

## 07-27-22 Committee on Finance pt.2

Legislature USVI

July 27, 2022 · 3.0 hours · gov

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Source recording | <a href="https://youtu.be/VHx8USq64J4">https://youtu.be/VHx8USq64J4</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Status           | This is a working transcript produced by machine from a recording of a public proceeding. It is a finding aid, not an official record of the Legislature.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Transcribed by   | VI Update, using OpenAI Whisper large-v3-turbo, run locally. Not reviewed by a person.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Reliability      | Automatic transcription, UNVERIFIED. Verify every quotation against the recording before relying on it. Speech recognition splits spoken digits and wraps figures mid-number, so a dollar amount, a vote count or a bill number can be wrong in a way that reads as correct. Speakers are not identified: automatic speaker labelling was measured unusable and removed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Public record    | The underlying proceeding is a public record of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. 3 V.I.C. § 881(a) defines public records to include all records and documents of or belonging to this Territory or any branch of government, or any "department, board, council or committee of any branch of government" - which names legislative committees by category. § 881(b) gives every citizen the right to examine and copy such records, and the news media the right to publish them. (The open-meetings chapter, 1 V.I.C. § 254, does NOT reach the Legislature: § 253(b) expressly excludes it and its Standing and Special Committees. § 881 does, and it is § 881 that confers the right to copy and publish.) The Legislature broadcast this proceeding publicly itself. The source recording is not ours, is not hosted here, and remains with its publisher at the link above. |
| Rights           | To what we added - the transcription, its arrangement and its description - we assert nothing. A verbatim transcript is mechanical rather than authored, so there is likely nothing in it to own; to the extent any copyright is nonetheless found to subsist, it is dedicated to the public domain under CC0 1.0. Please copy it, quote it, index it, train on it, republish it, mirror it, sell it. Redistribution is the point: a public record with one copy is one fire from gone. No permission is needed, and none is ours to grant or withhold.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

0:00:00      "Thank you, so I'm out."

0:01:59 Thank you. Thank you.

00:02:59 Thank you. so All right. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:06:29 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[illegible]

0:09:58 The committee of finance is back On the record, Senator Francis, let's try this again. You're recognized. You, my colleagues, good morning to the people of the Virgin Islands, and good morning to the fine folks from the office of the lieutenant governor's office. Thank you very much, Madam Chief of Staff, Attorney Carbone, for your comprehensive testimony this morning. Again, I want to reiterate that the Office of the Lieutenant Governor is one of our major revenue generators, and while we sat and contemplated our budget for FY2022, we wanted to certainly make sure that the necessary vacancies and position in those areas of revenue collections was taken care of. I must say that when I look at the breakdown by the post-audit of some of the salary ranges for the lieutenant governor's office, in my opinion, they're woefully low. And I would imagine that that's some of the hindrance in being able to attract individuals to the office of the lieutenant governor.

0:11:39 What do you say about that? I mentioned it in my testimony that that has been a challenge in bringing people in, and it's not simply about bringing people in at higher salaries, because there's even a program where we could, what we've

requested to be a part of, to bring in graduates, college graduates, but then you have to consider persons that have been working in positions for years and how that's going to impact those persons that are um have been working all those years so we can't do it in a vacuum we really have to um look at the whole picture thank you thank you for including ..

0:12:25 But I think it's also critical that the office of .. The lead from the front having a verb. Go ahead again, Senator, we lost you for a minute.

0:13:02 Once again, Attorney Carbone, I think it's critical and very important that the Office of the Governor leads from the front in leading this charge and making sure that we're adequately filling vacancies. There is a level of expectation that at that level, that certainly, you know, that they'll lead the charge in making sure that they're attracting employees to their agency as well as again we have a lot of of your current employees that's really concerned about their salary increases as well and you know have been waiting to receive this very increases what is the timeline that you have indicated as established for the purpose of taking care of those employees in house current employees two minutes are you referencing the union negotiations um i didn't hear i couldn't hear yes ma'am yeah union well your current employees whatever it'll take for them i would imagine that they're part of a collective bargaining agreement so when when are they slated to go for negotiations so that their salaries could be considered increases could be considered okay miss miss As Farrington mentioned, that we participated in the last meeting we had with OCB and the unions were, I think, in June, and they're still finalizing. So we don't have any numbers as yet, final numbers as yet. We're waiting for them to let us know what the final final is. Very well. And I expect that the Office of the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor will lead the charge and not just wait for, you know, Office of Collective Bargaining to make that determination. But I'll move on from there. In respect to the Record of Deeds, there are some severe shortages within the Record of

0:14:58 Deeds as well. Record of Deeds on St. Croix, we're short one staff, we've already, we're supposed to have someone joining hopefully by um the middle of next month or the end of next month st thomas is is fully staffed with regards to the positions that are available what about technology a computer is getting um you know the entries being made because i'm getting uh calls and concern that there is a delay of actually about three days in some instances three to six months uh for the to load certain information uh go for that uh there is a delay on the island of st croix and that's where we have this staff shortage but we have put some stuff in place and hope to have them up to date within the next few weeks because it was brought to my attention um this week very well um again i i represent st croix and i'm very concerned um if we've uh there's some shortages within that area that's creating delays of three or four or more months i think it's critical that we're able to address those post haste um we have a level of by our relatives our titling companies as well as the closing attorneys they're completely frustrated uh by this process and it's really leaving a bad a bad taste in their mouth in regards to what's happening there with with that situation um so i'm asking you to take back to the lieutenant governor and i'll reach out to him as well you know that we really to address the situation um within the record of these or overall with the officer tank up and being able to fill some of these necessary areas uh because it's creating some some residual impact um mr chair i just have

0:16:58 two follow-up questions um in light of this communication um issue uh that i'll just finalize with go ahead thank you thank you very much um attorney carbon you also mentioned about the notorial act as well as the electronic wills and being the bill sponsor on that I want to say you're welcome for moving those legislation forward have you finalized the issue of coming up with a notorial act coming up with the costs for the notaries going forward I'm going to refer to attorney McLean morning senator could you repeat the question please I was trying to ascertain whether or not there have been any finality to the costs for notaries going forward. I saw some press release that the lieutenant governor had sent out caution in any increase but I wanted to know if there's any established increase that have been sent out thus far. No there are no increases at this time as you noted the press release has been sent out and the notary division has reached out to each notary individually and personally via letter and via email as well as phone calls to let them know that there are no increases at this time.

0:18:23 And when do you intend to be able to take action on that? The purpose of moving the legislation was in fact to move the \$5 cost to some other reasonable costs in this day and age? well we were let's just say the OLG was willing to move forward we've got a lot of pushback in trying to move that effort forward and so now we're but but the legislation does provide for there to be increases after a six-month period so I probably towards the end of the year the notaries will be able to take advantage of that legislation very well thank you for your response there and finally mr. chair I just wanted to ask on page 17 attorney Carbone you mentioned that the lieutenant governor's office requires collaboration with specific government agencies this is a work in progress but the more effective collaboration with the government agencies can you further explain what do you mean by this um the statement uh i couldn't hear the whole um your whole question are you asking what i meant about the collaboration or about the work in progress that's the collaboration Basically, in order to, for instance, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, they have information regarding persons who are

building in the community or renovating, making improvements. That information is needed because it affects property values, right? We also have the Waste Management Authority. The information that we need from them is information with regards to the sewer fees because we collect those sewer fees on behalf of that agency. So we've already met with them, we've already executed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and we are in dialogue with Waste Management regarding finalizing a memorandum of understanding with that agency.

0:20:48 Very well, I just want to say that the role of the Lieutenant Governor's office as the second highest individual within the executive branch, there's an expectation that we could move beyond collaboration and that the policies, those things that need to be executed, that in fact that they could be taken care of so that we could move on and make sure that we get in the work of the people being done so um you know i have some concerns about a statement such as this being in um in your your testimony this moment thank you very much for your response you know thank you very much for the time mr chair thank you senator francis your record of these office you have any issues on the island of st croix yes how long long uh it may be uh uh two months um miss pierre could confirm that but i think it's about two months it's here yes uh this is the question here recorded in saint roy uh it has been longer than two months the hc officially worked out earlier this year um and of course the office of the governor have been trying to um like see how they can improve the situation with the ac they've ordered parts and you know and so forth trying to improve that situation as of recently we have temporary um we have temporary units in the office now ac units that you should use your home residence we We have cleared up the record and it has given us some relief, but the main AC unit is still down, and it's about five to six months it's been down.

0:22:56 Okay, I know it's a longer period, so five to six months the main unit has been down for the record of dates? Correct. Correct. And you have a temporary unit in there now? Yes, we have three of them. Okay, and your passport office is also down? Passport is with record of dates? Yes, that is correct. Yes. If you purchase a building, these entities would be moving to that new building? Yes. The estate, Castle Coakley location, we're going to be moving the passport division, corporations, banking and insurance.

0:23:35 The new building that we purchased is where we court our deeds because of the volume of books and stuff that they maintain. okay so corporations and those other units are going to stay at the castle coakley building even if you get the building in christianston yeah because we have so many divisions and your plans to expedite record of deeds we have so much complaints from i mean i know you had a meeting recently with attorneys and individuals in the real estate market in reference to um cadastralla record of deeds and titles and the slow process so when is that going to be corrected it's to the point where some of the title companies are saying that they're just ready to give up and and not do anything until we get the problem fixed so when is it going to be fixed okay so again we we're we've hired or we've gone through the process we've identified um an individual to go and work with the division they should be starting maybe in a few weeks we just have to complete the NOPA process we're gonna have assistance for miss Pierre we're gonna we've brought in or we're gonna be bringing in additional staff we've already made arrangements to have staffing relocated temporarily relocated to assist her in bringing the so so So you expect to get the problem resolved by what, next week, week after?

