



03/24/2026 The Committee on Health, Hospitals & Human Services

Legislature USVI

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0:02:12 Oh, yeah, man. Oh, yeah, man. Oh, yeah, man.

0:03:42 Oh, yeah, man. [1 such phrases repeated 16 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:11:41 Oh, yeah, man. [1 such phrases repeated 10 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

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0:55:40 Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.
Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, obligations? No. Okay. So let me let me come back. Let me let me look at the

0:57:52 projected. Okay and I'll skip over my nursing skill nursing facility question because you already answered that. What is it
assistant commissioner? Tell me we continue to hear from child care providers about delayed payments. What is causing
these delay disbursements? Carla Benjamin assistant commissioner. Delayed payments are always a combination of all
pieces that are necessary for the payment to go through. What's the chief reason? Okay so for the informal providers right
now and sometimes with the formal providers the biggest culprit right now is sam.gov registration. Is what? Sam.gov is
the entity that that entities have to register with in order to receive any kind of federal dollars. So tell me let's let's go
straight to the perfect scenario. Everything is in place all documents are in place. What's taking so long and an average
should get disbursements to these child care providers? Very transparently. Sometimes it's human error on the programs
part. People just not moving as expeditiously as they should. And when that happens what's the repercussions? Well the
repercussions is scolding, retraining, putting guardrails in place in terms of threats of additional consequences. But
sometimes the the human error is also on the part of the provider. Okay so any immediate

0:59:48 corrective actions being taken right now? Yes, yes. And is there a staffing issue in these areas and getting these
disbursements out timely? Payment is a multi-part thing but in terms of the office of child care. No, but I'm talking
specifically staffing in in that area. Do you have a staffing shortage in that area? We do. You do? Yes, especially in
licensing. Do you know how many? In licensing we need at least two more staff. So can you provide that in the
breakdown that I asked from HR police in vacancies? Yes, yes you can. And then lastly I did write down the cost for
Haven site phase one and phase two.

1:00:46 To Park Mall, I don't remember hearing what you said. You said approximately and then you were verifying but you
didn't come back to give us the exact amount per year. Uh, Tutu Park is forty thousand six hundred and seventy one
dollars and forty three cents per month per year. It is five hundred and eighteen thousand three hundred and fifty nine
dollars and twenty six cents. Repeat that one again per year.

1:01:19 Five hundred and eighteen dollars, three hundred and fifty nine, twenty six. And the Palms Court you said it was two
forty seven per night? Uh, two thirty eight per night. Two thirty eight per night, that would be times nine? Rooms. Okay.
Well, they're per night times thirty. Like, you know, so it's on a thirty day. On a thirty day. Yeah. Okay. So what it came
out to for the nine months?

1:01:50 The total, I thought I gave that, um, for Palms Court the total per month that you want or per year? For the nine months?
For the nine months? For the nine months you're gonna be there, right? Oh, for the nine months it's five hundred and

seventy eight thousand three hundred and forty dollars flat. For nine months. And then I wanted to go back and you asked about, um, Brown, well, construction start for? For Newt Hanson. Newt Hanson. Yes. So demolition is scheduled June, July, construction start should be July, August of this year. If it all goes well.

1:02:32 Say that one more thing. Demolition is June, July this year. Yes. Construction to start on the grounds July, August of this year. Shortly after. To start the construction process. Oh, this year too? This year, yes. Oh, wow. Start. Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Um, Mr. Chair, I'm not sure if, um, time was called, but thank you. Yes. Yes. Um, thank you, Senator Gittins. Um, you know, I want to go back to the number, the 40,671 per month times, um, 12 months. I'm coming up with 488,052. So human services do, do me a favor. Calculate all of those and then come back and give us, um, take a couple of minutes calculated and come back and give us the total lease and the rental for Palm courts, et cetera. I want to follow up on a question though, with, um, the demolition of Nord Hanson, which will be renamed the Joe Malloy, um, human services office building. You say June, July, you're going to start the demolition. That's what is planned now.

1:03:46 Correct. Okay. In that Nord Hanson building, I want to make sure of what is going to be demolished. There's a building that the health department occupies. They call it the towers. Is that going to be demolished as well? Yes. Akilah O'Brien disaster recovery specialist. So on this site, it's going to be our Nord Hanson facility, the DOH tower, and then there's a mental health building as well as a part of the demolition. Yes. That's what I was going to ask. So then the department of health is also going to be relocating. They have to be out of there before that demolition can start. Right?

