating matters on St. John I am deeply grateful to Senator Boquez and James and to the staff and also myself for playing such an important role in conducting this Town Hall we also have representatives of the Virgin Island Housing Authority with us to provide details and to provide answers to the best of their ability in addition pens and papers are available for anyone who wishes to leave a written comment, and those comments will be submitted to the VI Housing Authority. In addition, those interviewing and listening audience are encouraged to submit your comments to the VI Housing Authority via email at agencyplan@vihousing.org, dot agencyplan@vihousing.org.
- 0:40:16 At this point, I also want to recognise, I believe I saw another senator coming to the well. Senator Fonseca is here also. At this point, I want to turn you over to my Legislative Director, Mr. Rudy Krueger, who will present a summary of the plan. So, Mr. Krueger, you can move forward with a summary. Mr. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And if media can place the presentation up, thank you. Good evening. My name is Rudy Krueger. I'm the Legislative Director and Policy Advisor Senator, for Senator Marvin A. Blyden, and I'd like to again thank you for being with us here today and sharing your input as we move forward. Now what is the Annual Plan and why are public comments important?
- 0:41:09 The Annual Plan is a document that guides the operations and direction of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority for the coming year. It is a requirement of the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and is submitted in October of each year. Despite most federal policies and regulations, however, a 45-day comment period is required in which the public has an opportunity to review the plan and submit their comments and suggestions. This is a critically important part of ensuring that government plans and policies actually work for the people that they're supposed to serve. To illustrate just how important this is, the fact is that it was public housing community residents who first contacted Senator Blyden in his office and alerted us to some of the issues that were being discussed in the annual plan. For example, they alerted us to the fact that the proposed plan would increase its required security deposit from \$205 to \$500 or a month's rent, whichever is greater. Whichever is greater.
- 0:42:15 Now this is what led us to start organizing this meeting, and as we started looking further, we discovered other issues that we realized need to be brought to the public attention. Now you realize that if through this meeting the security deposit is reduced from the \$500 that's proposed to the current level or to a smaller amount than \$500, this is just one illustration of just how powerful the voices of the community can be in shaping the decisions that affect our lives.
- 0:42:46 Now before we begin, I'd like to give just a brief overview of the VI Housing Authority, the scope of its responsibilities, and what the status of the agency is. Excuse me one moment, there we go. Now the VI Housing Authority is the arm of the government that utilizes federal and local funding to provide affordable housing to Virgin Islanders at a cost below

market rates. The Housing Authority uses two primary methods of doing this. One is the public housing communities and the second is housing choice vouchers, commonly known as Section 8, which allows persons to utilize assistance to get housing in the private market. Now, the Housing Authority currently manages a total of 4,612 units, 2,087 of them are active housing choice vouchers, and 2,525 public housing community apartments. Now in discussing this annual plan and all future plans of the Authority, we want to make one thing clear.

0:44:00 The position of the Housing Authority based on the age and the condition of our Housing Authority inventory is such that their focus is on replacing, okay, rather than simply rehabilitating the existing unit. So over the next 10 years, I should say now eight years, because it's been two years since the 10-year plan was announced, the Housing Authority intends to replace all 3,000 all 2600 of the units that's currently in its inventory. So by the next 10 years, we intend to have all new units.

0:44:38 Now, we have to say from the outset that we recognize that the need for affordable housing is greater than simply replacing the existing unit. The Urban Land Institute in 2015 projected a need of 5000 units. That number has grown since the hurricane and we are going to have to figure out collectively okay how to move beyond what is planned and what we actually need. Now, let's get to the summary of the plan, all right, as we just mentioned that there's going to be 10,000, I'm sorry, over the next 10 years that there's going to be 3,000 units replaced and that we do need to figure out how we are going to properly fund not just those 3,000 units but the additional units that are required if we are to actually meet community needs. As HUD is moving forward as we move forward in this annual plan there are a number of reports of the annual plan that have to do with meeting the requirements of the federal government. One of those requirements has to do with HUD what HUD calls is deconcentrating of poverty policy and what that means is that each public housing authority across the United States is being required to make sure that the average income level in each public housing community is neither above a certain point or below a certain point now the problem with this is that this doesn't necessarily meet the economic realities of the Virgin Islands the facts are that most of the residents in public housing and most of the applicants in our public housing units are classified by the federal government as low or very low income. And therefore,

0:46:32 the primary focus of the Housing Authority in addressing this issue is to take the steps the necessary to assist residents in increasing their income. So our employment programs through the Section 3 program are one of the options that they actively pursued. The Housing Authority is seeking to actively increase its own workforce so that it can not only employ more residents but meet the needs of the residents. Everyone knows that the Housing Authority is significantly short staff in areas like maintenance, etc. As we move forward to our next, the VI Housing Authority is working with the Department of Labor and I'm going to be asking Mr. Farmer to give us some more details as to how the employment provisions are actually going to be implemented okay from the section three to bypass moving forward hey we are not going to just lift a couple of the we spoke about some of the larger policy changes that the housing authority is making it in its annual plan and now we're going to speak to briefly very briefly to list some of the operational changes that are being made the housing authority is moving to a hire third-party vendors so that there can be an impartial process of doing grievance hearings when there's a dispute between the Housing Authority and tenants so that we take any questions of fairness, you know, off the table and, you know, have an impartial process.

0:48:18 Additionally, this is the part that we mentioned when we first began, that the Housing Authority is proposing an increase in the security deposit from \$205 to \$500 a month or the first month's rent, whichever is higher. The stated purpose is to encourage residents to, you know, have less issues and so that there are less repair costs when one apartment is turned over to another resident. The Housing Authority will also be in an effort to improve maintenance issues, will be conducting more frequent housekeeping inspections, I believe I'm correct, Mr. Farmer, and those will be quarterly inspections that the Housing Authority will be moving towards, and in terms of payment options to facilitate matters for residents. The Housing Authority will be establishing kiosks. If you've ever paid your bill at Sprint or T-Mobile, for example, you'll see the kiosks that they have set up for you to do your payment. There will be kiosks available at housing communities to do things from paying your rent to updating your change of status information, et cetera.

0:49:53 the authority will be launching an online payment option on September 1st. That will be in operation tomorrow, Mr. Farmer? On September 1. Okay, excellent. Okay, lastly, the Housing Authority is updating its admissions and continued occupancy policy regarding over-income households. And we're going to ask Mr. Farmer for some more clarification as to the timelines. but our understanding is that households that are over income will be given a 24-month period to either relocate or to pay rent at a higher level in accordance with their income. Can you clarify that?

0:50:37 What was the period? I think 24 months was what we saw in the plan. Okay, thank you. And at this point, I'd like to pause, okay, and give an opportunity for questions, input on what has been presented so far in terms of some of the operational changes that are being made by the Housing Authority. We want to start on St. John and then take questions

from St. Croix and then St. Thomas. So Senator Bulkens, if there are any individuals on St. John that have questions at this time, we would like to entertain them.

- 0:51:17 Senator Bulkens, Thank you, Mr. Krieger. There doesn't seem to be any question right this minute. But while I'm here, I just wanted to say I wanted to thank everyone for attending the town hall uh in person and virtually as we discuss the virgin islands 2024 housing plan so no questions so far mr krieger okay i think odd st croix uh senator uh senate uh vice chairman james good evening everyone and welcome yes we have uh an individual i'm st croix who is going to ask a question when you when you get the mic identify yourself and then ask a question blessed evening you guys can hear me okay blessed evening my name is Marisha Maynard a resident at Williams Elite as well as a member of the Resident Council and my question is to your last statement on the household the occupancy requirement for the over income. This is a question but still like a statement. I understand what the question is, is that you guys going to go back and check to see if ones right now is making too much money to be considered low-income residents, correct? And if so, I just wanted to state that do you guys realize that some these people that you're going to go back and check their income have been on a waiting list to purchase their home for like 10 years of course people is gonna get raises so now because of the lapse and pause within the home ownership from process you guys are going to say they have four months to go pay more rent when they was on a waiting list for almost 10 years for home ownership explain that to me please. Mr. Farmer, you understand the question? Through our Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Lydia Pell, I can answer that. Repeat yourself, go ahead. Ms. Pell is going to take the question and St. Croix, please recognize her mic. Thank you.
- 0:54:03 sticky two. Evening Lydia Pell chief operating officer. So in response to. Excuse me. In response to the question in regards to the lapse in time for individuals who are currently public housing residents and they're participating in the home ownership program at Williams delight again the calculation for their rent is going to be done effective January 1 so HUD is implementing this initiative starting in January 1 of 2024 has to be implemented the calculation of your rent as a over consider that over income family right now based on our first run there's roughly about 45 people the majority of those people are not at Williams they liked we will continue to evaluate but again we will be working on a family with each family to make sure that whatever income they are at when if if they fall
- 0:55:58 in that category they have a time frame to come up with compliance for what HUD has put a mandated the the thought that they're gonna be kicked out of or evicted from public housing because they are over income there is a process so they have to look at we have to look at and they with the family if they're gonna be able to afford something market rate and I would think that when we look at market rate the purchase of your home should fall in that category exactly so I don't see how that would be an issue of a family being kicked out if they're in the home ownership program what would be the problem is if we have to wait again till january 1st if we have to wait that for you said that the over over income occupancy is going to kick in on january 1st that means we have october and august september october november december for those who's on that list to hopefully get their home so we do not have to go through that so that's another that's that but that's not what i'm saying i'm saying in lieu of you having to go to the market to rent a home if you are over income i don't see why the participation in the home ownership program can't be in lieu of that because essentially i know that's what we're doing
- 0:57:53 understand exactly what you're saying but I'm still I need you to understand it's still time it's still process that we still have to go to for this so I understand what you're saying in lieu of it but we if we if we do not get our homes while we're on that pending list by January 1st those who's on that pending list we will still have to fall in that to go through that process correct of checking our income correct because yes because you're still renting so whatever process that you have for those tenants on the list we think we that needs to be focused for those people to get in homes before January 1st Okay, please.
- 0:58:39 My point is. One moment. One moment. One moment. One moment. One moment. Before you speak, please let's establish some rules. Two people cannot talk at the same time, so please give the individual time to explain and then you may proceed. Continue, Ms. Fell. Thank you. Yeah, another thing too is that since we have to go to St. Thomas, you have to remember yeah also for each individual so we will try to wrap this up and then we come back to you I'm good yes I'm good okay did you want to wrap up I I really think that the authority would look at even though their determination of whether they're over income or not is done the the process of participating in the Williams delight home ownership should be some type of exemption but we would have to vet that with HUD that's that's a comment really that should I want them to make sure that the questions that you're raising and the comments reason are valuable so you should try to put them or you are you got it good okay you got it you got it together okay all right so we look good so we because we don't want to loot they're very valuable and and meaningful comments that were made yeah we're gonna go we're gonna go to st thomas thank thank you senator james okay i'm gonna go to sounds like getting quickly and then i'm gonna go to the the constituent. Thank you, Chairman. Good evening to all. Thank you, Madanelle, for that question as well, because

I was wondering that. I'm looking at the PHC plan summary, and it says that HUD, Deconcentrating of Poverty Policy requires the Virgin Islands Housing

1:00:46 authority to seek a greater percentage of higher-income households in PHA, I guess, as public housing authorities. At the same time, HUD is requiring that over-income households move out or pay higher rent. I'm wondering move out to go where if we have a housing crisis? Virgin Islands Housing Authority seeks to solve this dilemma by focusing on helping lowest income households to gain employment so this is like sweet and sour for me which is it you want them to move out or we're going to assist them in remaining in these apartments and allowing them to like for the Williams Delight area on St. Croix to be able to purchase outright because they have been waiting for quite some time so if you can just clear that up for me because I'm not understanding this. Somebody from Housing. Thank you, Senator.

1:02:06 The place is still silent. What's up? Mr. Farmer, are you on this? I can answer that. Respond. I will respond. but can the senator repeat his question again one more time i'm sorry i don't know how much more succinct to be i read exactly what's in the phc plan summary it says hud the concentrating of poverty policy requires the vi housing authority to see greater percentage of higher income households in the public housing authorities whatever that means At the same time, HUD is requiring that over-income households move out or pay higher rent. I'm asking move out to go where? And then it goes on to say, VI Housing Authority seeks to solve this dilemma by focusing on helping lowest-income households to gain employment. So if you're going to focus on helping lowest-income households to gain employment, What happened again to those who are now over income? Like Mother Nile stated, in the years past that people have been waiting on lists, some people may have gotten an increase in pay.