0:25:09 Let's say maybe two weeks. Probably sooner, but probably two weeks. Two weeks and being able to deal with the backlog. Yes. As far as cadastral, that was something that, that's a temporary, that's not a longstanding issue where it happens that the two employees on St. Croix had to be out. One was due to illness, and the other was on leave. And that's going to be brought up to date. The Ms. Moorehead, you were explaining which types of research has historically taken longer because research has to be done on those properties. So that's gonna be within, what, like a two-week period. the other um filings would be within one week that's correct so adjacent ownership adjacent i'm sorry sir um officer lieutenant governor adjacent ownership is taking a little bit longer um we do have a little backlog there with a number of requests that um the office receives um the the attestation of deeds should be brought up within a week or two or so.

0:26:31 Okay, and adjacent properties, how long does the process take in St. Thomas? It would be a same two-week period. On the record. Good afternoon. It takes about two weeks sometimes. It just depends on the configuration of the properties. Okay, so, and I'll go to the next senator right now, so record of deeds, you have a plan to hire additional individuals? Yes, someone has been, we've already interviewed the person and they'll be, we just have to complete the NOPA process and give them a start date, which should be next month.

0:27:16 What is the qualifications for the position? It's a position that you could train the person? Record of deeds? yes so it doesn't require an associate or anything I don't I don't know I don't okay are those positions listed on personnel website yes good thank you Senator Fred Gregory Point of Inquiry Mr. Chief Point of Inquiry quick Senator Francis Attorney Carbon what was the last time you were in St. Croix and met with the staff of the lieutenant governor's office i was there was it earlier in july i think earlier in july early in july very well you met with the staff at that time not as a whole but i i visited the staff particularly at the christian stead in the Christian Stead area.

- 0:28:16 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. But I do have monthly staff meetings with all of my directors, and they pretty much keep me abreast of all of the issues, and as soon as an issue comes up, I'm usually informed of the issue. Okay. Senator McGregor, you're recognized. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanna go back to the property tax collections very quickly.
- 0:28:48 So, the projection as of, was it June? Is some 30.2 million dollars, 30.3 million? Yes? So, that was the actuals. Okay, so that's actuals as of June? And to the end of the year, or the fiscal year, we were projecting some 50 million? 58. Okay, so I am concerned that how we are going to meet the 50 million, and I know that you talked about what you intend to do, but from a realistic perspective, do you believe that we are going to meet the 50 million dollar mark come, what is it, September 30th?
- 0:29:31 Yes, Senator. How? Well, over the past years, we have embarked on a campaign. No, no, no. So give me how, don't tell me over the past years. Just to simply tell me how are we going to, if it's June, we have what, three more months? Yes, Senator. So what are you projecting to see for the next three months? About approximately another 28 million.
- 0:30:00 Another 28 million? Yes, Senator. And how do you plan to go about that? And let me tell you why I'm asking the question. So I'll give you an example of myself. So I did not receive a property tax bill. I got, for one of my properties, right? And I call the office and of course you all work with me. But my question is, there are some individuals in our community who may not have received their bills, who are not necessarily paying attention to the fact that, hey, I didn't receive my bill. How are you sorting that out to ensure that everyone has received a bill? Even if they didn't contact you, because you don't have instances where that did not occur. And we cannot assume that people are not really going to say, I'm going to pay my bill.
- 0:30:42 Well, the tax assessor is aware of who didn't receive the bills, and he can expound more on that. Okay, so tell me. Senator, we send the bill out to the last address of record. We are mandated to do that. No, no, stay with me. I didn't receive my bill. I didn't change my address. I called, y'all assisted me, but I'm saying, have you sorted that out? Because there are other individuals in our community who have not received their bills, who may not have reached out to you, who are perhaps not paying attention.
- 0:31:22 That's what I'm asking. Okay, Senator, I think it comes from what the tax collector was indicating about the return mail. Because we do send out a lot of bills that sometimes come back in the mail, and we're trying now to reach out again to those persons so i'm gonna i'm gonna leave this alone because i'm saying to you that we i didn't have a return bill situation uh-huh i did not get a bill okay but i didn't change my address two minutes okay so you're gonna need to tell me if that was a return to you because i'm not certain what we're saying it may have been that that was a one-off so perhaps if you bring it to their attention that's what i'm trying to establish so how are we how are we looking at the deltas to make sure that we are in concert with collecting with ensuring that everybody receives their bills my time is running financial services you had the approved the the the projections of the appropriations for fy 2022 or some 11.4 this year under the page 4 of the post audit report i'm seeing some 18.2 what is the and you may have said it in your testimony what is the reason for that 6.7 percent increase which is 60 60% over FY2022, and you could look for it in the meantime if you don't have it in front of you. Let's talk about timeshares. I know that we had an issue with issuing timeshare bills.
- 0:32:47 Have we resolved that situation, and how is that looking today? Senator, that issue should be taken care of by the end of the week. were hoping that it would have been addressed and updated before today but they have a day or two more to complete that so those are gonna go out yes senator okay so what are you projecting from those just a minute okay see you can't sign a chair sinker that's important I had with and then let me Let me just ask Chief Carbon a quick question around the Record of Deeds while both of you look for the information. So you continue to say that in the same time, we've gotten complaints from the realtors saying in this district that we were unable, their transactions were not moving. I think you said that that issue has been resolved, but you continue to say that you don't have a vacancy. But is it that you don't have a need or you don't have a vacancy? Which one is it?
- 0:33:48 Well, let's be clear, the record of deeds. A need for an additional, because right now while it provides four are those, the record of deeds and two persons in each district. So I'm asking you, let's be clear, I mean, I know what you have, but I continue to hear that operative word, based on what's available, everything is filled. That is not the primary concern. What is your need? You may have six slices of bread, but you really need eight. So that's what I'm trying to establish with you. What is the true need in order to make sure that the processes and the transactions flow swiftly? And do we have a backup in St. Thomas still?
- 0:34:37 We don't have a backup, but Ms. Dover, I'm gonna let you speak to that and then I'll Erica Dover, Recorder of Deeds St. Thomas, on St. Thomas presently we do not have a backlog, so I'm not sure if you're speaking to the District of St. Croix or St. Thomas. Mr. Chair, I just ask a simple question.

- 0:35:17 I need to know, I give an example, all of us run households, walk with me man. Okay, so Ms. Dover, do you think you have a need for an additional employee, your backlog you've caught up on, but to make the processes flow as they should, do you think there's a need for us to add a position to that division? Okay, it would be... Yes or no?
- 0:35:46 Yes. Okay. Yes, because we have things that could be fine-tuned, so with that one person, we can give them that additional scope. Okay. Ask their job description. I have never seen... We have to work so hard to just find out, do you have a need? The Committee of Finance has the ability to increase or decrease budgets. You're a revenue-generating entity. Record of deeds, we're getting a million complaints on Synchro. You have complaints on St. Thomas. If we need to add staff, we need to add staff. If you have individuals that are going to be coming on board and we need that to fund it at 0.5, and we need to fully fund it for the upcoming year because you can get two individuals come October, we need to know so that we could include those amongst into the budget i guess we still caught up chairman with with getting things done and we getting things done at least in one district with with what we have that we still caught up that is that is not correct i'm gonna allow you to ask you the last two and then we no i don't have another question one minute senator it is not acceptable that it's working at one district it's not our real estate community the lawyers everybody they're extremely frustrated they call for a meeting with the lieutenant governor they met with him and they're still having a backlog and can't get stuff moving so we have to find a particular solution that is i i could call all the attorney names that have met and all the real estate agents that have met and and they clearly said that it wasn't a criticism but they want to improve the the process so that they can be able to get the transactions done. And that is the responsibility of government.
- 0:37:43 And we are concerned, and I... Senator, two additional positions for Ricardo Deeds, one in each district, and they would make it three employees and a... Okay, thank you. Senator Fred Gregory, you will tell us how long. And of course, we're getting the complaints from the heads of banks in the Virgin Islands. These people are calling. But I wanted to get my two questions, that I asked the questions, I really just want them answered. Which one? The one question that I asked around the financial services, the significant increase projections. Page four?
- 0:38:15 Yes, ma'am. You said 11 there? Page four of 16. Uh-huh, what was the figure you said? I'm seeing that last year we had some 11.4, based on the post-salary report, and this year the recommendation is 18.2. So I'm trying to figure out that 18.2 over FY 2022. oh that's the grand total yeah okay so i'm trying to establish you know why are we seeing a six point six point eight sixty percent increase no it's um the 2022 appropriation reflects the budget as of a certain point in time you don't put on the full budget like with the general the appropriated fund you know you put it on collections you put it huh it would be your collections then you put it on over time based on the collections coming in okay so okay but your actuals in 21 was 13. that's what i'm saying so if we're going to go to 21 and then we move to 22 then how do we get all the way up to 18 because if you look at 11 is still there's still a huge increase yes the funds are based on a percentage of collections like in the case of property tax, in the case of property tax.
- 0:39:36 So you think you will meet the 18.3, that's basically? Yes, yes, Senator. And then the other question for Mr, I think it was Ms. Samuels? Yes. And the question was around the record of deeds, I mean not the record of deeds, the timeshares. The timeshares and what are you projecting? What is the amount of the bills that you're sending out and what you're projecting to actually generate? We're hoping to generate about \$5.5 million. How much you're sending out?
- 0:40:05 How much is, okay, how much in timeshares? Correct. Where's the number? About 27,000 bills. No, no, no. The total, the aggregate of the bills that you're sending out, not the number of bills, What you're, what is it worth? And then what you're projecting that you'll receive. Okay, would you?
- 0:40:37 Yeah. Senator, for timeshares, approximately some \$5.5 million has been billed. those bills have gone out. So the billing is 5.5? Yes ma'am, yes sir. And you expect to receive your entire 5.5, right? Yes Senator. And those bills are not gone out? Not based on what Mr. Mills just said, so? Well, as we speak, some of them may be updated online already, but we're still going to do a mass distribution and actually mail them once all are finalized.
- 0:41:17 So what's the requirement? Is it to require it to be mailed? What's our system, a mailing system, or a system where we put it online and we say, check your online, which one is it? Both. No, it's not both. What is it customarily that we do as it relates to our tax bills? We mail them out, so we mail them out. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the leeway, thanks. Thank you, and give me some additional time because the answers, instead of being direct, like you have to ask the question two, three different ways in order to get the answer. I think that the financial services area is where we're seeing a large increase, we have already collected some 6.8 million dollars in financial services so that is actually the area where we're seeing the bump while the projections are a lot lower um but the actuals for financial services so 2021 was what was it it was a 3.2 or was it in your collection yeah on page one of the little appendix that you have you have 6.7 million dollars for 2021 no 6.7 yes yes yes yes okay so when you submitted the information originally to the post audit it has been updated so it's we've got to post out of that 3.2 but it's really 6.7 for 21 revenue collections yes 6.7 fiscal year 2021 6.7 okay but we have already collected more this fiscal year than 21 because this fiscal year we've already corrected 6.8



million correct page page one of your testimony page one of the after the summary of your testimony