1:04:30 Um, currently the tower is not being utilized. So that, that part of the building is vacant. It's vacant. Um, the mental health, um, building is not in use as either. So the only, and I can't speak for DOH. I could only speak for DHS. As far as relocate, relocating of staff, that is only to my knowledge, we are the only, um, agency that's doing relocation. Oh, you know, well, you know, actually I got to congratulate you because that old mental health facility in the back needed to be demolished a long, long, long time ago. So that's good that we're going to clean up and raise that whole site. So colleagues, we're going to go to a burning question and I have, um, two burning questions. Um, commissioner, um, threats to the federal programs, the SNAP, um, program, there was some potential changes to the work requirements. The beneficiaries, um, may face some challenges. Give me an update on how the SNAP program may be affected.

1:05:45 I'm pulling it up for you, senator. Um, AC Dorsett, you want to talk while I pull it up? Just to make sure we got the correct information. Patricia Phillips-Dorsett, assistant commissioner. Our SNAP team have, has done several rounds of press releases and, um, social media postings with regards to a population that we call the ABODs. That's able-bodied, um, adults with no dependents. So on a national level, that particular group, um, between the ages of, I believe it's 18 and 64, they are required to demonstrate that they are working 20 hours per week or volunteering for the same amount of time or in a training program in order to qualify for SNAP. So I recommend that the listening and viewing audience, um, please defer, if you have social media, defer to the Department of Human Services Facebook page. There's a lengthy explainer video, um, that will give you all of the information that you need and we will continue to push out additional, um, press releases and other information to keep you updated. If you have any questions and you're already a SNAP beneficiary, contact your caseworker and they will also assist you, um, with this process. Thank you, AC Dorsett. Um, Senator Fredericks, you're recognized for your burning question.

1:07:22 Senator Fronseca, before you go to Senator Fredericks, Ms. O'Brien has a clarification. Yes, yes. Um, Akilah O'Brien is a recovery specialist. So, Senator Fronseca, you mentioned about the numbers for Palms Court, uh, Palms Court. Uh, Palms Court is for a nine-month time frame, not a, not a 12-month time frame. So that's where you may see some discrepancy in the number. We're only there, hopefully, for nine months. Hopefully. So what, what is, what is the total lease and rent moving that you project for the fiscal year for the 12-month? Just use nine months for Palms Court, but the 12-month for Haven Site, one and two, and Tutu Park. It'll be the same numbers that I put on record, um, Senator.

1:08:14 Okay. For the 12 months. So Haven Site and Tutu Park is at a 12-month. Palms Court is at a nine-month. No, what I'm talking about, the total combined for all of them. I didn't write that down. I'm, I'm getting one point, one million something, but I want, I, I'm not sure that, um, my number is correct. Okay. We'll go to Senator Frederick and then you give me that number. Senator Frederick. Senator Frederick: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Um, um, Commissioner George, I just wanted to, um, commend you on the team again for your outstanding work that you guys are doing. I know it's not easy work and it's a very important agency to the community. Um, I also wanted to get an update, if you can, can you provide us with what's been done since the, um, arrests that took place, um, recently to make sure that the service delivery is still in place and that, um, systems are being, um, currently put in place to avoid that from happening again so that, um, we could put this issue behind us and move on. This is an ongoing investigation. So I'm limited. Our services has not been curtailed. We have made the appropriate changes to make sure that our community needs are met. And we're going to process an implementation of new policies and procedures to be put in place to avoid this from happening again. I hope that answers your question.