1:03:26 So where do they go? That's what I would like to know. Senator, I can't tell you where they would go. So let me repeat what the plan says. It says under the HAPMA when a household's income exceeds 120% of the area medium income for 24 consecutive months housing authorities have the option to either evict them or offer them a new lease with the rent being the greater of the fair market value or an amount of monthly subsidy for their unit including amounts from the operating and capital fund or the subsidy amount. The housing authority has chosen to allow these households to remain in public housing but paying a higher rent. And the effective date of those provisions is going to be January 1, 2024. So I cannot respond to your question to say where these people are going to go. What we did respond and say is that we're going to allow them to continue the process of being a homeowner at Williams Delight.

1:04:52 Okay, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for responding, Ms. Pearl. Thank you, Mr. Chair. However, it's not just Williams Delight and I just want them to know that. And if they're trying to solve a dilemma, then basically they need to say that they will allow them to remain and pay whatever adjustment costs for the rent. But you can't allow people to believe like they're going to be put on the streets. Agree. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Gatian. What I'm going to do right, I'm going to allow the residents to ask questions because it's a town hall, it's about them, and then I'm going to leave all my colleagues ask questions at the end, but I really want to hear from the residents. So you may ask your question.

1:05:39 Okay. Good evening, Senate Vice President, and good evening, Honourable Senators. Good evening to the viewing and listening audience also. First before I start, I want to share some information with you all. I have a date here of December 6th, 1971. That date is the date my grandmother purchased her home in the Anna's Retreat subdivision. This really is the last true housing development we've had in the territory. She purchased that home at that time for \$30,600. Truly an affordable housing opportunity. My question is very simple. When can we anticipate putting locals in affordable single family housing units, not affordable units, but single family structures? When can we anticipate that? I didn't see that in the plan anywhere. I see a lot of scaling down, numbers decreasing, but no positive plus on building and developing.

1:06:54 Okay thank you for that question. I think I can answer that one because the housing plan is public housing but I think that question is so further down helping finance authority. They are the one that deals with those type of developments. So nonetheless I will inquire to them about that and report back to you. Okay thank you so much for your question. We are now going to go to okay let me do another one. same time before I go to St. John, because I know St. John has a question too, because they came, so what I'll do is go to St. John and then I'll come back to you, okay? St. John, you can stay there. St. John, you recognize your question?

1:07:36 Yes, we have a question, but from Ms. Raven Phillips. Please proceed. Hi, good evening. Hello. Hi, good evening, everybody. My name is Raven Phillips. I JUST WANT TO START BY SAYING I DON'T CURRENTLY BENEFIT FROM ANY OF THE PROGRAMS THAT HOUSING AUTHORITY DOES, BUT I DID GROW UP IN A HOUSEHOLD THAT BENEFITED FROM THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM. I JUST WANTED TO POINT OUT THAT SOMETHING THAT I NOTICED WITHIN THE PLAN, JUST TO START WITH, I DO APPRECIATE THAT HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS MADE SOME CONSIDERATION FOR THE FACT THAT collaborative efforts need to be taken to address affordable housing issues in the territory.

- 1:08:26 They recognized, I know I see that they're the poverty policy. It requires housing authority to HUD's poverty policy requires housing authority to seek a greater percentage of higher income households. And in trying to address that issue, there's collaborations happening with the department of labor to increase employment building off of that i think my first question is housing authority have you identified uh that the issue is a matter of unemployment underneath your programs or is it a matter of the people under your programs just not making enough money in general and as a follow-up question to that if it seems to be more of an issue of not making enough money has any consideration been made towards pushing for increases in the minimum wage it was brought to my attention this morning that there's supposed to be a wage board in place where it's like a collaborative effort to assess to assess minimum wage in the territory whether it matches the cost of living and what increases can happen is that part of the conversation being had Lydia Pell chief operating officer I'm over here in the St. Croix. So Ms. Phillips a lot of what you said is a little bit of both some of the individuals just don't make enough money some individuals I agree could use increase in a minimum wage but that's not
- 1:10:19 something that we as a housing authority have lobbied but it's something that our territory and other officials can lobby. So I but I think you brought a good point to the to the conversation. Thank you. Okay thank you for that response. I bring it up because you mentioned that you're working with the Department of labor to increase employment if you're already engaging in that kind of conversation where it's inter department inter agency collaborations that happen that are happening can't the same approach be taken with trying to address issues of minimum wage i i agree i'm i'm sure they can right now we're focused on making sure the individuals in our communities have more opportunities to increase their skill set to be more marketable in the employment area to help to assist them to afford you know living and providing for their families but yes it's something we can you know our data from our our households help to create and to for others to have better input on decision making on things like minimum wage so we can contribute and continue to collaborate with Department of Labor as we're doing now okay thank you for that response i would again i do appreciate you know the collaborative effort that is being taken in regards to just getting people employed i do just want to stress that you even admitted that sometimes
- 1:12:08 it is a matter of people just not making enough money if we can push for increases to minimum wage that might adjust like if you're already working with department of labor and i know department of labor has you know they have their views their views uh online program that i know THAT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DOES POST SOME OF THEIR POSITIONS THERE. I'VE SEEN HOUSING AUTHORITY ITSELF HAVE SOME OF ITS POSITIONS ON THERE. IF WE'RE ALREADY KIND OF HAVING THAT CONVERSATION ABOUT GETTING PEOPLE EMPLOYED, I JUST THINK THAT THAT CONVERSATION NEEDS TO BE EXPANDED SO THAT WE'RE PUSHING FOR AN INCREASE TO MINIMUM WAGE JUST SO THAT YOU GET PEOPLE INTO POSITIONS SO that they have employment but make sure that once employment they're making enough money that hud is expecting thank you right and a lot of that is making sure they have the experience and the skill set thank you so much um st thomas good uh good evening uh senators virginia's housing housing authority and everyone present. My name is Dan Darima. My question this evening is related to income. What is the income limit that you're considering to be high? And I know it was mentioned here, 120% over.
- 1:13:36 So what level is that and if it's different for St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John? That's my question. Thank you. Good afternoon. Jimmy Farmer, Director of Asset Management. The income limits are different for St. John, St. Thomas, and St. Croix. One second to indulge in the plan because the numbers are posted and I can provide that number before we leave, okay? It's based on families of a household of one, household of two, household of three. There are income levels that cannot exceed for those family size. Currently, within the Housing Authority, as Chief Operating Officer Ms. Pell stated, there's about 45 families that are currently over the income threshold. And when we say that they're over the income threshold, these are households making comfortably six figures. And the Housing Authority's goal is to ensure that we are meeting the mandate set by the Department of Housing Development as it relates to ensuring that we're housing low-income families. So whereas it may seem that we're trying to get rid of everybody, it's not that. We have to be mindful that there is a segment of the population that is really struggling. And if there are individuals, and one lady brought up a very good point, so if I'm making good money, now you want to kick me out, where do I go and we all know territory why there's a housing shortage right and so the Housing Authority has to dance this very delicate dance in terms of making sure that we're not putting an undue burden on the territory as it relates to evicting families simply because they're they're doing good the Housing Authority we want individuals to work we want individuals to make good money and there are individuals in the public housing development making very good money, making a good living, but we have to make sure that we're adhering to what HUD guidelines
- 1:15:41 are. It's not something that the Virgin Islands Housing Authority came up with and said, you know, because you're now over this income threshold, we're going to kick you out. There's just guidelines that the Housing Authority is binded to, and And we must follow, we must follow, as it relates to adhering to those income limits, both for St. Thomas, St. John,

and St. Croix. Give me a second as I engage and try to find those numbers before everyone leaves. Thank you, Mr. Farmer.

1:16:15 I just wanted to add one thing. That's why it's important to get comments from the public to add to this plan so that we can share them with HUD from our territory so they understand our dynamics here in the territory for a family to just go on into fair market rent amount or calculation is not that simple. Stateside is completely different. Thank you, Ms. Pell. I'm going to go to St. Croix and then I'm going to come back to St. Thomas. Okay, St. Croix? St. Croix has a question. Come right ahead. Okay, good evening. My name is Simone James. I live in Williams Delight also. And the young lady from St. John, when she was saying about the minimum wage and stuff like that, I just want to be honest we looking at people with good credit that's the first thing because I already went through the stages and I got denied because they said insufficient funds but I do work and I'm paying five something now they had a grant program that they had to first bank I don't know how they did they who they classified as low income because to be honest I am low income but I went through everything I went through the process everything just to hear I've been denied now if I would have been able to get through the grant program my my bill would have been three something now you understand but I'm closer to the mic like this better okay so let me go back it's not about who has a job because a lot of us already have income income is not the problem it's the credit part to pass so when the bank tells you okay so the grant program we kind of ask them what is that grant program about we never got like a breakdown of it a pamphlet never got anything we were just told about this grant program somebody from the bank is gonna contact us he did contact us we gave them all our information all just to say we've been well I've been denied because of insufficient funds now

1:18:43 my question is how are y'all gonna work with people like me that's been living in Williams and Light for like almost 30 years right and in the beginning let's be real rent-free I did my part I joined the programs I did everything to better myself now I'm working and I'm paying close to \$600 rent I need assistance because if we looking at just my credit then what can housing do to impact us you understand what I'm saying because you got two impacts you got bad impacts and you got good impacts and this this this this this housing thing is really impacting us y'all y'all don't get it so let me just read something all right before I get off and it's about good impact right I had to write it down a good impact is any activity that significantly increases the ability for all life current and future generations to meet their needs if housing think they met our needs they didn't I'm being honest right I'm talking about social impacts what what are y'all doing right now is is impact y'all y'all y'all kind of forcing us so before i get off this mic because we've been going through this housing thing for years years some people probably could have been able to purchase it at a time but guess what they lost their job whatever happened now some people got a job now they've been working for three four five years y'all charging them rent and now y'all telling them oh we selling the house you got gotta go do this that that but some of us is still being denied so you guys need to work on a program where we that lived in there for 30 years or more and been paying rent work with us do not move us out of there we can't afford to pay the mortgage like I said regardless of what it is just just I don't know what else to say but I wish I would really think about this give us another five years then don't let us rush out now that's what y'all want to get because some of us need more time to get our credit right and then try again and see

1:20:59 where it goes from there but don't rush this thing like I said the grant program was through first bank okay and I got denied and I want to know is it gonna come again because if it comes again maybe I did a little better and maybe I would get it but right now they need to um tell us about the grant program what was that about and why was they picking and choosing I feel like they was picking and choosing to be honest they wasn't really for those who've been living there you got people who just moved in Williams delight let's say three four years tops they was able to get on the program and get a house but then you got people who live in there 20 plus years work for the government 20 plus years paying rent 20 plus years and they still got to turn around and go through the bank housing need to work something like a rent to own for us at least a rental own a rent to own for those who've been in there for so long to pay something towards it to own it please we some of us can't go through the bank right now we got student loans for our children we you know life went on you know like I said we got set back from the COVID everything so it's like y'all talking about all this all this money and this and this and that what about us make the economy has impact us as lower-income people just know that so can I say one more thing um I know some people don't like to be personal but I will I bring home \$800 my rent is close to 600 I got three children I got two girls home with me under the 26 i can't even get insurance because the insurance is 250 so you do the math you understand what i'm saying so i'm telling you from my heart this is what's happening on the ground you understand i can't even afford um insurance and now y'all telling me i gotta go and see if i could get credit and pay banks and all of that come on people y'all gotta give us some more time again keep giving us time demolish what y'all got to demolish but the people that's still in there come on man thank you thank you thank you um that that that one was was painful i i ain't gonna laugh about that but i but i but i do want to ask based on what she said, do you not get any credit towards the purchase price if you've been a tenant