0:43:17 we we updated the actual so i put it right on the page at 6.7 you said we have collected 6.8 this year i need to find a report okay so what are your projections for fiscal year 23 okay right now it looks like you're going to collect more than seven million dollars what are your projections for fiscal year 23. it's between 6.3 and sorry 6.3 and 6.5 projected for fiscal year 23 23 Why would you project 6.3, 6.5 when you already collect 6.8 and this is June?

0:44:15 As of June, you said you collected 6.8. I need to check that figure, Senator. Yes, as of June, we collected 6.8, that's correct. Okay, so the fiscal year isn't over. Well, it's based on when we did the projection. So actually, now, what do you think is going to be the projection? We are projecting 6.5. And I know that's conservative, but we tend to be conservative. Okay.

0:44:45 You beg to differ. Totally differ. We already collected 6.8. You're going to collect over \$7 million. We are not supposed to go backwards. We're supposed to continue. It depends. It depends. Okay. I will calculate that. Senator Giddens, you're recognized. the market could change thank you uh mr chair you know well as i sit here and this it's it's very uh constituents uh sending messages simply put looking for efficiency progress in this the question or discussion about the mails when you have returned mails what are you doing with these mails because oftentimes this is a lot of the the bills going out what are you doing with the return mails.

0:45:59 Speaker 2 Well, Senator, for the return mail, we update the system that the mail has been returned to us, and this year we are reaching out to the customers to remind them that by law it's the responsibility of the property owners to make certain that there's a correct address of record on file with the Office of the Tax Assessor.

0:46:32 Mr. Chair, I can't even see who I'm speaking with. Can you have whomever is responding to put their name and title on the record, please? Yes, Senator, this is Brent Laird, tax collector. So again, in short, what are you doing with the return mail? We will be posting in the newspapers a record of the return mail that we have received and remind and ask customers to come and update their address of record with the office of the tax assessor, which they're required to do by law.

0:47:09 Okay, and I did ask in short. No, that's what you intend to do, but how long have you had these mails sitting there? Well, Senator, we have an amount that comes in every day and so we are compiling them and making them ready uh for print listen i'm pretty sure a number of these uh individuals are government employees uh we can find these folks do you have uh individuals that's that has entered into a a payment plan with you for any uh past new bills yes senator we have payment plans being made every day and how are you keeping up uh with these payment plans do you have a tracking system it we we have a property tax management system that tracks all of this sir now okay so i'll i'll move away from that uh you the chief of staff mentioned i think uh four four retirements, and seven resignations.

0:48:17 What are we doing to aggressively, but before I ask about what are you doing to aggressively recruit for those positions, those seven resignations, what are these positions? Two minutes. Let's see what we have. We had one in the tax assessor's office. We had a resignation from an engineering aide, I'm trying to think. We have had a resignation from a real property tax collector, a passport examiner, trying to think of...

0:48:58 I'm not understanding why we keep looking up in the sky and as if we were just picking things. Do you have a list of the positions that are resignation? senator I'm looking sure I was trying to answer off the top of my head going by divisions based on the resignations I'm aware of we've also had resignations from franchise tax auditor we've had two of those left what did I see passport examiner real property tax collector real property records officer to franchise tax auditors and and the positions are posted on your site or on the division website yeah we have we have to post them on division of personal website so you have to post them that means they're not posted yet no some of them have been posted yes i was telling you in general we definitely have to post them on personal website but we have also made a notation on our website because we've done career fairs and in doing the career fairs uh we have indicated those as well we also had a resignation from a systems analyst thank you let me ask you quickly do you still collect public sewer system user fees yes How much collected last calendar year and this calendar year to date?

0:50:33 Time. Senator Brent Laird, I'm tax collector. So far this calendar year we have collected some Just over 200, no, about \$210,000 in sewer fees. That's for when? I asked for last calendar year and this year today. This is for this fiscal year. I do not have the numbers for fiscal year 21 on hand, but we can provide those to you.

0:51:22 Okay. Thanks for that. Lastly, Mr. Chair, if I can ask what's their relationship with the University of the Virgin Islands, specifically with their School of Business, to see if there's a recruitment relationship with them to hire people in these vacant positions that they have. Okay. We have reached out. We've been trying to reach out to the university. We had a contact in the business office, but I'm gonna tell you, let me take a quick second to tell you, this is a national issue with not, these people, this generation of today, they ain't looking for jobs in the office, they want quick money. So a lot of

them, they're not even looking at the salaries in government. And that's the reality that we face. I've told my directors that that's one thing I would like to fix before we leave LGO to pay, but I don't even know if that's going to address anything. It's a national problem where one state even was bringing back baby boomers to work. So that's what we have to face as a government, period.

0:52:35 You say all this to say that you don't have a recruitment relationship with the university? We have spoken with them. We've sent them job, well, we've sent UVI job postings. At one point, we had a contact in UVI who was on the board. I think it was the board of business. and we still have been unable to recruit. So we're not sitting twiddling our thumbs and I understand the frustration. We have the same frustration. Yeah, well, let us see some aggression in trying to get these things done, but we're not getting the responses that we thought we should be getting.

0:53:12 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator Gittins. Quick point of inquiry, Senator Saru. thank you mr check and back to the sewage fees we asked this question last year budget on the sewage fees and i got a response about dpnr and dpnr not sending things over to you blah blah blah so we seem to have the same issues here if your collections is 200 something thousand dollars tell me what are we doing with the sewage fees how has what has that been corrected so i mentioned in my testimony that we have met we've had a meeting with both agencies dpnr and waste management. We were able to execute our MOU with DPNR and we're waiting, the last I spoke with Waste Management, they are reviewing our proposal, our proposed MOU to finalize all of that so we can get all the information. I guess like, I guess the question, Mr. Chair, would be what is, of the 200 or some thousand collected, what is the aggregate amount right now that's owed in sewage fees? What's the total amount you don't know this is around two million per year two million per year yes based on what what we have on our records but I suspect it should be much more than that that's it okay what we I think part of the frustration is is that we we had the same discussion last year and we haven't moved from where we were last year in terms of being able to address this problem what is the MOU exactly well what's the MOU or waste management okay so when we appeared last year we promised that we would reach out to waste management and try and

0:54:58 execute that MOU the MOU is just basically I had a discussion with the staff as to what they need to receive and by what deadlines they had to receive it in order to incorporate the information into our bill process our billing process and then we met with waste management and had the discussion and we've submitted a proposed proposed language and we're waiting for them how long has it been submitted maybe two months ago because waste management is coming before us those monies are supposed to be transferred to waste management so we need to know yes because it's for their benefit correct so we need to know what they're doing you said we collected 200 000 thus far this year the outstanding amongst is 2 million, so that's only 10%. So that would sound like you have only collected 10% of the outstanding property taxes that have the sewage fee on it.

0:55:51 So that means we are way under in terms of collections. It's on your bill. But it's not on every bill. I have my own separate sewer. It's not on my bill. It's on those that are connected. connected so if you have two million dollars that should be connected and you only collect two hundred thousand then only ten percent of that two million have paid the overall property tax bill so ain't even two million the overall property taxes would be millions no gotcha gotcha so under the graph you had a point where they're looking for the information Thank you, Mr. Chair. One question I had, I didn't get a chance to ask.

0:56:37 When you moved from the property up back of the hospital down to Nisky, I was told that there was money's owed. Do you have the money budgeted for the budget, and how much money is owed? We are in litigation. What happened for a period of time after the hurricanes, we had issues between the landlord and us as to things that needed to be fixed for our employees to have good working conditions. They were not done, and we moved. Right now, we're in litigation regarding what they are saying we owe them.