- 1:09:47 Senator Frederick: Yes, it did, because someone did make a call asking what's going to be the situation since that, uh, there's so many people that were affected, the number of employees. And so I said, I'll ask the question and thank you so much for that response. Senator Frederick: You're welcome. Senator Frederick: Thank you, um, Senate President Potter. You're recognized for your burning question. Senator Potter: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I wanted to really ask about the grant applications for solar and battery backup at the Hestat facilities. Senator Frederick: What's the estimated award amount per site? And what is the decision timeline? Senator Frederick: And if the grants are not awarded, does the Department of Human Services have an alternative plan to address energy resilience at those facilities, given WAPA's challenges? Senator Frederick: Ms. Lewis, I'll turn it over to you. Ms. Sika Lewis, Administrator, Office of Head Start. I think the question you had was the value, the grant application. Well, the application was through the Department of Energy, and they were the persons that were going to be responsible for sourcing the material, the labor costs and everything. So there was not an exact value for the Department of Human Services. Specifically, in the event of we're not able to get it through Department of Energy, if we're not successful, the process will we will probably take on that cost ourselves where we will start doing those different solar energies within our facilities, one facility at a time. Currently, our new facilities are built with generators, but we also know that we have some of our older facilities, and those are the persons, those are the facilities that are included in the application, and that's the reason why we specifically targeted those areas for solar.
- 1:11:51 Senator Frederick: Solar exploration, I think, is an excellent option. It's an excellent issue to prioritize. Any sense of the timeline when you get some feedback as to the awarding of this grant? So currently, Department of Energy, they're actually scheduled again to come out. They're doing follow-up evaluation. So they're scheduled to come to our St. John office again, our St. John facility, this Friday. So right now, they're still actually doing further evaluation as far as getting the specs at the different spaces in order to give us timelines. Senator Frederick: Thank you, Ms. Lewis. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.
- 1:12:35 Thank you. Senator Fonseca, before you move on, our total rent we calculated is \$2,092,738.50, and a local match of that amount is \$104,636.93. That's our 5% match from the general fund. The other amount is being paid for by FEMA. Senator Fonseca: Thank you, Commissioner Avril-George, for that number. Senator Kurt Vele, you're recognized for your burning question. Senator Kurt Vele: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Commissioner, the \$1.6 million that was given for the expansion of Herbert Greig. How is that spent? And what is remaining? Senator Fonseca: We have a spending plan. I'll turn it over to CFO McGrath.
- 1:13:34 CFO McGrath: Good afternoon, Lydia McGrath Purcell, Chief Financial Officer. The first year, \$400,000 was released. Can you speak into the mic, please? Senator Fonseca: Yeah, put the mic to you. CFO McGrath: Sure. Is this better? Senator Fonseca: Yes. CFO McGrath: Um, \$400,000 was released. Of that, we encumbered \$222,663.44. We expended \$98,956.68. Um, we do have \$27,093 of invoices pending at finance. And the remaining balance of the \$400,000 was \$51,296. CFO McGrath: What was it spent for?
- 1:14:13 CFO McGrath: Well, I can provide you with a breakdown. But primarily supplies and fixing the facility and anticipating the new residents. CFO McGrath: The monies were given to be able to bring staff on board, fix the facility and bring staff on board. CFO McGrath: So, okay, go to the \$1.2 million. \$1.2 million is for FY26. CFO McGrath: We have only encumbered \$11,594 of those monies. We have not actually expended any monies. And the year one of the funds did not come online until September of 2025.
- 1:14:51 CFO McGrath: So have these funds, um, enabled you to increase capacity in any way? CFO McGrath: Yes, it has. Um, we are bringing on staff, um, repeatedly and we are getting ready to bring on new beds and stuff so we can assist with both boarders and community citizens. So the money that you legislature have appropriated has helped us tremendously. CFO McGrath: Okay. Um, the gain well contract, Mr. Smith, what is that for?
- 1:15:26 CFO McGrath: Gary Smith, Medicaid Director. The gain well contract is, um, the system that's, gain well is the vendor that manages the Medicaid management information system, which, uh, processes and pays claims. We also, um, just went live with provider enrollment and we also perform, um, our prior authorizations and referral process. CFO McGrath: Who had the contract before? CFO McGrath: Gain well has, um, been that vendor since 2013, August.
- 1:15:59 CFO McGrath: Okay. Okay. So there's no need for providers to re-register and all of that? Is the system transferred over? CFO McGrath: It's, it's the same vendor. So, so they were, they were once, they started out as Molina, then they were acquired by DXC and then DXC was acquired by Gain well. CFO McGrath: So this is the old Molina? CFO McGrath: Yeah. CFO McGrath: Okay. So they've been with the government for, for quite a while. CFO McGrath: Yeah. Yeah. CFO McGrath: Okay. CFO McGrath: And we are, we are, we are mandated to go out to RFP in 2027. CFO McGrath: Okay. Thank you so much. Uh, last question, CFO McGrath: Um, Ms. Black Grant for, uh, Ms. Tucker Leons. How is that going? How has the progress been in terms of making sure everybody's continuously paid of you made inroads?

You're pleased? Give me a, give me some feedback. CFO McGrath: Tishmo Tucker Lance, the Administrator for the Office of Child Care and Regulatory Services. From our last visit, Senator, I have to say we have made some improvement. Um, we will continue to make that improvement as, um, AC Benjamin indicated. We have set more guidelines and rules within the office as well as making sure that we work well with our providers as much as possible. CFO McGrath: So you don't have that large amount of outstanding that you previously had before? CFO McGrath: At this present time, no, Senator. CFO McGrath: Okay. You're going to continue to chip away at that? CFO McGrath: Yes, sir. CFO McGrath: Well, I thank you so much for the improvements that you have made in reference to paying, um, those individuals. That's it for me, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Bailey. One, one other question, Commissioner, um, the Meals on Wheels, um, program, um, the wait lists and your funding needs. I, I know that was an issue.