- 1:23:43 for a long time? No. You don't? We don't. Have they ever considered that though? Because that's a good point but so so to respond to Miss James so the individuals go through a pre-qualification process and she's right the bank had a program that they We offered assistance to families to do purchases.
- 1:24:19 We recognize the assistance. So there is rural development, there's VI Slice, there's First Bank Home Buyers Program. So she did what she was supposed to do. She went through the process. got denied and there in other individuals that got denied because they actually make too much money in the plan we discuss the ability for the housing authority to do the loan like we've done in the past so in her case once we determine that she can afford the payments we would do the loan ourselves so there there is discussion in the plan about having that option that that that's good that's good to know because if you've been a tenant for such a long time it just seems that we should find a way to the other thing that crossed my mind was like subsidies correct correct there is yes yes and we are working that there is discussion and apply that's okay senator blight and back to you thank you for that um i appreciate that thank you for that um before i go to mr before i go to mr beef um miss pell um based on a discussion thus far with a young lady there are two questions um that that need to be answered in respect to her statement.
- 1:26:04 The first one is, who advocate or who basically goes to HUD to let them know about challenges here in the territory on behalf of our residents, based on what that young lady stated. And number two, can you explain the FSS program, please? Because that's another program that these were section eight. Can you briefly speak to those two? so who goes to hud on behalf of the residents yes where the challenge is we do and this this public process is part of the engagement of people like the individuals that they've chosen for resident council resident commissioners that are on our board for those individuals to have a voice at the table and to the federal government about what and how they're affected by their rules and regulations so we we do that we do that by the comments and the information that we share and the things that we put in a plan to try to improve the way that our residents are being viewed or to make them in compliance and to make the conditions and the the surroundings around them you know see for a better in any way that we can remember the plan is just for one year a lot of times even though we have information in the plan we don't get to an initiative or a goal in that year and it moves forward to the next year so part of the plan is you'll see initiatives and goals that were done as part of the first five years that we either got accomplished didn't get accomplished and continue to work to get accomplished and speak to the family self-sufficiency program also so there is a entire section in the plan on FSS
- 1:28:11 what we call FSS family self-sufficiency and in the plan right now it discusses serving a minimum of 25 low-income public housing and housing choice voucher program families. I'm basically family self-sufficiency is a voluntary program. It it allows families to be able to basically set aside a portion of their rent to do things and set goals that they themselves set. We coordinate with our family self-sufficiency coordinator they coordinate and they go through a process of learning teaching guiding them into what they do with this money um and some of what that in also entails is the ability for them to purchase a home so it's it's something it's not on it's not just on the public housing side it's also on a housing choice voucher side so it's in both plans that you have before you okay thank you mr beef pleasant good night everybody uh speaking to the mic we can't hear you um i was listening i was thinking about um bill 21 0 173 and it's uh it's a rental it's a rent-to-own public housing conversion program and it was done in the 21st legislature and everything i'm hearing is right in the hand so it's on you legislatures to get the housing people to follow this bill and what repeat the bill number
- 1:30:14 21-0-1-7-3 and it's called virgin island rent to own public housing conversion program and this was done in 1996 when senator rocky library was chair so i listened to everything you're saying but it's right here already the problem is people was playing politics instead of implementing it to hurt they just gave it to the people like oh we could you own your own home they had it where they even had a schedule where if you did 20 years you could get it for a dollar okay and they have a schedule right here in the back because they enacted they didn't act at all act number six one one one where the time that you in housing already count towards your purchasing your home you know they playing games with us that's what they playing I'm not saying this people here this senator's here I'm talking about the system they just playing games with us and we putting up with it because we ain't saying nothing as far as our Williams delight what's happening with st. Thomas why St. Thomas don't have home ownership. Right now I got him in a court because of that because I appealed to HUD. HUD told us that okay it was discrimination but in the states the discrimination is different than down here. Down here is not discrimination cause of color. Down here is discrimination because of people's personal whatever. Right so they turned us down but they gave us a right to appeal to the district court which is in front of Judge Malloy right now for the last three months to rule on having an attorney appointed and to proceed from a proper without having to pay anything why we don't have homeownership understand they talking about the difficulties they haven't but at least they have it you

- 1:32:16 know so the housing miss Pelt all of them they know from 2012 Oslo Harris court been trying to get home ownership from 2012 all i've been doing is blocking this thing about tax credits getting the buildings and stuff it's going to make it harder because the people with the tax credits they're going to own 51 of the property and housing is only going to own 49. so who's going to call the shots strangers you understand so you gotta wake up because they got plan to tear everything down and let the tax credit people build back but they're going to own the thing they're going to determine who coming in next thing you know it's going to be like in hollum you know what i'm saying like in hollum you can't you ain't no ghettos in hollum no more million dollar condos you know what i'm saying so you gotta wake up because this ain't no game and i appreciate that you know i appreciate uh senator bryden calling this meeting i appreciate that you all take time and get these two bills here you're gonna see everything that people saying is right here the senators did it already why are you going to go over this again you know what i'm saying you got to get these heads everything the people in here are saying or ladies and them saying on the thing is in here and no buy no market nothing you're supposed to make it so that the people can afford it you understand because they're going to say okay and williamsy light was a dump used to be a dump that's why they can't build a system under the ground also house court they say oh they got teared down because it's you know damaged by hurricane and all that i don't have this course is one of the strongest buildings around am i right or not when people have hurricane here they come down to also harris court from their house up on the hill come on down so like you know i just i just really want i haven't been coming here for years you know why
- 1:34:10 have them come here for years is because one time they enacted a law stating that after after 2 a.m. in the morning that we couldn't talk no politics the people I came to them I said look that's a violation of freedom to speech they said it's a violation of freedom to speech I told them look if you do that, the court gonna throw it out. Governor Turnbull vetoed a bill. They came and overruled veto. And I came to them again. I said, look, I don't want to go in front of the white people and make me and you arguing looking stupid. The people have a right, because they fought for the right, on election, to express their self after Donald Wynn wins. Went there, the The judge heard it, he listened, and he asked me, he says, look, I live in Frenchman Bay. You mean if after 2 a.m. in the morning, I was talking politics, I could go to jail too? I said, according the way this bill is written, Your Honor, and he threw it out, you know what I'm saying? That's why I haven't been coming here, because you can't come to nobody and talk to them and talk no sense with them and, you know, who you are, who's you? I'm not into that, I'm into the truth. I love my home, and it's time for us to stop playing games with each other. That's all I'm asking you all. You know what I mean? Read these things good, because it's a Senate already passed these bills to everything everybody here is saying, okay? I'm still in court with them, because I'm not playing with them. Thank you, Mr. Abeef, for your input, and we will do our research. St. Croix?
- 1:35:56 And then we'll go to St. John. Yes, we have another question. I just have to really, it's not really a piggyback, I can't piggyback off what the gentleman just now said, because as far as, you know, this demolition and rebuilding and stuff like that, I just want to say, I was moved out of paradise. I call it paradise. You guys would know it as Luis Ebron Villas. We named it paradise. When we was leaving from paradise, They stood on the court and they told us, this was in 2000, we got this meeting in 1999 because I got down in Williams Delight in 2001. I deemed them I need to start my year in Williams Delight. Had a choice of Mali or Williams Delight. And I mean I had a choice because I always feel the way that they moved us out of Paradise was a illegal eviction. We had to choose.
- 1:36:57 They didn't consider the fact of some of us in William's Light maybe had issues with people in paradise. They just put them there. Some of the parents had to work real hard to make sure they didn't have no war when they made that decision to just split us up out of paradise, send who went Aradias, send who went Mali, send who went Kennedy, wherever they went with, I wish I dig so hard I couldn't find that paper. They told us that we were supposed to move back into paradise with single fine homes, like what William's Delight is built with for us to be home owners. You take a look at the building that they put there, it took 10 years before they rebuilt Louis C. Brown Villa. Now I'm here in another 10 years, so it's kind of like a deja vu thing when I hear these years and what they're planning to do for us and mm-mm. I moved in William's Delight with the option to purchase and me and a lot of fellow residents are still doing so.
- 1:37:56 I know I spoke about the demolition, that part didn't reach yet, but I have some suggestions for that demolition. I have some questions as far as what deemed some of those homes on the demolition list. I have listed numbers of the apartments that I went and walked around and I see that have roofs on them that my roof can't touch. Abandoned apartments have well intact, beautiful nice roof with it sealed up with nobody in there. There is something we could do and I do agree with Miss James. A lot of people are paying over \$500 close to \$600 close to \$700 in rent. I like the plan that a man just bring up about rent to own. That should have been and that could be. I don't understand why not. And there are others that left out of Willem's Light that are still waiting to come back in. So that's something that we need to pick up on and like i said i love the information the gentleman gave from st thomas it is yeah so that's something that we need to look up into as well thank you thank you for your comments thank you thank you senator now we're gonna go to st john and then we come gonna come back to st thomas st john thank you chairman we have a question from miss julia

mingo into the microphone please one moment on behalf of members working for the government over years they dedicated their life

- 1:39:46 for either being a fireman teacher a community worker out here please pick it to the mic they have paid their rent faithfully and now 30 years come down they have nowhere to go if we are living in paradise and we are living in a community where things should be better shouldn't this be a recommendation of some kind of credit score or just being on time and dedicated knowing that their income is not as much as expected because you know what the salaries are I feel that we should consider these people who have put in the time worked hard and pass it over to generation to generation knowing this could help a Virgin Islander or some Virgin Islander wouldn't you think so thank you thank you Thomas being good I first I first want to give thanks for this opportunities Senator Blyden and your other colleagues in common. I really would I like to see more of the senators but it's what it is and I give thanks for those of you that are here in the concerns that we need. I am not living in the housing community but I do have concerns. I do have solutions that maybe you would be able to take note of to include statements. First of all, I have not heard anyone speak about the homeless. The homeless where we have thousands of people living on the street. Many of those people are not mentally ill. Many of those people are on the street because of no fault of their own because of high rent. We have a community called Tutu Tonki. You are familiar
- 1:42:14 with their beautiful building. I must say that because I have been in it. Yes, there were damage. Yes, there were concerns in terms of criminal activity, etc. But those units are strong. those units you can take an example from Patriot Manor are you are familiar with Patriot Manor that have high-rise as well that have strict guidelines you seldom hear in Patriot Manor any criminal activity coming out a day I can say because I lived there before I bought my home it is a beautiful place They have strict guidelines in place that you have to follow is why you don't see too much criminal activity coming up. We have 300, I show is over 300 units in Tonki that you all can rebuild, not break down, because those buildings, as you can see, are strong. Those buildings will be able to have us save monies in demolition, in renovating those buildings. Now you speak about affordable housing. When we say affordable housing, I don't want it be when persons moving to those apartments that six months, a year, even five years come around and you're raising the rent. our people are hurting you heard a young lady tell you she bring home eight hundred dollars that eight hundred dollars goes part of it most of it to rent she have three children i could imagine the separation that she has and the scare in how this young lady going manage okay now i heard you all spoke about workers. I continue here you say we don't have no laborers. I have seen Tatola when they had the two category five. What did Tatola do? Tatola opened some units if I'm not mistaken in the university pulling tradesmen and women or anyone that wants to train water in carpentry, electrical, plumbing, maintenance, et cetera, to be able to build their units, their community back. Why are we not having what you call a construction job fair? In that construction job fair, you will then be able to identify those people that wants to do trade in building our community back i receive from senator giddings i will read it for him here with a concern that he have so i will read it in the record while hud is requiring that over income
- 1:45:30 households move out or pay higher rent what is the vi housing authority doing to address the repairs to individual units and the buildings some of the units are in disrepair lastly people are hurting people need place to live you have persons that young people that come out of college have jobs still living in the family home that want to be able to be independent to live on your own as well as the homeless as well as many others that need affordable housing what is going on with the dunu community dunu which i am a resident from for many years dunu as you all know was one of the best community in the virgin islands why was it like that because we had basketball tournament we have talent shows we had arts and crafts we had i mean you name it beach events we were a family that family was broken apart that family should be the first to be able to have access to an apartment in the dunu housing community senators i beg of you i'm understanding what have heard have in terms of plan but you are the ones that we are looking forward to to help us to rectify this housing problem and i give thanks thank you so much for your comments um before i go to
- 1:47:16 st john and then st croix miss pell can you respond to um the speaker in respect to preference when it comes to Duno and Tutu High Rise, as a matter of fact, and the new development that has been put up in Duno. Can you speak briefly to her, please, before I go to St. John? Ms. Pell? Well, currently at the estate Duno redevelopment and the estate Tutu redevelopment projects that we have going on those individuals that were former residents of tutu prior to the storm of 2017 they have a first right to return very well um thank you mr chair we have a question from Miss Abigail Hendricks good evening as you can see our well our building is empty because we don't have any housing facilities on st. John cost of living on st. John is very high especially among all three items we have the highest cost of living in your annual plan are there any provisions made to make housing available for st john currently you have zero housing communities on st john i listen to my sister islands and they have they're rattling off communities like potato chips in a bag we don't have any what are the provisions for um st john so so the plan on the housing choice voucher side is speaks to the authority proposing to put more vouchers on the island of St. John to be able to do that right now construction of