0:57:18 But that we don't agree. It's litigation. Okay. Yes. All right. Thank you. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Who filed a litigation? Excuse me? who file the i guess the property the property owner the landlord property owner did the landlord it's being litigated by doj on behalf of the oil and and has the lieutenant governor office have they come up with have you guys come up with an amount that you think that is owed absent whatever you say well the issues in the litigation concern more than just money's owed and so until we can resolve those other issues the court resolves them that it includes it includes build-out costs etc right it includes a lot of technical legal issues that we're not able to discuss in this forum then we weren't able to discuss last budget season we weren't able to discuss the time before so we just drag these stuff on it doesn't come to any resolution and um in the meantime the person is still owed outside the monies is there as a settlement um amount if it's a reasonable it's in litigation um like attorney mclean stated and i like i'd like to state for the record that the landlord was paid it was just amongst deducted like any landlord tenant relationship they were just amongst deducted based on what lgo felt what you know we should we should not pay until things were done but they were paid a certain amount of you know of the of the rental rental costs it wasn't like we did not pay them at all did the

last year you didn't pay any rental costs that is not a true statement I'm asking costs were rent was paid but again this is the exact subject of the litigation right what was paid was it enough these are these are the things but that that litigation is in the control of the court it's not driven by us it's not driven by the parties it's driven by a court there's a process there are rules and so we're just going

0:59:27 through that process and once it goes to the court there we were limited in what we can state once it's the cases filed in court we're limited by what we can say it's still being litigated and for the record there were other agencies beside olg that were also included in that litigation that had separate issues so it's it's a big case it's huge so it's not anything that anybody here really can control it just has to go through that legal process and we will get to an end at some point okay thank you yes go ahead yes uh senator i'd like to enter a correction on the record to the question that senator gittins asked the amount the correct amount for the 2021 that has been collected thus thus far for sewer fees is one million forty six 6,719 dollars and 22 cents. 21 or 22? For 21. For 22, rather. And for 21, the amount that was collected, the actuals, was 1,927,882 dollars and 92 cents. Okay. Were those monies transferred to waste management? Well, I have no idea if it has been transferred, but that's what who are collected on their behalf.

1:00:52 It would be plans for it. Colleagues, I think we, no, I usually say I think we have exhausted all questions, but I'm going to say we have not exhausted all questions, and I would hope that the Committee of Jurisdiction could have a follow-up meeting so that we can ask some of the more probing questions into operations, etc. But in terms of the budgetary process, we have asked quite a number of questions, and I'm going to give them an opportunity to put a closing statement on the record. We have two more groups to come before us, but I think this is one of the first times with the lieutenant governor office, I'm not leaving with a real good feeling at all and in reference to the answers that were given there's just a lot of outstanding areas point information I did recognize you a while back but go ahead I just want to be able to go ahead you can ask a few questions thank you mr. chair oh geez I was part of because I was attending a funeral we've been today about within your tests of numerous occasions inadequate staffing limited staffing small staff and it's in a sense is a bit frustrating that to have you here this morning and not really clearly express what those needs are but within your testimony you continually mention about limited

1:02:41 inadequate small staffing this is opportunity you have to really tell us what you need and it's been frustrating hearing so my colleagues trying to get that information out from your office with regards to your professional services um and and the post audit report page seven um there you have for co-file technologies uh why has increased to up to the 872 000 uh approximately two thousand dollars and it was forty four thousand dollars last year and please do apologize as this was asked and answered Senator, the \$4,000 just reflects the amount that was paid to that entity for 2021 and the \$72,353 represents the amount paid as of earlier in 2022.

1:03:44 I think there was a new contract, there's a new contract for more provisions. So the figure just represents what was actually paid to them during a particular period of time. So let me ask you this then, how are you making the payments? Are you doing them on an annually basis, a quarterly basis, how are those payments being made? No, as invoiced, according to the contract, as invoiced. it's not necessarily on an annual basis or quarterly basis we have a contract there's a compensation section and we are invoice we are billed and we pay based on the invoice and so how often are you receiving invoice for services that are being rendered because this is a huge difference here there are some services where you would receive a monthly billing and the monthly for this entity does average around four thousand four thousand three something however sometimes they're um like we mentioned we had breaches so there might be other services they had to provide to us emergency services etc that are not recurring so what's the full amount of this contract for co-file technologies the new contract attorney mclean yeah the new contract is 130 848 dollars two minutes 30 000 all right um any other outstanding vendors um no kofa when you say other outstanding vendors you're considering them to be outstanding i wasn't following if you have vendors that you are owing payments to no um not off the top of my head

1:05:42 uh some of these contracts amendments are just coming online now and again um we invoice i mean sometimes their invoices were reviewing but um nothing that was submitted to me for payments so far in terms of um outstanding what has been submitted has been paid and and let me ask you for billing audit solution services um from e-ring software solution are there are there are no payments from 2021 and for 2022 why is that because of when the contracts came online That entity was not previously with us, so it depends on when the contract came online. The contract for the mass appraisal system started first, so there were payments back in 2021, and this other entity, when it started, the other contract, there had been no billing at that point, but we received some in June, so there are now some amongst paid to that entity but they would not have been reflected on this report as of the date of the report gotcha and the amount for that contract is how much for which one earring and so forth just a minute let me find it here on my laptop and while you do that while you do that um also regards to your two offices located in lagoon street um what's the status on the extending or renewing the lease um for those two offices we are working with the vi housing finance authority to address those



renewals um we're

- 1:07:29 working through the process with them when is the last time you had a that was current uh a lease for them it's it's been a while um it's been a while um i'm looking here it says there are two leases one is smaller than the other so one i'm looking here that they say 2020 2018 it's been a while since 2018 and what's the whole about that then you're just waiting on them well we've had some back and forth the requirements now i think they had a vendor in the middle but they're no longer dealing with that vendor so we're dealing directly with them to address the leases and and closely you're anticipating by when you would have this lease well i'm hoping well i'm hoping to work things out with them um before the end of the fiscal year so maybe hopefully between the end of the fiscal year and the calendar yet this year because we're in 2022 yeah thank you all right mr chair thank you thank you uh may i may answer as to the amounts of the contracts yes you may okay thank you so the billing and collection contract is for two million seven hundred eighty eight thousand two hundred two dollars and zero cents but then we also had the um excuse me oh i'm sorry we also had prior to that the camma contract which is a little over a million dollars okay thank you uh senator okay 1.6 to be exact 1.6 okay um mr mills you have sufficient individuals in property tax to get
- 1:09:19 all of these return mail out center we can always do it more positions because we have retirement and we have persons a schedule well we have retirement that is gone and retirement coming and we we we can do it more yes both in cadastral and and in the appraisal unit, because we want to- So if you could provide me with that information as to exactly what the needs are.
- 1:09:57 What's the possibility of bringing back some retirees for a 120-day period? I'm not sure they would be predisposed to do that, but I can find out. If that's an option, I would want to pursue it. Okay, and we recently passed legislation in reference to allowing retirees to come back for a longer period than 90 days. And that might be the solution right now. I mean, some of the retirees that are waiting for payment, bring them back. And unless we can be able to pay them, there is legislation that clearly defines that particular process.
- 1:10:38 Those property owners that are off-island and with the portal not being open, And is there going to be an extension in reference for the ability to make payment? Yes, there will be an extension. And as you know, the lieutenant governor is empowered to waive 100% of interest and penalties. And so on a case-by-case basis, we will make adjustments to make it easier for the taxpayers. And do you have any summer students? Any summer students could have been assigned to that mail issue?
- 1:11:12 Yes, Senator. We have had two summer students assisting us with reconciling that issue. And they're still there? Yes, Senator. And they're working on it? They are. Okay. And before I close, I think Ms. Farrington, I'm an attorney, Caban. You said it, but you said it kind of soft, so I don't think everybody realize what you're saying. you were saying that we possibly could get some fellows we we've inquired into getting um um the fellows persons from the fellows um program the other part i wanted to hear the butt part that you said after but the issue as always the salary there's there's gonna be an issue with salaries and those persons that are currently employed in the house.
- 1:12:07 The part is, how can I bring on somebody fresh out of college for \$55,000 and have individuals working for 30-something and can't go through the negotiation, can't get a raise, can't hire individuals to come on full-time, but I'm going to have somebody come on making more than the person who have been working 20 years and has to train that person. So we, I want to be able to hire young Virgin Islanders, and the intent is to hire young Virgin Islanders, but it's a slap in the face when you have government employees working 25 years that have a degree, or a teacher that has a master's degree, and come back to teach full time and making \$43,000, and you pay somebody in the fellows program \$55,000 for one year. So I don't know what kind of message.
- 1:12:57 I mean, it was a nice program, but we've got to think these things through. What we need to do is to raise the salaries so that we're able to retain staff and hire additional individuals. Because we're saying you have 1,200 vacancy and then you could barely hire 300 because the salaries are too low. Isn't it better to just have 500 vacancies and pay people what they deserve? And that's what we've been trying to do from this body. And I'm going to allow you to put a closing statement on the record because we're going to go directly into the next group. So, Chairman VLA, we thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony in support of LGO's FY 2023 budget. As stated in the testimony, LGO has many challenges, however, we forge ahead in carrying out our statutorily mandated duties and responsibilities and have had many significant accomplishments.
- 1:13:56 We're moving forward with some technological improvements that will allow us to improve services and increase revenue collections. Staffing is an issue which we are working on and again, exploring different ways on how we can address knowing our limitations with, again, the unions because that would be, To bring someone in at a higher step would pose the same problem to me as the fellows.