1:17:46 Can you update the committee? CFO McGrath: Um, I'll turn it over to AC Dorsett, but, um, let me, we did make some thank you to the committee for assistance in helping us with the Meals on Wheels department, but I think AC Dorsett can give more in depth. CFO McGrath: AC Dorsett. Senator, repeat the question for me, please. CFO McGrath: Um, the, the Meals on Wheels wait lists and your funding issues. CFO McGrath: So, in terms of Meals on Wheels, we currently have a waiting list in both districts. Um, our Meals on Wheels program is funded primarily by the Social Services Block Grant. Generally, we receive about \$7 million per year for that grant, and we're able to pay our vendors from that funding source. For the current fiscal year, we've only received about \$2 million, and we just had another quarterly meeting, um, with our project officer for the SSBG, and she indicated that she didn't know when they were going to be able to release another allotment to us. So, the, the waiting list has to stay in place because we don't have another funding source, um, to fund it. We can only fund the current people that we have, um, receiving the services right now. And I have the number for you, for how many clients that is. Yes, please. Um, so, in St. Thomas, we have, for Meals on Wheels, sorry, for the whole Virgin Islands, Meals on Wheels, 708 persons, and then we provide congregate meals at some of our senior center sites. So, that's an additional 141 persons. So, the grand total currently is 849 persons in the territory that are receiving meals five days per week. We do also have a subset of clients that are deemed critical. They receive meals seven days per week, and that total is 126 persons that meet the seven day per week, um, critical category. And I can break down the criticals by island if you would like that information. Um, no, that's 126. Um, total. No, that's, that's okay. Um, what, how about the waiting list? What, what's the number on the waiting list? Can you answer on

1:20:35 the waiting list? Um, the waiting, Kishma Vincent, administrator. Um, our waiting list on St. Croix, uh, is about 20, 21 persons on St. Croix and on St. Thomas. Our waiting list is 15 people. And it changes. It changes every day because we're, we're getting calls constantly. Okay. Thank you. Senator Clifford Joseph, you're recognized for your burning question.

1:21:10 Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Question, um, Commissioner. Do you anticipate any issues with the CMS approving the plan that you're working on? The state plan that you guys are working on? I don't see any issues at this time. That's the only question I have. Okay. Thank you for your response. You're welcome. Thank you, Senator Marvin Blyden. You're recognized for your burning question. Thank, thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Um, in respect to, um, the rebuild and the development of our senior home living facilities, right? Um, let me ask in respect to, um, green technology because we know up to last, that we still have, um, rotating power on St. Thomas. And when it comes to our seniors, they are most vulnerable in respect to, um, what they need to continue to live, um, comfortably. Let me ask in respect to how much, um, how much, I want to say, how much engagement do you have in terms of the outcome when it comes to the type of, um, equipment and technology moving forward that we build of those facilities? Um, how much impact do you have in terms of that conversation with, um, whomever?

1:22:28 We are, we are intricately involved with our design phases on all projects and we're trying to build modern facilities going forward so we don't be in these kind of predicament where we are now. So we're taking technology and all aspects into account to make sure our facilities are built to specs that 21st, what is that? Century. Very well. Thank you for that. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you. You're welcome. Thank you, Senator Blyden. Um, Ms. McGrath Purcell, um, we had asked about the, the accounts payable for the Medicaid program. You have that number now?

1:23:13 Lydia McGrath Purcell, our general fund, sorry, our need is \$1.897.224 for prior year expenses. But again, Director Smith is working with CMS in terms of seeing how much they would fund because the, the reason we ended up with this kind of amount is because there was a change in leadership with CMS and we went from being able to pay on justification letters that they, they stopped us. We were no longer able to pay on justification letters. And Director Smith can give more details. No, give me the Medicaid AP and then we'll go to Director Smith. Give me that one. Give me that number. 1 million 897.224. That's the general fund, but any federal funds? There's a federal fund portion to that. Yes, give me that. I don't have that number. Okay. Um, I, I can provide that to you with the breakdown of what this 1.8, the

vendor is involved. Yes, please. Thank you. Director Smith, go ahead. Um, excuse me, Gary Smith, Medicaid Director. Uh, like, you know, the prior year, uh, relates to, uh, uh, an amendment not being, you know, not being executed and also a couple of, uh, purchases.

People named in this transcript

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14x	Senator Hubert Frederick heard in this transcript as: Frederick, Fredericks
8x	Senator Ray Fonseca heard in this transcript as: Fonseca, Fronseca
3x	Senator Kurt A. Vele heard in this transcript as: Kurt Vele
3x	Senator Marvin Blyden heard in this transcript as: Blyden
2x	Commissioner Avril George heard in this transcript as: George
2x	Senator Clifford Joseph
2x	Senator Kenneth L. Gittens heard in this transcript as: Gittins
2x	Senator Milton E. Potter heard in this transcript as: Potter