- 1:49:27 new housing is not in the plan for st. john remember what i said the plan is only for one year things that you plan to that the authority plans to do it in one year so for right now st john is not in this year's plan or the coming year's plan well miss pell you know i love you daily but that is unacceptable totally unacceptable as slapping our face kicking our behind for the people who pay the highest taxes of the three islands that is so unfair thank thank you um and i do agree with you in respect to to St. John not being in the plan, and as part of our oversight and our due diligence, we will write to her in respect to assuring that they can do something for St. John because St. John do pay the highest taxes, the rents are the highest of all three islands, and we must do something for our residents on the island of St. John. We're going to go to St. Croix, and then we're going to come back to St. Thomas, okay?
- 1:50:50 St. Croix? Okay, hold. Yes, you have a question. Go right ahead. Good evening, everyone. My name is Achelle Bilardo. I'm present presently a resident of the Williams Delight from years I was raised in Williams Delight from 12 years old I started my family I went out rented and decided I wanted to come back to live at Williams Delight because I wanted to be able to raise my children there and let them see where I was living for my childhood years. Homeownership came up from 2013 I was to own my own home and it didn't happen. Three times I went up for I went up to try to own my home but because of time you see time is of the essence and when the old people let me say time is money Mike Okay. Senator.
- 1:52:39 Give us someone may we try to mic as she was speaking, we're trying to fix the mic. That's why I was asking if you want to come back to St. Croix, or you want us to wait? Yes, yes, Senator. Go ahead, and then we'll come back to St. Croix.
- 1:53:13 Thank you so much. St. Thomas? My name is Jeffrey August. I'm from the BugZoom community, and what I have to say today is to include BugZoom in your annual plan. Now, what to include in your plan for the box room community?
- 1:53:56 Number one. Maintenance to be done in a timely fashion. The trees need to be trimmed so that the leaves and the seeds don't clog the guttering, and the pictures to give you an idea of what inspired which. I have the pictures and then I have the pictures of it. the different pictures okay and then at the back of the pictures have a little note so that you could see really what's happening in the community and then first of all I would like to say that the via list is being violated by both parties when I say parties I mean the landlord and tenants without without no regard and then it need to be revisited instead of now when comes to um cleaning up the communities including bogsum removing abundant vehicles and unoperable vehicles we have pictures there to to show you what's happening in box home right instead of between that one year period by the time you
- 1:55:55 the months that you start clearing out the place before that month finished they came right back with the next set or the those that was there they they take it out and they bring it back right away so the place is always looking like a like a a dump area they come there they make mechanics and thing and shuffle and all the all parts and them still around the place and so forth this is not good at all and then some managers they don't care others are perfect like one i know that used to be in uh null content and if you go to no content will be the clean like some some other places like um patriot manor as the young lady mentioned those places clean clean, no problem, no unoperable vehicles, no abundant vehicles in the place and everything else. They're clean and nice. If your food fall down on the ground, you could take it and eat. But you can't do that in Box Home and have a scout and all of them. And I'm more interested in Box Home. Okay, let me have our Mr Farmer respond to your concerns. Thank you so much.
- 1:57:32 good night Jimmy Farmer director of asset management mr. okay this you bring up some very very good points you mentioned that there's the perception that some of the property managers don't care about the property it's far from true let's talk about these abandoned vehicles within not just the Berksholm community but public housing communities throughout st. Thomas public housing communities throughout st. Croix it's gotten to the point where when our managers are tagging vehicles that are inoperable sitting on crates sitting on center blocks sitting on tires it's a health and safety hazard not just to the resident but at the end of the day it's a health and safety hazard for kids okay kids are inquisitive they like to touch and feel things when I lay my head down at night and I know that I've seen a vehicle that's jacked up on center blocks it sends something through my soul and so when the property managers tag these vehicles when I give them the directive to tag the vehicle they're simply doing their job but what happens they're accosted they're cursed at they're threatened I don't want you to think for one second the managers are not doing their job they're doing their job but now we have gotten to the point where we have to engage the Virgin Islands Police Department to help tag vehicles it shouldn't be like that they're simply doing their job right now what has been explained to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority is that there's nowhere to put these vehicles I believe as of this week the st. Croix district is working with identifying space but we're going to continuously stay on the st. Thomas administrator to help us as it relates to tagging and towing these vehicles to minimize some of that administrative burden on our staff let's talk about some of these unresolved work orders the maintenance

- 1:59:46 issues that you brought up okay currently there's about between both districts 1900 or so outstanding work orders 90 plus days though I would say at least two to three years that's currently in the Harper and that's what we're working on resolving what the Housing Authority is moving towards and we've outlined in the annual plan it's new for us is definitely going to be new for the residents and so that's why it's important that we engage in this level of conversation so that you're clear on what the plan of action is on The housing authorities part and what the expectation is for residents. We're going to be in these units more often and It's very specific quarterly four times a year four times a year. We're going to be in these units inspecting not just inspecting and noting deficiencies writing it down, but resolving them, okay Currently the housing authority has between both districts two hundred million dollars and in maintenance deficiencies our budget maybe 50 million so it's going to be impossible for us to fix 200 million dollars of outstanding maintenance deficiencies on a penny budget so we have to tackle what's most important leaks health and safety concerns within your apartment units okay some of the residents have taken a stance that you know what I'm not gonna pay my rent until you fix XYZ in my apartment unit, okay? That's holding the housing authority accountable, but you have to do it the right way. If you want to withhold your rent, you can't just stick it under your mattress or save it in the account. You have to put it into what we call a court escrow.
- 2:01:37 There's a way to hold the housing authority accountable, but you have to do it the right way. Because when we go to court and we see that there is an escrow account established by you, The housing authority if we know that there is money in the account and not even knowing there's money in account We want to make sure we get the money that's sold to us One way to hold the housing authority accountable is putting your money into a court escrow as opposed to just saying I'm not gonna pay my rent Apologize I don't want to take up too much time, but I I do do understand your frustration sir as it relates to the outward appearance of the community at the end of the day you just want to make sure you come home to something comfortable and you can be proud that you call home okay the housing authority my property managers in both districts are working to get the issues resolved sometimes their hands are tied as it relates to how fast certain processes are moving but I don't want you leaving here sir thinking that they're not doing their jobs okay I think there's another question thank you we gotta go to St. Croix we need to go back to St. Croix St. Croix thank you you can hear me okay blessed good evening again my name is ashiel balardo i'm presently a resident at the williams light community i'm on and i'm also on the resident council and i was just everybody have this story um i'm not here to just put all my laundry out but i have some concerns
- 2:03:33 concerns pertaining to time like i was saying from 2013 until present 2023 trying to own my home apartment 202. three times i went to lenders got approved and the windows got closed because time. I am presently going through the process. Time again. When I enter meetings with the Virgin Island Housing Authority, being that I'm a council member, I usually tell, I usually say that your language you need to explain it to me because I don't understand their language. So many paperwork have passed through my hands. Language changes from one extreme to the next. Ms. Maynard and I have had tracking information from the 2013 till our present and things have changed. Just like Miss James said, so is our income. Our income has changed as well. Concern with me is suppose I get, I don't get approved for home ownership but I'm paying over \$800 in rent. Where do I go with my disabled son. That's one. Two. I am a paying residence. I live next to an abandoned home. I pay to cut my grass and still pay to cut the grass next to me that's not mine because I don't want unwanted visitors in my area and we know what that is. Rats, centipedes, roach and you can name them. I'm not here to put anybody underneath the bus but I am concerned with what's really going on
- 2:06:01 with the Virgin Island Housing Authority. Even if I do become a homeowner, I'm still gonna be concerned about it. Why? Because that's where I live. That's where I live. you know, and I'm paying my money to be able to live comfortable. The young man in St. Thomas, I agree with you. When you take a drive around the different community. No taste in my taste buds for that.
- 2:06:47 Miss Mayer, I could tell you, I'm not OCD, but you better believe if I put that sanitizer container there, that's where I expect to see it. I'm clean. No dripping, no nothing. And if I am doing that in my household i think around me should be able to be looking like that too because i'm paying my 800 and plus every month uh like i said it's a concern and we need to really address that asap 2013 2023 and I'm still waiting please let's try to change let's try to make people feel comfortable if they are renters or if they are homeowners because you pay for your money what I feel everybody like to feel comfortable That's what I have to say. Good night.
- 2:08:03 Good night. Thank you for your comments. Can we go ahead with one more? Or you have someone? Okay. We do, but please go ahead, and then I'm going to do two on this side. Go ahead. And then I'll do two on this side. Okay. Good night. My name is Zontoya Franklin and I am the Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator for the Virgin Islands Housing Authority, the program known as FSS. Senator Blyden did ask about the program earlier and Ms. Pell did share some information and I just wanted to add some additional information about the FSS program. We have a minimum of 25

slots for the territory but our goal is to get to serving at least 35. Now I know it doesn't seem like a very high number however the amount of intensive services that are provided over a five to ten year period means that there's only so many people that can be accommodated. However we have people who are coming into the program and rolling out of the program all the time. The focus of the program is to assist individuals to increase their learning potential and that can be through vocational training, education, certification, or opening their own business. Individuals who are able to increase their earning potential through these means of course will see an increase in what they're earning but that always corresponds to an increase in rent and so with this program individuals have the opportunity to have that rent set aside by the Housing Authority if they're in public housing or reimbursed to that through the Housing Authority if they're in Section 8 in order to save those funds until they complete the program and at the end of the program those individuals are given those funds to use how they please. Most individuals in the Virgin Islands are interested in moving into home ownership. It is not a requirement but that is something that they're interested in and they value and they can use those funds and graduates from the program have done so. We pay out thousands of dollars every year to individuals to assist with their goals and on May 19th I held a workshop in the Williams Delight community to make Williams Delight tenants aware of the program and give them the chance to apply and potentially enroll in the program and use any funds garnered while in the program to move towards homeownership. So I just wanted to let you know that this is one in one way in which the Housing Authority is looking to assist individuals living in the Williams Delight community to move to home ownership. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You may proceed. Testing. Yes, good evening. Good evening Senators, viewing and listening audience. My name is Stephen Hudson Jr. Concerned Citizen. I actually, one of your previous constituents had also spoken. But what I want to read is briefly before I get to the two questions. HUD releases 85 million funding opportunity to remove barriers to building housing and announces new tools to build and repair affordable housing. So HUD has a lot of capacity. It's up to us to really take advantage of it, okay? As a child, I was in Blue Bear's apartments. My mother actually purchased a home in Anna's retreat as well. And I listened to a lot of the commentary. It's something that in my opinion HUD needs or at least housing needs to go back to because it's a it's a faster process you're paying the rent goes directly to housing it's a lowest a lower finance rate even when you look at the cost of property we need to make it happen for us if not it's going to be too late um the that earlier we had conversation reference to um the the 3 000 residents okay what I would like to know is how many individuals or how many of those residents actually on the voucher program? How are they going to be transitioning into any of the new properties that are being developed and for the other for the balance how are they going to be transitioning either to residential homes or is there a separate voucher program that has been

2:12:51 considered but has not really been made public. The other item and the last one you had spoken to the third party okay as it relates to administrative cases, hearings, etc. My suggestion is here in the territory we have a major lack of administrative law judges. That's where there's the PERB, the Department of Labor. So you have the Judicial College and also NEHO, the National Association of hearing all her hearing officials so the version of these to build capacity when we pay a third party fiduciary or anyone to provide those services it is not cost is too much money in cost is too much money and we can actually have it in in-house with individuals who are actually credentialed that's all that I have thank you thank you I'm well can anyone from how to respond to his to inquiries uh through you chief operating officer miss pell i can respond to a couple of those um however you desire to handle it we're gonna have to take them yeah mr farmer myself so let So let me just start about the appropriation by HUD, the \$85 million the gentleman discussed.