- 1:14:27 You're bringing them in at a higher step, but you have employees that are there working for years that they're either going to end up making more than or equal to based on how we've been able to move forward with the negotiations. We're looking at the job descriptions again to see if that could help address the salaries where persons are performing more duties and obligations than they were when the job descriptions were written especially with an expansion of duties and certain divisions within the the office again thank you for the opportunity and we look forward to a favorable response from you guys with regards to our budget request okay thank you so much for your testimony along with all your colleagues that are here supporting you today we will be calling you during our budget markup the committee of finance will take a five-minute recess.
- 1:16:00 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- 1:19:00 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Oh, my God.
- 1:21:00 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The Committee of Finance is back on the record. Next before us we have the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority. Mr. Biggs, the Chief Executive Officer, is here. I'm going to give him an opportunity to put his name and title on the record,
- 1:23:29 along with the other individuals that are here to support him. Mr. Biggs. Economic Development Authority. Start over. Yeah, good afternoon, everyone. Wayne Biggs, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority. To my near left is Kelly Thompson Webb, our Chief Financial Officer. Okay, let her go ahead and put her name on the record. We'll have each. Good afternoon. Kelly Thompson-Webb, Chief Financial Officer of the Economic Development Authority.
- 1:24:02 Thank you. Rosa Celeste-Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive Officer. Thank you. Tracy Lynch-Bola, General Counsel. Thank you. And we have some individuals that are participating virtually. Ms. Holloway. good morning who's the holloway christian incubator program manager version patiana bertrand budget and financial analyst pen joy pen senior compliance officer Thank you. Is that it, Mr. Biggs? Ms. Samuel, the Managing Director of Economic Development Bank, should also be on virtually. Ms. Samuel, I'm not seeing her. Yes, good morning. Monique Samuel, Managing Director, Economic Development Bank. Okay, thank you so much. You may proceed, Mr. Biggs.
- 1:25:05 Good afternoon, Chairman Veilley, members of the Committee on Finance, other members of the 34th Legislature, the Virgin Islands Economic Development Team, and the viewing and listening audience. I am Wayne Biggs, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority. With me today are Executive Team Members, Rosa Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Kelly Thompson Webb, Chief Financial Officer, and Tracy Bola Esquire, General Counsel. I'm also joined in chambers today by the following USVI EDA team members. Margarita A. Benjamin, Managing Director, Economic Development. Nadine Marchena-Ken, Managing Director, Enterprise Zone Commission. Chanel Peterson, Managing Director, Marketing and Vision 2040. Mark Finch, Director of Fiscal Plan, Kayleigh Richardson, Director of Human Resources, and Selena Morris, Executive Assistant to the CEO. As mentioned, other members of the authorities team who have joined virtually include Munique T. Samuel, Managing Director, Economic Development Bank, Kusa Holloway Christian, Incubator Program Manager, Joy Penn, Senior Compliance Officer, and Tatiana Bertrand, Budget and Financial Analyst.
- 1:26:28 If necessary, they are available to respond to any inquiries you may have directly. Before I start testimony, I'd like to just show a quick film in regard to the accomplishments of the authority over the last fiscal year. The Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority fiscal year 2022 snapshot as the lead economic development organization in the USVI, the VIEDA is building the local business community through low-interest loans and other financing options through the Economic Development Bank, supporting artisans and manufacturers through initiatives like the Made in the USVI pop-up shops and spotlighting VIEDA clients across the territory. The USVIEDA has made key strides in attracting more businesses to target events in key industry sectors as identified in Vision 2040. and betting businesses for the VIEDC Tax Incentive Program, facilitating investments in the USVI. In 2022, the EDC received 15 applications and the potential for \$36.6 million taxes paid over five years. To date, there are 79 active EDC beneficiaries as we continue to diversify the economy through additional marketing efforts and a strong lead generation program. The Enterprise Zone Commission initiatives in growing agribusiness include anchor projects in Enterprise Zones, Savan Down Street, St. Thomas, and in the town of Frederickset, St. Croix, while arts and culture are on the horizon with rehabilitated buildings in the town of Christianset, St. Croix, and Garden Street, Upstreet, St. Thomas. With robust efforts in promoting the South Shore Trade Zone, the VIEDA is planning trade zone assets. The VIEDA is all about helping the community through the Estate Planning Forum, promoting the USVI Cares Fisheries Program, and supporting farmers and patrons at AgriFest. To women entrepreneurs at the annual Women Empowerment Conference, we thank our team of 40 dynamic professionals for their great service to the people of the United States Virgin Islands. For more information, visit [www.usvieda.org](http://www.usvieda.org).

- 1:28:47 Let me first thank my in-house team for putting that together for us. The Authority is an umbrella entity unifying the functions of four main divisions with a primary focus on implementing comprehensive economic development programs to improve the quality of life and place for residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Through its main divisions, USVI-EDA offers wraparound services to clients and stakeholders to facilitate investment, bolster the small business community with financial and technical support, boost export activity, revitalize our distressed neighborhoods and communities, and provide affordable commercial space. To further illustrate USVI-EDA's core services, I will now provide a brief overview of the four main divisions.
- 1:29:36 The Economic Development Bank for the United States Virgin Islands, known internally as the EDB, provides equity infusion to small business. As of June 30th, the Economic Development Bank had a portfolio of 61 loans. This represents over \$5.5 million that was approved to finance local small businesses. EDB's loan delinquency rate is 1.5%. In addition to administering USVI EDA's loan programs, the Economic Development Bank has been the lead entity that manages funding through the State Small Business Credit Initiative known as the SSBCI program, which allows for loan guarantees to commercial banks to reduce risk to the lending institutions and thereby encourage small business growth.
- 1:30:27 It also administers financing programs offered through other federal and local agencies, such as the U.S. Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program and the Virgin Islands Energy Office's Sun Power Loan Program. Also housed within the Economic Development Bank is the Incubator Program, which provides technical assistance and management training to help new companies become full-fledged businesses. Through incubator services and events such as the Small Business Camp and the Young CEO Camp, USVI EDA has helped entrepreneurs realize their business concepts into thriving businesses on St. Croix that include a pharmacy, tech companies and skin care businesses.
- 1:31:14 Two, the Virgin Islands Economic Development Commission, known as the EDC, plays a key role in facilitating greater investment to our shores by administering tax incentives that encourage businesses to start, relocate or expand in a territory. This enhances the job market and injects dollars into our local economy. Preliminary 2019 statistics of a reported 66 companies receiving EDC tax incentives indicate an overall average of 1,565 employees.
- 1:31:50 Total capital expenditures of over \$113 million. Total charitable contributions of over \$2 million. And total taxes and duties paid of over \$59 million. Further, in 2019, the total benefit of having these companies operated in the territory was over \$295 million. As of June 30, 2022, there are 77 active companies receiving tax incentives through the EDC. This month, two additional companies were added to the program, bringing the total current number to 79. Ensuring that these beneficiaries are in compliance with the terms and conditions of their certificates is critical to the success of the program and guarantees that our company, our community, excuse me, reaps the benefits of having these companies in the territory. EDC's compliance unit is incorporating technology in its process, recruiting for vacancies, and seeking consultants to ramp up activities to bring all beneficiaries into a one-year compliance cycle pursuant to Act 8559. EDC also administers the Eligible Virgin Islands Supplier Program, which currently includes 350 local businesses. This program supports EDC's procurement policy, which requires beneficiaries of the Economic Development Commission tax incentives to purchase locally to the greatest extent possible from licensed businesses operating in the territory. Other programs administered by the Economic Development Commission are the Sustain Tourism Through Art-Based Revenue Streams Program, known as STARS, and the Hotel Development Program, known as HDA or the Hotel Development Act, and Tax Increment Financing Program, known as TIF, in acting under USVI-EDA statutes.
- 1:33:45 The Enterprise Zone Commission takes a holistic approach to applying community development tools to revitalize once-vibrant towns and neighbourhoods that are now considered distressed. Tax incentives encourage local residents to invest in rebuilding their neighbourhoods and entrepreneurs to open storefronts and increase commerce in the territory's four designated enterprise zones, the towns of Christianstead and Frederickstead on St. Croix, and the communities of Garden Street, Upstreet, and Savandong Street on St. Thomas.
- 1:34:20 Local manufacturers can potentially broaden their client base through the enterprise zone commissions made in the USVI pop-up shop program and its accelerator initiatives, as well as export their products with assistance from the SBA's State Trade Expansion Program known as STEP, which is also administered by the Enterprise Zone Commission. Families receive assistance with issues related to property through its rejuvenation programs and estate planning forums. Notably, this year's in-person estate planning forum was a multimedia event that was aired on radio and television, and live-streamed on Facebook and YouTube via Zoom.
- 1:35:03 Website analytics reflect that the live event drew 100 viewers, the recording garnered another 800 viewers, and the event received over 3,000 hits. Additionally, the Enterprise Zone Commission is the lead entity that will manage and promote tax incentives offered through the Virgin Islands South Shore Trade Zone Program. with the goal of establishing St. Croix as a gateway to trade to this region. 4. The Virgin Islands Economic Development Park Corporation, the EDPC, acquires and operates industrial parks in their territory and complements the Economic Development Commission

activities by offering commercial rental space to investors. The corporation manages three locations and is a self-sustaining entity of the USVIEDA that is supported by rent collections from its 15 tenants. The Virgin Islands Industrial Park located on St. Thomas is 100% occupied with five private businesses leasing space. On St. Croix, the Economic Development Park Corporation operates the William D. Roebuck Industrial Park, which is 88% occupied with nine tenants that include a mix of both private and public entities. It also should be noted that the industrial park on St. Croix is ideally located within the trade zone of the island's south shore. It will no doubt play an integral role as we promote this asset to prospective investors due to its proximity to the airport and seaports, the opportunity for eligible activities qualifying for tax incentives by virtue of operating at this location within the trade zone, and the ample land for development. The Economic Development Park Corporation's third property, the Fleming Building, in the historic town of Frederickstead, not only houses the USVI EDA's office, but also has a portion

1:37:00 of its space leased to one private entity. Although these entities maintain distinct identities and function independently of one another to execute their specific mandates, they also operate in an integrated fashion. In other words, USVI EDA's four main divisions work synergistically to establish a territory as a premier business destination and foster a more robust economy. Supporting the core activities of the main divisions are USVI EDA's administrative departments. These include administration and finance, legal, human resources, marketing, and the the Executive Officers of the Chief Executive Officer and the Assistant Chief Executive Officer. The Authority's overall strategy and operations fall under the guidance of a seven-member board. Presently, the USVI EDA's Governing Board has six members and one vacancy.

1:37:59 In this fiscal year, the USVI EDA successfully negotiated a collective bargaining agreement with the United Steelworkers Local Union 8249. Filled two key management positions, the Director, Human Resources, and Director Fiscal Plan, and three staff-level positions. The authority currently has a total of 39 dedicated team members, with 22 in the St. Thomas-St. John District and 17 in the St. Croix District. Of the overall headcount, three of the employees are members of the Economic Development Park Corporation which operates on a separate budget from the USVI-EDA. There are a total of eight vacancies in the authority. We are also experiencing the hiring challenges that many agencies are facing, and we continue to strategize and discuss innovative ways to minimize the impact of these vacancies. Training, development and succession planning are high on our list of priorities, as we recognize the need to create and maintain a well-trained and skilled staff to further propel the mission of the USVI-EDA forward. This past year, the world began to adjust to the new normal of living with COVID-19.

1:39:17 There was an upswing of in-person events that the USVI-EDA team either hosted or participated in to encourage additional investment in the U.S. Virgin Islands and inform our clients and prospective investors about programs and services that would offer financial or technical assistance to their businesses. It should be noted, however, that during the height of COVID-19 pandemic, when much of the world's activities seemed to have been severely curtailed, the USVI EDA's Dynamic Team never missed a step in providing our service to clients, whether through virtual or in-person means. To accomplish its goals, the Authority utilizes a targeted strategy to maximize its financial resources. The USVI EDA team strives to consistently take this approach while fulfilling its mandate as fiscal responsibility is key to an organization's success.

1:40:17 Once again, I am pleased to report that the Authority has earned its 12th consecutive unmodified audit opinion after completing its fiscal year 2020 independent financial audit. At this time, I will review some of the USVI EDA's other fiscal year 2022 accomplishments in three key areas of economic development. One, diversification, business attraction and investment. Two, small business development. And three, trade. For generations, the United States Virgin Islands's main economic driver has been tourism. Although the USVI did not suffer to the extent as other popular tourist destinations in the region, the blow that the COVID-19 pandemic dealt to many tourism-dependent businesses following the not-too-distant devastating impacts of hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 demonstrated the importance of economic diversification. To help guide the territory toward a more economically diverse and resilient course, Vision 2040, the 20-Year Economic Development Strategy, identified eight target industry sectors which are agribusiness, professional and technical services, coastal and ocean resources, renewable energy, health sciences, research and development, light manufacturing and assembly, VI-style tourism. In fiscal year 2022, the USVI EDA's marketing activities have sought to attract businesses in these industries. USVI EDA participated in the following events, along with partners such as the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism and the Virgin Islands Port Authority, to promote the territory as a premier business destination to investors and their advisors. Some of these events were the 25th and 26th Annual International African-American Hotel Ownership and Investment Summits and Trade Shows hosted by the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators,

1:42:29 and Developers, known as NABHOOD. Both NABHOOD conferences were held in Miami, Florida, the first in October 2021 and the second in early July of this year. USVI EDA representatives met with approximately 40 hoteliers and

several brand representatives at the conference and held eight follow-up meetings. In addition, I participated in a summit panel discussion with hotel brand representatives entitled Caribbean Investment and Development Forum Rebounded to approximately 84 summit participants on the benefits of investing and doing business in the territory. Two, the Global Summit of Women, held in Portugal in October 2021 and Thailand in June 2022.

- 1:43:20 An average of 500 delegates, all women from countries gathered at the summit, which allowed members of the USVI delegation the opportunity to network with women entrepreneurs, CEOs and leaders from across the globe. Contact was also made with entities that may have an interest in South Shore Trade Zone. This was a collaboration with the Department of Tourism to highlight the benefits of choosing the USVI as a place for both business investment and recreation. Interest has also been garnered in the US Virgin Islands hosting this prestigious conference in 2024 or 2025. 3. The 6th Annual Private Wealth Florida Forum in West Palm Beach in November 2021. Approximately 100 high-net-worth individuals attend this conference.
- 1:44:15 Several one-on-one meetings were held with potential investors during the conference. 4. The American Bar Association Mid-Year Tax Virtual Meeting in January 2022. USVI-EDA was an Emerald sponsor of the event, which guaranteed exposure of the territory and the authorities' programs on the event website and email promotions. Additionally, I had the opportunity to present at a breakout session to 66 attendees, which included tax attorneys and consultants of prospective investors. 5. The Caribbean Hotel and Resort Investment Summit, known as CRISS, in Miami, Florida, in May 2022. CRISS is recognized as the Caribbean's leading and most noteworthy hotel investment summit, with approximately 400 registrants and 30 countries represented. The USVI-EDA team received interest from five potential investors due to connections made during CRIS and anticipates three site visits prior to the end of the year.
- 1:45:24 The Governor's mission to Boston to increase investment from the northeastern region of the United States in June 2022. Approximately 62 contacts were made with potential investors, some with an interest in a South Shore trade zone. 7. The 2022 SelectUSA Investment Summit, known simply as SelectUSA, held in the National Harbour of Maryland in June 2022. SelectUSA is the highest profile event in the United States for promoting foreign direct investment. SelectUSA attracts more than 1,200 business investors from approximately 70 international markets. This year, USVI EDA's team, accompanied by a VI Port Authority representative, received interest from over 70 potential investors from around the world, leading to seven follow-up meetings and a coordinated effort for a Taiwanese delegation to the USVI with the U.S. Department of Commerce. It is also anticipated that there will be five site visits to the territory from investors and site selectors contacted at SelectUSA.
- 1:46:38 These contacts are interested in the areas of financial and business services, hospitality and manufacturing and assembly. In addition to participation in events, USVI EDA has increased its exposure in the following national print and digital publications, which had a wide reach to high net worth individuals, site selectors and advisors. Business facilities, website and newsletter, over 1,000 senior level executives and approximately 60,000 magazine and e-newsletter subscribers. Upward Curve, magazine 550 000 high network weekly readers hemispheres magazine placed on the united airline flights and lounges a potential viewership of over 15 million site selection magazine digital and print a subscriber base of over 44 000. newwire distribution to over 200 national and international online publications including yahoo finance marketing efforts have increased interest on three of the usvi eda's social media platforms excuse me usvi eda's facebook reach has increased by 30%, Instagram followers have increased by 6%, and Twitter profile visits have increased by 39%.
- 1:48:14 Analytics of USVI EDA's jump site [www.investusversionislands.com](http://www.investusversionislands.com), targeted specifically to investors, experienced a 54% visitor increase over the previous quarter. The U.S., the U.S. Virgin Islands, and China are the top three locations of website visits. Currently our marketing department is managing a customer relationship management database of over 15,000 companies. We have identified 25 hot projects with solid investor interest in the territory, all within seven of the eight target industry sectors outlined in Vision 2040. Specifically, the HOT projects fall within coastal and ocean resources, health sciences, light manufacturing and assembly, renewable energy, tourism and hotel development, agribusiness, and professional and technical services. The total potential investment value of these HOT projects is over \$196 million. As of June 30, 2022, USVI EDA has hosted 31 site visits to potential investors to give them an opportunity to see firsthand the investment opportunities in the territory. In regards to investment, I am happy to report that at the end of the third quarter of fiscal year 2022, USVIEDA received a total of 15 applications submitted for the VIEDC Tax Incentive Program. These applications represent the potential future economic impact of a minimum of 81 jobs to be created or retained, over \$5 million to be paid in wages,
- 1:50:05 over \$2 million to be made in capital investment and over \$385,000 in contributions to broad-based charitable organizations and public education initiatives. These applicants also represent the potential for the Territory to realize approximately \$36.6 million in taxes over a five-year period. Moreover, 12 of these applications are new, meaning for the



most part they represent new potential investment and tax dollars in the local economy.

- 1:50:43 These 12 new applications represent approximately 68 jobs, over \$4.3 million in wages, approximately \$2.6 million investments and over \$314,000 in charitable contributions. Projected total taxes over a five-year period is approximately \$33.6 million. So far this fiscal year, a total of eight certificates of incentives have been executed. Based upon the comments made by the beneficiaries with certificates executed to date, the Territory will realize new and continued employment at a minimum of 98 full-time employees, approximately \$11 million in salaries and wages, \$550,000 in capital investment, and \$390,000 in charitable contributions annually. It is also estimated that the Territory will receive direct taxes over a five-year period of more than \$14.6 million should the business operations materialize as projected. To date, 13 certificate orientations to familiarise the beneficiaries with requirements have been conducted. There are 23 compliance reviews in process, and 51 COVID-19 petitions have been processed. At the end of the third quarter, a total of \$831,702 was collected in fines and fees. In regards to the Hotel Development Act program, USVI-EDA continues to work with two major hotel projects on St. Thomas.
- 1:52:25 One hotel, RC Hotel Virginalis Inc., was approved for Economic Recovery Fee or ERF incentives and is already in operation. The other, CREF III USVI Hotel Owner Inc., formerly known as Diamond Rock Frenchman's Owner Inc., was approved by the USVI EDA Board for designated hotel occupancy tax incentives and ERF, and is expected to come online by the end of 2022, adding 415 more jobs to the local market. The Enterprise Zone Commission is working towards implementation of anchor projects to fulfill town and community plans on St. Croix and St. Thomas, and further diversify the local economy. The first two anchor projects I will describe are focused on arts and humanities, and will tie into the Vision 2040 target industries of manufacturing and VI-style tourism. These projects are Healing and Humanities in St. Croix, Foundations Sunday Market Square in the town of Christiansted, and the Virgin Islands Museum Civic and Cultural Center in the historic J. Antonio Jarvis School, known as the Jarvis Project, in the Garden Street Up Street community. Both projects seek to revitalize these communities by providing training opportunities in the performing, visual and commercial arts to residents. Therefore, it is envisioned that dance, music and theatre will be major activities in the centres. There will also be training and workshop space for woodworking and masonry. Artisan spaces will also be dedicated to sewing, basket making, caning and pottery.
- 1:54:20 The complex will also include space for civic and community events. These projects will provide alternate social, academic, and professional development, spur small business growth, create jobs, and enhance the territory's tourism product. USVI EDA has been diligently applying for federal grants to help implement these projects, and I am happy to report that we have recently been awarded \$500,000 from the U.S. Department of Interior to start repairs to Building A of the Jarvis Project on St. Thomas. The other two anchor projects will provide shared space facilities to formally establish an agrotech industry in the territory, strengthen our food resilience, use technology training and consultation to increase exports and create jobs. On St. Croix, an agro and food innovation center will be placed in the town of Fedricksted. A site has been identified to host the center's main facility.
- 1:55:27 Two subsites have also been identified. Preliminary discussions have started with the owners for use of the properties and there's lots of interest in using the properties for this purpose. And St. Thomas, an agro and food technology centre will become part of the Savanne Downstreet community. The site of the former Evelyn E. Marcelli Elementary School will be repurposed for the centre. It has already been cleared and prepared for renovation. Four organisations have claimed space in the centre and will collaborate with us on renovations. The Enterprise Zone Commission collaborates with public, private, and non-profit partners to construct and open these projects.
- 1:56:16 Once completed, both centers will include space for agro-processing, a clean kitchen, training rooms, cafe, and a studio-ready fine dining restaurant. Incorporated within the agro-processing centers will be the Food Incubator, which will allow the incubation program to expand its services and offer specialized technical assistance to food entrepreneurs. Once fully launched, both centers will touch many players within the economy to include farmers, fishers, food entrepreneurs, students, retailers and more. Additionally, there will be the possibility of the territory to attain greater food security and increase its food exports.
- 1:57:06 Small businesses comprise the backbone of our economy. The Authority always seeks to implement strategies to support and further their development. In this regard, I am pleased to expound upon a number of developments and accomplishments that will directly impact or have already benefited our small businesses. The Territory stands to receive approximately \$57 million in funding to assist eligible small businesses through the second round of the U.S. Department of Treasury's State Small Business Credit Initiative Program, which we call SSBCI. The USVI EDA has submitted the SSBCI application to Treasury on behalf of the Territory and awaits notification of when funds will be dispersed to the nations and territories.