2:14:17 So it goes back to this plan. The Housing Authority can do nothing without this plan. Everything we do at the Housing Authority, HUD looks at the plan, is it in the plan? Is it in a plan? Has it been approved? Has the plan been approved? If it's not in a plan, we have to go back through this public process again. So that \$85 million, it's an appropriation for housing authorities.

2:14:55 But again, even if HUD were to appropriate the money, the first thing they're going to look at is the action that the housing authority was it in the plan and that's why we need your comments again on things that we should add to the plan so we we take your comment um very seriously and it will be added to the plan um so i'll let mr farmer add i don't i don't really have a response in regards to your comment but it is it's well taken uh again jimmy farmer director of asset management i did want to speak on your concern relative to the hearing officers just so that you're aware the housing authority has has a difficult time trying to get local vendors to do work when we put out the request we do advertise locally however in terms of the response and the timely response of when they should respond relative to if they're interested in doing the workforce someone said it best time is of the essence and when we put it out and there's a specific date that you must respond to or respond by if you're interested in doing work there's no wiggle room from a procurement policy in terms of receiving something five days afterwards we're very specific in terms of having that date set we want local talent to be able to apply even for jobs and I'm

- 2:16:45 I'm gonna do a plug for HR real quick. The Virgin Islands Housing Authority is hiring. Please go to our website, www.vihousing.org. If there is a position you are interested in, please apply. We are looking for the best. If it's maintenance, we are looking for the best. Property management, we want the best. End of plug. We want individuals to be able to respond, but they have to respond timely. So the unfortunate thing is that we had to accept the bid from it was a company from the states It's actually two companies. We had two spots My hope was that a local entity would take advantage of what we advertise But we didn't get any response and when it comes to grievances This isn't something that we can just sit on and hope and pray and wait that someone's going to respond And so if you see that there is an advertisement from the Virgin Islands Housing Authority Relative to work that we're looking to get done within our agency. There is a deadline that we have to adhere to. Okay Thanks to our chief operating chief financial officer, Ms. Saultong Foy We have zero audit findings when it comes to our financials. We like to pay our bills on time So if there is a concern relative to whether or not the Virgin Islands Housing Authority is going to pay you for work that you've done, trust and believe we like to make sure we keep our vendors paid. Okay. There are a couple of other items, sir. I would encourage you to please include that in the response so that when we send it to our field office, that those are taken into consideration.
- 2:18:32 Thank you. We have one more question. And after that question, I want to go to Ms. Actrica quickly. Good night. My name is Carmen de Castro. I'm from Oswald Harris Court. I'm living there 60 years. I'm living there. So now my rent was like 300. My daughter moved her because it went up to a thousand and change. over over 17 no yeah like 20 years she lived there where we paid a thousand and change what would my dilemma be in owning this my own home now Just one question, what was her, I didn't hear that part.
- 2:19:32 She wanted to know, and you can correct me if I'm wrong ma'am, but she wanted to know what her dilemma would be given that your daughter has moved out, is that correct? have a rent decrease correct okay and if you're interested in the home ownership program you want to know what challenges you might have trying to purchase a home correct no no I was in terms of the home ownership process I yield to miss Pell regarding the home ownership because I think she's you're interested in purchasing a home is that correct ma'am all right i'd like to stay in my lane so i yield to my chief operating officer miss pell good evening ma'am uh so you're in the saint thomas district so currently uh your opportunity for home ownership is through the housing finance authority We currently do not have any sites on St. Thomas Public Housing for homeownership.
- 2:20:41 If you have not been to the Housing Finance Authority, I would recommend that you start there through their homeownership program. Okay. Or the VI SLICE program as well. Thank you. Mr. Krieger, I'm going to give you a few minutes to close your portion, when it comes to Section 8. Please recognize Mr. Krieger's mic.
- 2:21:15 Thank you very much. No, you're not on. Media. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thankfully, much of what I was going to summarize relative to public housing communities has already been covered in the question and answer. So I'm just going to take just a few short seconds to-if Media, if you can put the presentation back up, please. I'm going to take just a few short seconds to summarize the annual plan as it refers to the Housing Choice Vouchers. As you know, the Housing Choice Voucher Program is an extremely important part of affordable housing because it's a mechanism by which people get assistance to rent in the private market.
- 2:22:03 Okay. There are a couple of changes being made relative to the Housing Choice Voucher Program. And from what we've read, they all engage trying to make more vouchers available and to try to increase landlord participation because we have two separate but very real issues. One is the availability of vouchers. But more importantly, as from what we've seen, is the availability of apartments and landlords. So we've got many people that have vouchers, but they can't find an apartment. So we have a two-pronged struggle going on that was trying to be met. One of the steps that is being taken is to increase the frequency of inspections and of course that has to do with the quality of the living conditions and to make sure that everyone is in habitable apartments. And along those lines, they are also going to allow remote video inspections and allow in certain cases the owner to self-certify their unit so that we can streamline that process. But additionally, we are looking, from what I understand, at expanding the possibilities for Housing Choice Voucher recipients to utilize those vouchers in a home ownership process so that the payments that they make towards those can go towards renting I'm sorry, owning that home at some point. And I'm sure that Mr. Farmer will give us some more details as well as Ms. Pell. Lastly, I'm going to be setting aside some, we're going to be eliminating the one-year requirement for eligibility for that home ownership program with the vouchers. We are also setting aside 25 vouchers for elderly and disabled and white residents. And I'm going to be looking for some of our non-profits to give us some questions and presentation relative to the some of the community issues with housing choice vouchers particularly in terms of the re-entry program and they so seem with them some of the specialty vouchers that are available are the mainstream vouchers foster the youth independent emergency housing vouchers which we're going to hear a little more

from veterans vouchers through the MTOC program and single-room occupancy vouchers and lastly and perhaps most importantly the Housing Authority is going to be highlighting programs to increase our landlord participation. Right now there are a couple of incentives including I think a \$50,000 grant or loan program to do repairs and there's also an incentive program for I think up to two months rent to landlords who agree to you know make their apartments part of the housing choice voucher program. With that, and additionally, and this is where we speak to Dr. Suzanne Dara-McGrath, who will be joining us in just a moment, the Housing Authority is going to be working more closely with the continuum of care and nonprofits to improve the referral process for emergency housing vouchers. And at this point, we would like to welcome Dr. Suzanne Dara-McGrath, who is the head of UVicel and also is a member of the Vientry Action Group, as they have a statement

- 2:25:28 to read into the record. Thank you and good evening senators and good evening to the listening and viewing audience. My name is Dr. Suzanne Darrow-McGrass. I am the director of UVI-Cell and I'm here today on behalf of the UVI-Cell and Bureau of Corrections Reentry Action Group and the Reentry Housing Work Group Subcommittee. Over the past four years UVI-Cell has worked closely with the Bureau of Corrections to offer in-facility and reentry education services. To date we have graduated over 50 students with our accredited high school diploma program and our industry recognized career certification programs. We prepare incarcerated individuals for the workforce and identify re-entry friendly employment opportunities to help individuals re-engage into society. Despite our best efforts to support education, employment needs, and cognitive behavioral needs, in many instances returning citizens are homeless upon release. They often cannot return home if they were in public housing due to current VIHA policies around criminal records. They are not eligible for housing vouchers due to their records and the same VIHA policies. The shelters often will not accept them due to their criminal records and there are no beds available. With no other choice the BOC releases individuals to the streets where they have no other choice but to reoffend in order to survive. As a community we need to take responsibility for public safety and the role that we all play in perpetuating cycles of crime and violence. Being in the corrections education business comes with a lot of criticism. We are seen as soft on crime but this is far from the case. If you do the crime you should do the time but 90% of incarcerated people return home and who do you want returning home to live next to you someone that's even more damaged and traumatized from their incarcerated incarceration experience and a hardened criminal or someone who is rehabilitated ready for employment
- 2:27:38 ready to engage with their families and make amends over the past year and a myself along with other members of the reentry action group we joined the continuum of care board to understand how the system works due to our continuum of care not having the HUD mandated coordinated entry system in place the US Virgin Islands is unable to take advantage of millions of dollars in HUD funding that would allow for the creation of emergency transitional and and permanent supportive housing for the homeless and for our returning citizens. Despite our best efforts, we have seen minimal improvements with the continuum of care, with meetings often canceled, agenda items tabled, and important initiatives put on hold. We are happy to see that there is support for the continuum of care in the plan with one sentence on page 31. A lot more is needed in this area.
- 2:28:36 We also need active VIHA representation on the continuum of care. Within the plan, we need to ensure that the continuum of care is fully supported with additional staffing to support the work. The continuum of care relies on volunteers to do this work, and this is not effective or sustainable. Support for the homeless through the continuum of care should be a paid position through the Department of Human Services and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. The Virgin Islands Interagency Council on Homelessness was established within the Department of Human Services by an executive order of Governor Charles W. Turnbull and reestablished by Governor Bryan in 2019. And this serves as the single territorial resource for homelessness planning and policy development. And this organization has not met for several years.
- 2:29:29 And this needs to be addressed as a priority and included in the strategic plan. In April, 2023, HUD outlined requirements that public housing agencies must ensure that people are not denied the opportunity to access housing due to a criminal history record. As a re-entry action group, we have been waiting for the housing authority to issue new policy changes for voting on by the Virgin Islands Housing Authority board. We have yet to be updated on progress on this or to see any evidence of changes. Mr. Farmer, during the recent committee hearing, you said that individuals with criminal records were reviewed on a case by case basis. Where are the new policies? We'd appreciate seeing these.
- 2:30:14 I thank you again for the opportunity to share our perspective on the Virgin Islands Housing Authority strategic plan, and we appreciate your support to move the items addressed forward. Thank you for your comments, Ms. McGrath. Any response from the housing authority in respect to those comments on the plan? Yes, so the housing authority just sit on the committee as the re-entry committee. We do have representative that comes to those meetings. So I continue to advocate for Ms. Marsh to, again, have her comments in the plan. While the plan does not currently address this initiative

that is needed on the policy change, her comments will be such that it would be included in the plan for consideration.

2:31:12 Very well. Thank you. going to do um is 8 50 what i'm going to do i'm going to have st croix um i'm going to let st croix if you have any comments do you have any comments think right but i have several on st thomas okay very well st croix yeah one person yeah i'm saying the bladder one more okay thank you so much good evening good evening and thank you all for hosting this uh wherever you all want to call it because I've been through quite a few of these oh my name is Troy Mason I was just born into Williams Delight I own a house down in the private section now I don't live in there but Williams Delight who was there to me that's why I continue to come to these town halls and all of this but on three different occasions now I've heard about them selling the houses in Williams Delight and I seriously said I don't feel y'all want to sell these houses because I feel like y'all running around running around in circles I've spoken to y'all many times about it I mean I do the mat I look at this beautiful pretty paper that y'all have here with a letter to me the relevant information on it because I listen to Mr. Farmer and he says something about they believe in hiring locally and getting local and they can't find local contractors I have to say that he lying to Ayo in here because I know three different contractors that has worked on the williams lighthouses and all three of them are personally still waiting for more work from are you so don't say i can't find our local contractors that's a lie that's not what he was referring to though he said he said it was vendors for the grievance process he said local contractors i could i could i could i had local vendors sorry he said local contractors i was kind of listening if he said the wrong thing telling me go correct it after and I mean but I heard him say that day I look at this new 10 year plan 10 years ago y'all came out and y'all say I have 82 houses to sell according to this y'all only sold 35 houses so that's about roughly three to four houses a year the prices y'all gave the prices are these houses if I'm not wrong the prices y'all were selling those houses for was 22 thousand and change 24 thousand and change and 32 thousand and change they were being sold by how much rooms they have in them right and you telling me you couldn't get 82 houses sold. Y'all even gave a step plan of how

2:33:44 and who you're selling the houses to. Basically, I heard a lady come up here and talk about public officials, like police officers, nurses, and those who work in that public. That was on y'all's plan. Did y'all ever get to those people? Because I know if y'all got to them, these houses should have been sold by now. It has been so much roundabout. So you're telling me that you're able to rent young lady a house for six hundred dollars a month if you do the math she paying about seven seven thousand two hundred a year you only charge in 22 she should be able to pay half the house in roughly what three four years but she doesn't qualify to buy the house come on man be real with the people then that's how I feel be real if y'all want to sell them sell them come on come out and just sell the houses straight up because if you do the math 82 houses times less the average of thirty thousand dollars that's a little over 2.5 million dollars it's not the 85 million or 10 billion are you looking for no it's only two and a half million dollars for them to sell it come on these people they have jobs now you're watching me and telling me oh that now you are going to look into getting people to uh you're talking about raising minimum wage and all of this y'all don't have to go all of there sell the houses i've heard a lot of residents say that they want to buy the house as is you could sell it to them as is lawyers contracts as is get rid of the houses sign farm was sold right yes or no that's a question i don't know sign farm was sold what did you were sold those were always for all public houses were what public housing once upon a time they were sold and what did the residents do when they bought them they repaired them and And watch how they look now. Why this one ain't moving forward. Ten years ago you came with a plan, and I drive through Willem's Light almost every day, and it look the exact same. And now you have a ten-year plan.