- 1:57:57 To provide historical context, USVI EDA successfully managed three tranches of SSBCI 1.0, funding totaling \$13.1 million. This assisted 43 businesses in the territory through \$11,800,000 in guarantee support. As a result, 213 jobs were created and 479 were retained. The USVI EDA team is excited about the possibilities that such a significant increase in the anticipated level of SSBCI funding could provide to the Territory. Not only will it be possible to facilitate financing through loan guarantees, but it will also pave the way for additional forms of technical assistance. Though the Territory has 10 years to expend the second round of SSBCI funds, the USVI EDA team has already jump-started discussions with local banks and other partners dollars to strategize the best ways to maximize the use of these funds.
- 1:59:12 As indicated earlier, USVI-EDA collaborates with other agencies to get much-needed financial assistance to small businesses. A major initiative USVI-EDA has been working on this fiscal year is through a partnership with the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, DPNR, to disperse approximately \$3.6 million in direct financial assistance to registered commercial and charter fishers as well as fishing-dependent businesses adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The USVI CARES Fisheries Financial Assistance Program was made possible by funding DPR obtained through the National Oceanic and Aspic Administration . Eligible applicants will receive grant funds based on their level of loss for specific periods.
- 2:00:07 USVI EDA launched an aggressive marketing campaign that included radio and social media interviews, print and digital advertisements, a website, an online application, a webinar, flyer distribution in areas frequented by the targeted groups across all three islands, and in-person informal sessions. The authority also secured technical assistance to the Virgin Islands Small Business Development Centre, the VISBDC, for applicants who needed help completing and submitting applications. Other collaborations this year include partnering with the Office of the Governor to disperse \$4 million to qualified small businesses for submission to the Small Business Innovation Grant Program, and starting discussions with the Virgin Islands Energy Office about the Solar Plus Program for residents who need financial assistance with purchasing solar energy systems for their homes. USVIEDA also offers opportunities for local businesses to increase their exposure and client base. The Enterprise Zone Commission, in partnership with the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts, a division of DPNR, opened the Made in the the U.S. Virgin Islands pop-up shops three times this fiscal year, once on St. Croix in the town of Frederiksted in December, and twice on St. Thomas in December and April. Thirty manufacturers were featured in the shops, and a combined total of over \$43,000 was generated in sales revenue in approximately four weeks of operation. The success of this program is measured not only by the amount of sales, but also by the community's anticipation as the Enterprise Zone Commission team often receive inquiries about
- 2:01:54 when the shops will reopen. It is anticipated that the Made in the USVI pop-up shops will return to both St. Croix and St. Thomas during the holiday season. Additionally, the USVI EDA will continue to partner with American Express to support and promote the Small Business Initiative. Additionally, the USVI EDA will continue to partner with American Express to support and promote the Shop Small initiative, which encourages residents to shop at local small businesses. Finally, the authority recognizes the importance of educating the public about how its programs and services can make their dreams of entrepreneurship a reality. The USVI EDA sponsors and participates in major community events, such as the annual Agricultural and Food Fair, AgriFest, and the Women's Empowerment Conference hosted by Women Striving for Success, Inc. We also host our own preparatory events to spread the word. This year, following the Women's Empowerment Conference in St. Thomas, USVI EDA hosted Women's Small Business Workshop on March 30, 2022. In addition to adult attendees, eight students on the entrepreneurship track from the Charlotte Amelie High School and the Ivana Edora-Kenn High School participated in the workshop. The Authority also launched a series of short videos highlighting business tips and USVI-EDA clients during Small Business Week, May 1-7, 2022, and Economic Development Week, May 9-13, 2022.
- 2:03:45 At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the USVI EDA launched weekly webinars to keep our clients and stakeholders informed and engaged, not only about our services and programs, but also about offerings from other local and federal agencies, as well as to discuss topics that generally impact Virgin Islands community. These webinars continue to be an important medium to keep residents informed. With the passage of Act 8376 designating a portion of the South Shore of St. Croix as a Trade Zone, the U.S. Virgin Islands has opened itself up to a world of possibilities.
- 2:04:22 The Trade Zone Program, though the newest of USVIEDA's tools, has the potential of making the greatest impact on St. Croix's economic development landscape. landscape, thereby transforming the territory's position in the greater realm of trade and commerce. This fiscal year, USVI-EDA has been in an exploration and preparation mode to launch a marketing campaign for investor attraction. Earlier this month, USVI-EDA's Assistant CEO and Managing Director, Enterprise Zone Commission, attended the World Free Trade Zone Organization's annual international conference and exhibition. As a jurisdiction newly entering the trade zone sphere, the networking experiences and opportunity to learn best practices and the state of play in the world's already established trade zones were valuable as USVI EDA fine-tunes its strategy to

promote the territory's trade zone to prospective investors. At the conference, the team learned that there were over 5,000 Trade Zones worldwide and another 500 in the pipeline. It was also made clear that the USVI Trade Zone already has an advantage over many other established zones due to the presence of an airport and seaports. There are Trade Zones that do not have these assets.

- 2:05:51 In fact, some are in the middle of an economic desert or operating out of a single building. The USVI EDA has also been working with a volunteer consultant through the International Economic Development Council, the IEDC, to lay out a trade zone marketing framework. The consultant has advised that before the zone can be promoted to serious investors, property preparation is required. After touring the trade zone and facilities contained within, the team has determined that cleaning and preparation are needed. USVI EDA has met with two of the major property owners within the Trade Zone, the Virgin Islands Ota Tariti and St. Croix Renaissance Park, to discuss preparation and their plans for the properties.
- 2:06:38 Both property owners have also identified areas that are ready for promotion. The consultant has also advised that the marketing framework should include strategic placement of services and activities in the Trade Zone. Therefore, the following target industries and activities have been identified. Manufacturing and assembly, agriculture and food security, warehousing and transshipment, one-stop business services, a shipyard facility to repair and build ships, and a maintenance, repair, and overhaul facility for aviation-related activities. In the latter half of fiscal year 2022, and as we advance into fiscal year 2023, USVI-EDA will focus on the following strategies to boost infrastructure in the trade zone, ready the area for increased investment, provide a full picture to potential investors of the scope of services the territory can provide, and market the zone's unique assets and geographic location. 1. Commissioned a study to determine the demand for a shipyard in the trade zone.
- 2:07:53 The study would also consider the size of investment required to construct a shipyard and estimate the return on that investment. A facility that repairs and builds ships would represent a considerable opportunity for St. Croix and the larger territory. Our geographic location, coupled with the number of shipping lanes nearby and ships that pass near or through our waters, would make St. Croix a convenient stop to have ships repaired. 2. Explore the feasibility of building a facility with the capability to host large-scale conferences, similar to the World Free Trade Zone Organization's annual events, or Sea Traded.
- 2:08:36 To achieve this goal, it is critical to have a hotel located within the Trade Zone. The USVI EDA will continue discussions with the Virgin Islands Port Authority and hotel developers to construct a hotel near the airport on the Port Authority's property. 3. Establish cold storage warehouse space to ensure food security at the Wilfred Bumba ALEC Port and Transshipment Centre. 4. Construct a facility in the William D. Roebuck Industrial Park to provide Class A office space and accommodate manufacturing and storage for shipping. These are eligible activities for tax incentives within the Trade Zone.
- 2:09:20 5. Construct a spec building to attract a big-box distribution centre. We recognize that these goals cannot be accomplished in a vacuum, therefore, we will include stakeholders and partners such as the Virgin Islands Port Authority, the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, the St. Croix Renaissance Park and the Legislature in the strategic planning process. The USVIEDA seeks to improve the economic well-being and the quality of life for a community by increasing and retaining jobs and providing a stable tax base. Economic development is achieved through administering programs, policies and activities that attract new businesses by promoting communities as desirable sites for economic activity, supporting existing local businesses, help entrepreneurs access the technical and financial resources they need, need, and prepare not only the workforce of today, but also workers to be ready for the jobs and careers that will be in demand tomorrow. These activities work together to improve the quality of life and place in the community.
- 2:10:39 In other words, the heart of economic development is the community's people. With that in mind, the USVI EDA must take a holistic approach and promote the territory as more than a place that offers tax benefits. The focus will always be on economic development for the USVI as a whole, its people, its unique assets and the services it can provide. The authorities' proposed fiscal year 2023 budget of \$6,613,000 will employ strategies to address the territory's challenges as we continue to rebuild from the destruction caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, adjust to the new normal arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and rebound from the impact of the Limetree Bay refinery closure.
- 2:11:39 Vision 2040 serves as a guide toward long-term meaningful outcomes as we use the short-term goals of the fiscal year 2023 budget to create a brighter future for the U.S. Virgin Islands. Therefore, USVI EDA will focus on diversifying the economy, attracting more investment, the small business community and increasing trade by prioritizing the following goals for fiscal year 2023. One, implement a complete rebranding of the agency and launch a global marketing campaign that promotes the territory as an innovative world-class business destination. Two, continue targeting the eight industries identified in Vision 2040 to increase investment in the territory.