2:35:38 If we got to wait ten years, I could guarantee you, the next 82, some of them will become, like you all say, structurally and sound to sell. Thank you very much for your time. Thank you so much for your comments. Thank you. Thank you, Senator. Okay, we're going to come back to St. Thomas. We have several questions briefly, and then I'm going to give my colleagues a chance to ask a question because they've been here all night, and they're going to ask questions in respect to the plan, but you may proceed. Yeah, good evening.

2:36:11 Good evening, senators, housing representative, and all the residents. Speaking to the mic. Speaking to the mic. Yeah. um trying to get rid of housing in like eight years if i'm not wrong if um is like a um russia and ukraine situation we already paid for these houses in rent the lady 60 years i live in here 25 years and getting rid of these houses what she really mean about um owning a house is not a house any place we try and get home ownership for ohc and like mr habiff said these buildings and some of the strongest buildings built, housing buildings, we rescue all communities during the hurricane and getting rid of them and nowhere to put us, that's a big, you know, situation.

2:37:01 Yeah, so thanks for the little opportunity. Thank you for your comments. We have our next individuals who want to share. We have... Uh-huh. Oh, sorry. We have one on St. Croix. One more. Okay. I'll let you go and then we'll go to St. Croix. I do want to make a correction, though. St. Farm was not public housing. St. Farm was built to sell to homeowners. It was a successful homeownership program, actually, that we need to consider doing again in St. Croix.

- 2:37:47 Go ahead. Good evening, everyone. My name is Marilyn Joy Carson. I am a transitional case manager at the Bureau of Corrections. I just want to piggyback off of Dr. Susan McGrath. I'm trying to get people, we're trying to get the guys housing. We, I'm back a thousand. They tell me there's three vouchers out there. I apply for the vouchers. I don't hear back. Something has to be done, because we have people, I have a guy right now sleeping in a cemetery in Fredericton, and I have another one that told me he has to re-offend in order to find, in order to have housing. Something has to be done. I mean, I don't know if it's where the government will pay, will set aside some housing for our people returning, or look into some of the other programs that they have in the states like the the lancy street program where they're self-efficient this there's ways there's ways of housing I mean I came from the states there we need to put we need to come together with people maybe that own homes or landlords that will take people of this abandoned building and we have people that can actually do the work just like um dr mcgrath said we are we're educating our guys and they can do the work themselves you may get where you don't need to use a lot of government money so that's all i have to say thank you i i like your comment thank you i like your comment we need to talk so we need to not have it in a group setting we need to have a one-on-one with the housing authority and the re-entry okay okay thank you you know you're correct but the entire community needs to come together that community agency departments non-profits all of us senator blannon thank you
- 2:39:55 you hello everyone go hear me good day everyone my name is Anelia Foy my parents I live in Aswell Harris Court my parents my grandparents lived there from the time they used to call we know housing as red brick this is before like from way back then and I also been living in Aswell Harris Court 44 plus years. Now, I'm hearing all the time St. Croix, William Delight, Hone Ownership, stuff like that. It kind of, it bothers me because right now I want to catch a flight and go to St. Croix and see if I can own one of them homes myself. Now, drawing back to what Mr. Abiff was talking about, that as well, Harry Scott and many, many people in there feels the same way I feel. Own ownership is a must. We need it. We resolve it. We pay rent beyond measures and we're still at the same spot. Now, as what Harris Court is, flat house, three stories and two stories. If it do pass that we do get the own ownership. The three storeys and two storey buildings and the people that are living in there also would like the privilege of owning where they are. If that's all you can do because like I said it's still a step forward of owning your own. Now in consideration I listening to William delight. If you guys could, like you said, you're putting the old people home or you're building up our old people home in the field, that could be more flat houses for people that been living in Oswal Harris Court 20 plus years. More flat houses. Can we dissolve it? I know. Where are we gonna go? What are we gonna do if we go to the bank to get the loans some of we are not going to get it period point blank even if we're working as hard as a lot of people out there is working we're not making it we're not making that type of money maybe because we don't have the education and the top level maybe because we don't know many people like other people know people it's just not fair. I'm listening over and over. This is a community meeting, but it seems to be more on St. Croix, St. Croix owning homes. St. Thomas, as well, Harris Court needs home ownership.
- 2:42:55 Three-story, two-story flat house. All always one. We deserve that. I mean, do something. You understand? It was there before. It's still there. Look into it. That's all. Thank you for your comments. What I'm going to do is I'm going to give my colleagues a moment to ask. Okay, let me take that question quickly, and then we're going to go to my colleagues to ask questions briefly. And I'm going to start, when we start, I'm going to start with then Senator Joseph, Senator Gittin, then Senator Fonseca, I'm not sure if it's Cardiunate in St. Croixville, and then Cardiunate. Okay. Okay, very well. You may proceed.
- 2:43:45 Hi, blessed evening. Everybody can hear me? I good? Okay. I really don't have no questions, really. I just wanted to make some statements. I just came over from at all honestly i just buried my aunt you know and within the time i saw my best soul but this year in january she had found out she had cancer and she went to the government or whatever the case might be she has signed up like probably i want to say late last year she has signed up for her house they start to build a house within a month and a half her house was finished my aunt died before she could have even moved into her house it's the government that did it and they did it for numerous other people that live there so i'm saying that to see this i moved into loving on oh sorry did i say my name i said my name oh my name is carmella hughes i do pr rep for um loving on apartments and a mali terrace and everything of that nature i formulated the um our tenants association for her and st john now i did that because from 2005 we i moved into loving But I think Loving Lawn was built probably in 2004, 2003, I could be mistaken.
- 2:45:19 But we was under the pretense that we was going to be able to be homeowners. Yes. And also we had St. John, they had Bellevue Apartments and Calabash Boom. I think Calabash Boom came true with their homeownership. But everybody else, as soon as 2017 hit, we had the two hurricanes and stuff. and homeownership just went kaboom you know what i mean it was no more talking about homeownership it was nothing i did get to speak to senator blighting and we we tried to get on the board of dealing with homeownership but because of mismanagement and i mean we probably went to 515

managers and you know what i mean people don't know what's going on and we have to try to go from the beginning again it was just craziness so we right now up to this day can't even deal with our home ownership but that's not even the biggest problem because if we do become homeowners our apartments still need to be fixed from since 2017 we still fighting for people to come fix it but the funny part is let's go here's the kicker this year in one year we literally had two times they actually raised people rent about not just 100 50 or something like that no like 200 300 but you can't come fix that you can't even fix the window for us you can't even come and fix the roof that's probably falling in you can't even do what you need to do and mind you these is people who've been paying we don't have no problem because for us to be able to live in these places we had to be under a certain structure we had to be like middle class middle income whatever the case might be so we don't have no problem paying our rent we never had a problem paying our rent but what we have a problem is is now you want to raise rent on top of us right and you can't even fix the place that's a problem and i'm going to

2:47:31 tell you no i mean even going to speak alpha loving on or for bellevue amali terrace grandview all of us that is there and in this situation because we in this situation from since 2017 is 2023 gosh five years and you can't even huh it was what is six yet me counting i just telling you what a damn the time is that's crazy you understand but me even going speak i'm not speaking about me right now either i mean with our properties i ain't gonna speak on that i going go after as well harris court right now too sorry because i have an aunt that is there and she's been living there for a very long time. She has mental issues, so she can't speak for herself. You understand? But I'm going to speak for her today.

2:48:21 I've been in her unit. And I have a problem. I can't go. If I want to go and cool with my aunt, and I just like, okay, let me go take a shower. The shower, the water cold, the heating, walking, these type of things. The pressure is limited. It's ridiculous. us you understand like a family don't even really want come there and just sit down with her or even go and visit her they don't come and stay by me and then i still have problems you see what i'm saying but it's a problem for us right now to keep hearing let's raise this and let's raise this thing and let's do this and do that but then again we don't have no problem if i raise our salaries great if are you raised i mean the way i taking care of us even better you understand we will have no problem in dealing but you can't come and tell me that are you fixing nothing or doing what i supposed to do and then i want us to keep paying out our packet that's unfair and it's unjust you understand and this government is ridiculous and just like i say i set the example in the beginning, which I told her, one month, one and a half months, my aunt had an apartment that the government built for her. Our government have us here, like, we're just struggling, and that's what we're supposed to do. And it's a hurtful thing. It's a hurtful thing, because I want us to vote for IU. I want us to deal with IU, but IU dealing with us. i deal with us mess up you understand and i'm sorry i don't have no questions because i don't think i'm gonna get no answers sorry to say but i have a blessed night thank you so much for huge um what i'm gonna do now is go to my colleagues to ask a few questions

2:50:21 very well one more question and then i'm gonna go to my colleagues I want to conclude my, my concerns, and two-fourth. VI housing need to hire electricians, plumbers, and non-scapers, and not helpers. Good. When it comes to emergency, Since 81, 82, I'm in housing communities, and I have been emergency personnel down in Boggs' home after hours, weekends, and holidays, and sometimes midnight, they come and knock my door to open for them or whatever clogging what whatever the the problem is if it is something that um i cannot um handle then i call fire right and the tenants get reliefs and whatever it is right away and now when the number that they gave us is that you have is puerto rico answering sometimes they answer you in spanish i'm telling you que pasa and you out there dying you can't get inside your apartment just like some time ago i heard on on the on the radio and lucky 13 that the woman balling and she's outside they call Puerto Rico answering what is going on

2:52:19 in public housing this is ridiculous now we have some other safety lights out there it just comes on by itself and everything like that but then since a time i think it was last year sometime last year vapor goes off for about a whole night and when it do come back now half of the lights in box room comes down the other half blinking like police lights and everything else this is ridiculous where are the electricians that housing had before where are they if they retire replace them don't have help us then they don't know what what they do and next example again i have a problem in my apartment in the laundry part this like this one switch control the kitchen fixture and the and the one in the laundry right now this gone bad and I had to change the whole thing and put a next fixture now those guys comes in now and i told them that well i want the switch to control one and the other one control on the next switch they say that well they cannot do that they don't know how to do it and blah blah blah i'll have to go back to how to go back to the manager and complete several times and it's not much it's obvious

2:54:24 mr geese i appreciate i appreciate your concern and please and for all other tenants and residents also please do not forget to force your concerns and submit them because that's why we're here that's very important we cannot cover of everything in this town hall meeting because we don't have that much time, but I, I, I ask you to please submit your

concerns and your comments of the plan to the whole authority. Okay. That's very important. I'm going to have Mr. Victor go quickly and then I'm going to have my colleagues do their run because we've got to close up by nine o'clock. We should have closed by eight, but I asked them for extra time.

2:55:04 So Mr. Victor, Victor, Victor, Victor, Victor, Victor, Victor, Victor. in there yeah so please please voice your concern and then we're gonna go to my colleague yeah good evening um i'm victor joseph that's mr joseph i am a recipient of the hcvp program I live at the property.

2:55:48 We have a concern, and I think I have brought it up on many occasions, there are 80 senior people living there. We have two buildings, one elevator has five floors, the other one has four floors. Now, I have since Hurricane Maria, I have brought it up. There was a representative from the Michaels organization who came down once. We had a meeting at the office. I brought it up.

2:56:29 When Miss Nicholas was there, the first manager, I brought it up. What I'm saying is there are senators here, and you all have to work on something for us residents. My concern is, as much as the other residents, and out of the 80 people living there, you see me? I look here, but I'm 73. OK? There are people that are older than me. There are sick people. There are some people on wheelchairs. OK?

2:57:06 there is a generator generating electricity when wapper lights go off the generator comes on the generator gives their laundry the office building and their elevators lights the residents the tenants in there have no lights the people are sick okay they cannot and we cannot bring in a gas stove everything there is electricity people that cannot boil a kettle of water okay and the generator i did my own investing into the generator it has a generator generation capacity i can give both buildings current it is powerful enough that the whole building can get current and something has to be done because two weeks ago a trans transformer blew off we had didn't have light for almost a whole eight hours what are the people going to do something has to be done about it and i i also want to say there's one lady who mentioned something about the units in Tonki, I did a small stint with housing division in the maintenance department, and I had the occasion to go in there and do many repairs. Demolishing those structures to do anything, it's a waste, a waste of money. All you have to do now, because some of the buildings, i look at them i still look at them as one of the strongest set of structures housing structures around st thomas okay all you have to do is to put back windows and turn on the buildings and give tenants give residency buildings instead of demolishing them thank you very much for the time thank you so much for your comments and concerns I'm going to go briefly to St. Croix. Senator Carillon, do you have any questions in terms of the housing plan?

2:59:25 Thank you Mr. Chair and I want to thank you for holding this Town Hall along with the Virgin Islands House Authority. The only, well not the only concerns, a lot of things have been raised here and we've been hearing complaints from residents that I think are important and they have to continue voicing their concerns but one of the things that really stood out to me also is the fact that when residents are asked to move out because their unit is going to be demolished or closed off many of the times they're told that they will have first preference to move back or first preference somewhere else and that is shared in meetings town hall groups but that's not the case and we hear it after different projects and are those agreements done in writing to these individuals as they move out or is just verbally because we're lying to our community when we tell them you'll have first preference and we have people that have gone through it and have testified that that has not been the case. So Ms. Pell? Senator I could only speak for what's before us. Anything that was done in the past unfortunately I can't I can't speak to but currently those right to returns are in writing. It's part of the hud approval for the relocation and the redevelopment if it's something that was done in the past um i i don't know what to say well i'm glad to hear that now they're in writing and that's

3:01:17 given to the tenants very well thank you senator carillon senator james maria james Thank you, Senator Blyden. I'm going to give my time to Mother Nile. I appreciate you, Senator James. And I'm not going to stay long. I just want to close up by saying thank you, Senator Blyden, for hosting this meeting. And yeah, this is my first time coming to one of these meetings. But I've always been a person to voice my opinion and what I think is fair and just for us as a people in closing i just want to say um some suggestions that i could have as far as our williams delight and i do understand my st tomians and my st johnians i do hope and pray that you guys are able to become homeowners same way we fighting over here and yes there are communities over here not only williams delight but kennedy is in a disgraceful situation my brother worked in Kennedy in 19... I graduated in 1993. My brother worked in Kennedy in I think 1989, 1990 and because my brother worked in Kennedy for like three months housing back charged my mom and when my mom died they tried to take that money from me. That's another story but um anyway because I have a long history with via housing. I don't mean it me and Pell have a communication as well too but it's just not her it's the whole entity when I said via and if I do use her term misspell it's just because we have a relationship however in closing I would like to say um what I do think they should do instead of demolish the units I have some suggestions because I did my own foot

ground some of the units do not need to be demolished I had on my list about seven of them I put a check mark where you could see the roof is actually crumbling yet those could be demolish the the homes on the east side is where they're looking to really demolish but a lot of those homes over there have good roofs some of them was painted and fixed back in 2015 2016 I think when after that when they had just started to bring back in the plan when they painted the front streets when I think Rick that that that was coming through to to give us points if we're gonna fail or make it yeah they came in there and didn't Williams like awesome I'm beautiful, but guess what? They stopped. I don't know if they passed or not. Anyway, moving on with that.

3:03:50 My suggestions would be, how about you guys, before you guys convert us into homeowners, do you realize that the area in which we need needs to look like a housing community? How about if, first of all, our roads need to get fixed, our lights need to be put back. I was even thinking on the community for us to even try to get some sidewalks, Because I would turn them to walk to and from their homes to the bus stop when you fix up a community Even if there are abandoned units there if you fix up those abandoned Places it will allow people to come in to want to purchase them But you could always put them up as far as let me use the right word. Are you ever seen um? storage wars Yeah, put the hot the homes up for for action I have an idea how you could come up with a price to set the actions all of those homes have systems those systems work because i tell you i see people coming there and scoop up um water and load up the whole truck so those systems for some of those abandoned buildings are accessible and working and if you say you're gonna knock them down and only put up half of what you're knocking on what's gonna happen to those systems that's there for the rest of the homes that's something you need to think of and i'm guarantee you if you put those hopes up those homes up for action on the listing in which you said which is the people who are there the ones who left the military and veterans and then the outsiders i guarantee you those homes would go another thing is as far as you guys looking for contractors with license stop because i could tell you the dominican and illusion and some of them don't have no degree but ain't nobody could build a house like them and then on the fact of the matter when you talk about those homes being old how they're gonna be old and standing after 60 years they went to hugo they went to a five cat

3:05:41 come on you understand me you guys do not need to demolish those homes and in the process are you thinking of what you could do how about you guys building us some take one or two of those units and make them into laundries put a laundry on the west side a laundry on the east side for the residents there there are things that you could do with these homes make not one into storage for us to store things for hurricane season and when hurricane season come williams the light family has to go no place okay so instead of you guys thinking and demolishing them listen to some of our plans i have all of this to email to whomever needs to hear it but again thank you guys for holding this meeting and i hope you guys do take in consideration and everything these residents and these people put out here because they're coming from our heart you understand we love our home we love our people and we want to have a peaceful community and own our homes most definitely definitely thanks thank you um well well said i couldn't have said it better my only question i was going to go for shabbat and where do the people for shabbat go since you're transferring land to the government that's my understanding so where would those people go so those individuals that are former residents of Dishabart they have a right to return to the new development that we're doing for the land swap for the Dishabart property because we cannot build residential because of the blast zone study that was done because of the location of the propane tanks on the WAPA site so HUD will not approve for us to build any residential on the Dishabart site so they would return to the new developments that were on a new property that were land swapping with the government. Quick question, do you know

3:07:30 where the new property is? I do but I don't have the addresses with me but it's in the middle of the island. Okay I'll probably follow up on that later. Thank you. Thank you Senator Blyden, thank you so much for having this Tong Ha meeting it definitely opened my eyes to a lot that's happening within our communities so kudos to Senator Blyden I'm his vice chair but we this was really really meaningful thank you again and thank you all the residents for coming out and voicing your come you know just telling us just speaking to us because your voice is what we need to hear and that was made possible tonight Thank you, everyone.

3:08:19 Thank you, Senator Maurice-Jane, my vice chair. And I want to thank you and your staff for participating to help this come to fruition. Senator Angel Boquist, do you have a concern or question in response to the plan? Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. And of course, thank you again for organizing this town hall. And, of course, thank you to the VEHA employees that are also here to share the knowledge and information.

3:08:51 And, of course, colleagues, thank you as well. And most of all, the people who are attending in person and virtually watching tonight. You know, when I heard about the discussion with the Oswald Harris court community concerning the pursuit of home ownership for that property, It led me to think about the Housing Act of 1937, which was amended in 1998, which was the Quality Housing Work Responsibility Act. There's a provision in Section 32, and I'm curious to know if that section applies to the Virgin Islands, whereas the program allows public housing agencies to use a portion of

the federal funding to help eligible public housing residents transition from renting, to home ownership, and the program provides opportunities for public housing residents to purchase homes that they're living in for other homes on the market. So that is my question to Vita at this point.

3:09:57 Vita D' Senator Bocas, yes, so everything you just discussed as part of the Housing act 1937 does apply to the virginia's housing authority oh they still testify please mute that mic glory yes you mute all online testifiers please thank you mr chair i'm not sure what just happened i think um ccoo pell mentioned that yes that the provision of section 32 applies here in the virgin island so my follow-up would be what is precluding us from making that a you know a possibility for residents of not only Oswell Harris Court or any other public housing facility that is deemed, you know, after it ages a certain amount of time, then you could decide, okay, you know, we've had tenants here for 30 years, you know, let's make a provision for them to transition into home ownership. What is stopping us from doing that? Nothing is stopping us from doing it.

3:11:23 that that whole premise is part of the plan. Again everything that's in the plan talks about moving to homeownership. A large part of the plan is about home ownership. It's in the plan. Let's make it a possibility because I'm hearing a different message here tonight. You know and I really want to say that you You know, for those who have had the quells of having to deal with the issues and have rented for over 30 plus years, that they should be giving that opportunity.

3:12:04 Nevertheless, let's see what we can do to make it a possibility as we work together. Thank you, Senator Blyden. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the time. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Burkwes. And thank you and your team for happy to spearhead its most important town hall. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for putting on this town hall. I would like media to just turn up the camera and show the people who are in the audience. For housing, I'd just like to tell you, add this to the plan. It's real people. These people live here. They work here. They try and get a living here, so they don't have to be forced out of here. add that to the plan for me please real people not just incomes and numbers and things real people um is the poverty level and cost of living on in the virgin islands the same as it is in the united states are we using that cost of living and poverty level for the plan Miss Pell Everything that's in the plan is distinctive to the territory for the US Virgin Islands Right, so because of saying you know it's let's not let HUD determine our fate is what I'm trying to get at, so we put together a plan, and it almost sounds as if whether we put together a plan or not, come January, HUD going to decide, hey, we're raising the rent, we're training the people them out. But the poverty level here is the poverty level here. Being on a housing for people to go, and first and foremost, add OHC to the plan for home ownership. Let's make it happen. Let's start a process come January 1, so that could be done too. And two final questions. How come, Ms. Pell, first thing I want you to know that, again, I rather

3:14:17 support VI housing because you're part of us also in making this happen for the people than to just call you out and try to find fault. So I ain't that person who will be doing that but the housing authority um below score below a point a score of 60 threshold in a housing assessment system and then out of 14 categories they're also below the required points why are we below the required points um to me this adds to our detriment when we have to address hud so how come are we why are we below standards and what do we need to do to get above standards so again we could be looked at in a different light because believe because we are failing below 60% then we are looked at in a different way so I don't want us to be gentrified force us out also Harris code passing garden all these places and prime property the fortunate is a gold mine so we don't to get what people them throw kicked out so i just would like to know just those two things those two areas are we failing it why are we failing below the 60 um set one percent average and you can answer in the chair time thank you mr chair so so two two things you talked about the evictions based on the over income that's a national requirement for all housing authorities come January 1 it's not specific just to the VI Housing Authority so that's that's one thing so I mean we use social media a lot if you go to social media we're not the only ones complaining about this

3:16:17 regulation it has gone through six years of vetting back and forth with HUD and asking for public comments etc etc we need to continue to voice our public comments and this plan is the way to do that in regards to the the the lower scoring for our public housing authority and for our housing choice voucher program the areas that we failed in had to do mostly with our physical components the inspections that we had for what we call REAC HUD comes in and does annual inspections of our properties a lot of these inspections happened right after COVID a lot of housing authorities were not pleased and a lot of housing authorities lost scores in their react inspections as well the other major part that we're causing us to fail is rent collection we're not collecting our rent again another product of the after effects of COVID there was there was no collection of rent nobody could be evicted um people got accustomed to not paying rent uh so so we're asking individuals to now go into repayment agreements try to catch up with the amount that you do owe and come back to a position where the housing authorities rent collection is where hud requires us to be occupancy we're we're past the threshold where we should have been we

- 3:18:20 are finally at 90% over 90% occupied we're continuing to move that mark so September 30th we should be getting a better score almost an additional three five points on the scoring for next year's assessment with HUD. So we are continuing to remedy the situations that got our score dropped on our Housing Choice Voucher Program. It was always for the last five years they've always been outstanding so this is unique we haven't had this happen in a long time but we understand the parameters and the situation that has caused it and we are putting plans changes in place to make sure that this coming scoring year that We score better than what we have right now Thank you so much for your spouse senator A pleasant good evening everyone. I want to commend you mr. Chairman for Definitely putting together this meeting and more importantly I want to congratulate all of the residents that came out to this town hall meeting. For those of you who are in the chambers, I lived in Oswald Harris Court for 12 years and also in Bovoni Housing Community. I'm probably one of the only legislators who can legitimately say that I have lived in public housing as a resident for almost 40 years. So I feel your pain.
- 3:20:31 I feel what you go through because I have been there. And also I was an employee of the Housing Authority for the Section 3 and Ud Bail Program. I implemented those two programs. Housing is there to my heart um because i know we are in a housing crisis i wanted to ask regarding and i didn't see anything in here and i know we had the hearing regarding what we are looking at relative to crime prevention uh in the housing authority how are we dealing with issues relative to uh violent and criminal gun activities within the virgin islands housing authority i know i saw a section of your plan that you had x on it and you said safety and crime prevention but i didn't see any delineation or articulation and how that's going to be addressed so senator in the plan there is discussion in the resident wellness section in regards to coordinating with the VIPD and the gun violence task force so I can look that up for you but there is discussion about that in the plan. Yep.
- 3:22:07 But the discussion is a little bit limited because we don't have the community, I just, it needed to be fleshed out a little bit further, just for me, so we could look at having the community policing, are we going to also have, provide opportunities for police officers to reside in the public housing at a reduced rent? That used to happen as well, or are we going to also put in any surveillance cameras within the housing community so we could see the criminal elements and catch them because people live in fear for their lives and the employees as well because the actual activities are happening in the community and they happening in broad daylight so um the criminal activities and gun violent activities so that's that's what i'm getting at miss pell is there it's not in here where it indicates that level of uh surveillance camera and that type of collaboration so that was one of the other items i wanted to talk about i i will leave it there because it's growing late and so i really want to again commend you mr chairman uh relative to holding this town hall meeting and also commend those individuals who came out and stayed uh you should be commended for your work and for your being here this evening thank you so much mr chairman thank you senator Yes, pleasant good evening and blessings to everyone.
- 3:23:57 Mr. Chair, you know, I have to congratulate you on having this meeting and bringing together all of the residents and the different people that have been affected. You know, what I get out of this meeting here is that we have a lot of work to do, Mr. Chairman. There's a housing crisis in the Virgin Islands. But to Ms. Pell and Mr. Farmer, right, I have to congratulate you because in all honesty, based on your testimony tonight right it shows that you have a severe funding shortfall and misspell explained the little deficiencies with the inspection and we see how you get back on on level right but there's also another thing that we have to do housing authority is that Home ownership, definitely we have to push home ownership for Oswald Harris Court and William's Delight. In addition to that, this legislature has to assist with the financing and making sure residents qualify. Because you see, redlining exists in the Virgin Islands. You know, redlining is that system where they denied blacks and minorities access to loans to buy houses and open businesses and et cetera. So redlining exists. So we have to do a little bit more. And to Ms. Fina, who mentioned in 1971 when they purchased the home for \$30,600.
- 3:25:45 Well, you know, in 1963, when my mom purchased the house, my mom and father purchased the house in Bovone, it was 13,005. In 71, it went to 30,006. But look what I want to mention to you here, right? the housing has 2,525 public housing units and they are saying here to replace those in the 10-year plan is going to be \$2 billion that means the housing is telling us it's \$776,700 per unit things are very expensive in the housing in the community, in the Virgin Islands. So we in the government have to do more.
- 3:26:33 So let me ask you, Ms. Pelo, Ms. Farmer, does the VI government provide you any financial assistance to pay for your water or to assist with your maintenance or your operating expenses? Senator Fonseca, no, not at this time. Okay, see, when I was in housing back a while ago, the vi government used to give the housing authority uh that water and used to provide subsidies to the housing authority now the vi government don't do that so madam mr chair we have a lot of work to do and i have to congratulate you on having this meeting and home ownership for us with harris court we need that now thank you very much thank you senator thank you mr. chair and just bear with me please you know via housing

authority i know that you probably feel like you're in a hot seat but let me tell you all something we're all in a hot seat housing authority feeling all the questions from our residents the legislature being held to make You're all accountable to what you're supposed to be doing for our people and coming up with the answers.

3:27:58 And our residents rightfully here tonight crying out for us to assist them. Now, honestly, I question at times whether or not the Virgin Islands Housing Authority is representing our people's best interests with HUD. That's why I oftentimes tell you all, take your jackets and your ties off, roll up your sleeves, and get out there in these housing communities so that you can understand the cry of our people. As I sat here and listened to the testimony of some of these young ladies, I almost came to tears because what they're talking about is real. What I didn't like was the angle that we're looking to go And I somewhat blame the authority for this Is because this almost became a St. Croix St. Thomas issue As to the one young lady even saying that she wanted to catch a plane to go to St. Croix Because these programs happen on St. Croix But I'm looking and I do a lot of research on housing all over Because I know it's not just in the Virgin Islands But we are unique, and we're supposed to be able to come up with our answers. And a lack of affordable housing poses, or rather set us up for the housing crisis that we are in today.

3:29:30 So we need to be working. Housing costs today, overall today, is one of the driving reasons for inflation. I wonder if you all really realize this. It's rising twice and three times the cost of everything else that's going up except your pay. We need answers. Again, I ask on behalf of housing residents, while HUD is requiring that the over-income individuals or households move out or pay higher rent, what is the VA Housing Authority doing to address the problems in these units? My office, I've been called numerous times to come to make physical inspections at people's apartments. And the condition that I'm seeing, up to today I haven't seen one apartment addressed. Even to a tub that's cracking up and the lady have to take showers outside. What is the authority doing to address this? while we're saying you either have to move out or we're going to raise your rent. Please answer that for me because somebody asked that and it wasn't answered. Ms. Pell, I can answer that. I have not received any constituent complaints from Senator Gittins' office. Are you aware of any? And if you do have... Well, then you should have let Ms. Pell answer because Ms. Pell is fully aware. Fully aware.

3:31:01 Senator Gatins, I am not aware. Yes, you are. We spoke. And you told the one manager to call me. There was a back and forth. When I got over there, the manager jumped in her car and went. And then when I am leaving, after I already made the physical inspection, then they come back. I mean, listen, let's start playing games with our people. That's the problem. Talking on St. Thomas, I thought you were referring to a situation on St. Croix, but that situation has resolved.

3:31:33 Let me make it clear. I'm elected in the island district of St. Croix, but I'm a Virgin Islands senator. So when they call me St. Croix, St. Thomas or St. John, I go. When I was a police officer, I went through the police academy in St. Croix, but I was a Virgin Islands police officer. so it ain't a matter of where that's why i'm saying that we shouldn't make it a saint croix and thomas issue the point is is that you are fully aware of what i'm asking and i'm asking before anyone is put out or while you're raising the pay the the rent that is are you addressing the problems of these individual units yes the units are being addressed. We discussed the plan that we're putting forward about doing more inspections. We have a new HUD protocol for the inspections. The staff is being trained. We are addressing the situation but it's gonna take us some time. Your situation that you described in the Oswell Harris court, the issue was addressed. You called me, I was on a plane, we called the manager, the manager came over you missed the manager but the issue got resolved when have you ever called our office and we not resolve an issue that you bring to us i'm still receiving these calls that's what i'm saying situation that every senator brings before us uh mr chair i'll close out that uh while uh Mr. Abif spoke to a measure passed by the 21st legislature back in 1996 regarding the Rent to Own Housing Conversion Program. Again, this program was intended for the Virgin Islands, not for St. Croix. So, the public policy indicates that it is a policy of the GVI, the

3:33:32 government of the Virgin Islands, that all tenants in good standing of public housing shall be entitled to purchase existing or future public units and favourable negotiations. Now I wanted to know from them if housing authority is doing the home ownership training and if so when was the last time that they did so and how often is it being done because our residents are saying that they're fighting for information.

3:34:07 getting the housing authority doesn't do home ownership training one of the requirements of the home ownership plan the residents go to the housing finance authority home ownership training they have to attend and they have to bring their certificate to the housing authority so okay and i'll stop here because you're saying that you don't do it but this is a document from the virgin islands housing authority that says the housing conversion program described herein is consistent with the elements of act number 61 11 i just need for you all to follow through so that our people can be at rest in their own homes thank you mr chair for having this town hall meeting i'm sorry that we had to even be competing with the governor because I know he have a Tonghal and St. Croix regarding the derelict buildings and whatnot. But this, I had to be to this one.

- 3:35:09 So I thank you and the Vice Chair for putting this together. And thank you to the residents that came out. More should have come out because this is exactly why sometimes it feels like you're falling on deaf ears. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much, Senator Gettins. First, I would like to thank you, the community, for attending this evening. I believe that you understand the importance of such a plan, and your voice matters and your suggestion will not go in vain, so it's important I want to thank you. I must say also that I know, as you stated, many folks have other responsibilities and other things to do but i think we had a good um good representation of residents and they really spoke up and made the voices heard i want to thank the housing authority for honestly being here and responding to questions i really appreciate it because i know it's a priority in terms of the housing plan and without the residents input it's for not so thank you again secondly i would I would like to thank my Vice Chair, Senator Maurice James, and her staff for their assistance, and also Senator Angel Boquist for basically running a route in St. John. I want to thank rehab management and staff for participating also in this endeavor. And lastly, I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their attendance and contribution this evening.
- 3:36:46 It's very important and I really appreciate you guys. My staff, again for the hard work in making this town hall a success, and the media and security, and the staff for the seamless collaboration. To the Executive Director's Office and Myra Picard, thank you for your expeditious responses. To the listening and viewing audience, again, thank you for your support. Of course, media, media have been here all night, and I really appreciate them. This was a fantastic opportunity for everyone to let the voices be heard. Let's not forget that our efforts are needed in this endeavour.
- 3:37:28 Once we continue to work together, we can see a better future for our Virgin 930 residents and the residents of our community overall. We know we have a housing crisis at this moment, but it's imperative that together we do everything possible improve our situation. Again, this is not the end. Based on the responses this evening, I know we are going to see many more meetings individually in each housing community moving forward to work with the health and authority and the resident to bring resolutions to many of the issues that were brought up this evening. And lastly, as I mentioned in the last hearing, i do see a housing summit on the horizon because many of the other issues have to do with other housing opportunities in the territory from contractors to appraisers to surveyors to suppliers the whole nine yards and we're going to make it happen it must we must do something to help our people in the territory home ownership is one of the most important investment anyone can make for themselves and their families and it's up to us to make it happen other community other body and other people so again I want to thank everyone for the participation and I want to say everybody have a blessed night and thank you again good evening I'll see you next time.

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.

- 9x **Senator Marvin Blyden**
heard in this transcript as: Blyden, Marvin A. Blyden
- 5x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Gettins, Gittin, Gittins, Gittins'
- 4x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice James
- 4x **Senator Ray Fonseca**
heard in this transcript as: Fonseca
- 3x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**
heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Bolques Jr., Boquez
- 3x **Senator Angel L. Bulkes Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Bulkers
- 3x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Joseph
- 2x **Governor Albert Bryan Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Bryan

- 2x **Senator Angel Boquist**
- 2x **Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Bocas
- 2x **Senator Diane T. Capeheart**
heard in this transcript as: Capehart
- 2x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
heard in this transcript as: DeGraff
- 2x **Judge Robert Molloy**
heard in this transcript as: Malloy
- 2x **Senator Samuel Carillon**
heard in this transcript as: Carillon