- 2:12:33 3. Host an economic development summit to examine the factors impacting economies in the territory and the Caribbean region. It is the goal to use this event to place the USVI at the vanguard of economic change. 4. Establish St. Croix South Shore as a logistical hub for transshipment, manufacturing and assembly, and other industrial activities by collaborating with partners to improve the assets within the zone. 5. Continue seeking grant funding to implement the anchor projects in each of the territory's enterprise zones.
- 2:13:13 6. Collaborate with public, private and non-profit partners to construct the Agro and Food Innovation Technology Centers on St. Croix and St. Thomas and augment specialized support to food entrepreneurs by housing food incubators within these centers. 7. Pursue ways to provide more financial resources to residents by continuing discussions with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, regarding establishing a community development financial institution in the territory. 8. Work with local banks and other economic partners to increase access to financing and technical support for the small business community through the second round of SSBCI funding. 9. Expand the incubator program by identifying locations to formally establish a presence in in the St. Thomas-St. John district.
- 2:14:16 And 10, commence capital improvement projects in North Shore Parks to maintain good tenant relations, improve the available space for lease, and enhance the image of both properties as state-of-the-art economic facilities. To achieve these goals, the USVIEDA looks forward to working with our economic development partners and legislators. It may be time for a paradigm shift in economic development to think more in terms of who stands to be impacted and how we can all rely more upon a spirit of collaboration. To usher in a period of true transformation, a public, private and non-profit sectors have joined forces to maintain our momentum from the Vision 2040 planning process. The success of the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority is due to the contributions made by its talented team of hardworking professionals. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the USVI-EDA Governing Board for their leadership and the entire USVI-EDA team for their dedication and drive in finding innovative ways to improve the quality of life in the US Virgin Islands.
- 2:15:30 The USVI-EDA team is also grateful for the support of the 34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands and that of the Honourable Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and his administration. I look forward to continued collaboration in the future. Thank you. My team and I await your questions. Thank you so much for your testimony. I see your big colleagues are going to go directly into a round of questioning. we're going to begin with a five-minute drill.
- 2:16:01 I think that should be sufficient. Senator Blyden, you're recognized. Thank you, Mr. Chair, good afternoon. Good afternoon. And your supporting team there, thank you so much for that comprehensive testimony. I really appreciate the testimony. I like the short and long-term goals, the vision. It's on point. Especially with the ship building, That's going to be huge, because that industry is a multi-billion dollar industry, and we really need to tap into the industry in all areas. It's a good look.
- 2:16:34 Let's go to the Postal Report, page 22 of 29. Under professional service, I see I have, for fiscal year 23, 901,835. All of those professional services have been paid for thus far for this year, up to date? We're current with all our vendors, and we're current with all our bills. Very well. Contracts, same page. The next page, really. You have several contracts also. Can you explain to me Oakley Ross technology? it was implemented in 2009 but it says 15 day notice of cancellation if that contract stayed ongoing I know a payment was paid of \$25,000 this year yeah that is still an ongoing contract that's our IT person and they do not only hardware but also software consultation for us also so yes that's up to date the 15 days just indicates that there's that that provision in the contract in reference if we want to terminate they want to terminate the contract Apparently SMAC law is the same type of contract. Very well. What about FI financial services that expired in April?
- 2:17:55 Yeah, FI financial services, that is our contract compliance officer. She assists us in reference to doing compliance on the EDC side. And so that's an annual contract that we've renewed over a period of time. But basically it's for our compliance side. So the other two are also annual contracts? The JH McGinley is more a six-month contract and its assistance in reference to developing relationships with various hotels. I can say from this contract we've garnered the interest of two hotels we're working very closely with of developing hotels on St. Croix, one in the Port Authority area of Betty's Hope and one on the Cane Bay. So we're working diligently and getting that done. The Johnetta Darden contract is an annual contract or six-month contract in reference to grant writing. We don't have any grant writers directly, but we've worked with Ms. Darden for some time and she's assisted us in receiving grants including this \$500,000 grant that I spoke about in reference from the Department of Interior. Very well. United Electronics Industry Service, LLC. That's what the lease is. Two minutes. at least expired in April and you have two five-year options to renew. Have you renewed it or are you in the process of- We're in negotiations and renewing that lease right now. Are you still negotiating? Yeah. Okay, very well. And finally, let's go to page 24, grants. You have two grants listed here. One expired 12, 15, 21, the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- 2:19:35 Yeah, that's an error there. I mean, I think it was just a misinterpretation of how we reported it. That was actually a \$50,000 grant. We have completed that feasibility study and expended all the monies from that grant. We additionally put another \$49,000 in the event that the grant had cost more than the \$50,000, but the full grant was expended at the \$50,000 level. And we did not have to pay any additional money, so we maintained our \$49,000 in-house. specifically what type of study in terms of uh it was a feasibility study being done for the food incubators um within the agro processing center okay and that was conducted through uvi and and finally on the next one from the department of interior insular affairs for the technical assistance program the 67 000 um that expired were those funds expended all of it this one here it expired in september of this year yeah uh correction that should be september 30th 2023. 23 yeah that's an era also yes okay very well well honestly before my time is up as i stated in your testimony um i'm very happy to see many of the goals um that was I think especially the eight areas when it comes to manufacturing and assemble, agricultural and food security that's critical, warehousing and transitment, I think you're right on target and you're aligned with many of the, I just stated, the 2040 vision.
- 2:21:17 So I appreciate the testimony and I look forward to many more companies coming into the territory. i mean when you tie those conferences um you have a lot of hits but at the end of the day the final result is when you actually get them to come and do what must be done how much you said you had this year onboarded five no i think we did i think we did 15 applications this year when we had eight actual certificates signed this correct eight hits okay thank you so much how much how much how much did you have last year 2021 20 to 21 yeah 11 and thank you so much for 11 11 last year okay very well thank you so much mr chair for the time thank you senator blight and samantha good afternoon everyone good afternoon when i think about economic development i get excited and um i believe that um if you have a healthy economic uh stability you get better jobs better benefits better pay for people overall um i want to start off by saying that the um the testimony was very good i i really um appreciated it and my first question comes from uh comparing the budget overview pie charts on page five um if someone can please let me know i saw an increase in the percentage of fringe benefits from 22 and 23 and a decrease in the percentage of other services and charges from 22 and 23 were those new hires in between that time frame yeah good afternoon kelly thompson webb chief financial officer the increase in fringe benefits accounts primarily for um yeah in fiscal year 2022 we did not have to pay fringe benefits on the eight percent restoration and that's all
- 2:23:23 included siracena increase in fiscal year 2023 okay thank you for that clarity um i also want to go to page number 20 in your testimony. Is the EDA absorbing the cost for the rent or location of these utilities once they are approved? I'm specifically speaking about the establishment of the Agro and Food Innovation Center on St. Croix, and the Agro and Food Technology Center on St. Thomas. Can you tell me a little bit more about that, please?
- 2:24:08 Yeah, we envision creating a center and then having the center really be self-sufficient. I mean, that's why we're talking about putting a food incubator, putting test kitchens that will be available for rental, having a restaurant, a variety of different things. So once the center is up and running, we envision that the services that will be provided there will make the center a self-sufficient center in that regard. We will augment and provide services to the community, but some of those services will be paid for. So for instance, if you're creating, let's say, shoe gooseberry, you can come in and you can rent a clean kitchen for an hour, make your product, and then leave. The only thing you'd have to bring is your ingredients, because everything else would be USDA certified. So all the utensils, all the pots, everything else will be USMDA certified, so you'll have to pay a cost for using that facility. It will allow for people who are doing catering where they're required to have a separate kitchen apart from their home kitchen to use the facility also to do catering and everything else and do the preparations at the site. I believe that's a good step in the right direction with that community based support. I'm glad that you're able to facilitate and be the conduit between that type activity. Two minutes. I also, on page six, I saw a jump in the health insurance premiums between fiscal year 2022 and 2023. Can somebody tell me about that, please? And then I have also travel and advertisement and promotion as well, please. Those are dropping advertising and promotion, and I wanted to know what that would be. Okay. Good afternoon again. Kelly Thompson web chief financial officer the increase in the health insurance premium again that goes back to in this fiscal year we had to pay the eight percent restoration payment to our employees and we did not have to pay out um health insurance on those so you'll see an increase in fiscal year 2023 as well as we expect to have a hundred percent of our vacancies failed um advertising and promotion there's a slight decrease in advertising and promotion um in 2023
- 2:26:16 and that's because in this fiscal year we purchase uh collateral marketing collateral supplies that we don't anticipate anticipate purchasing in 2023 perhaps you should consider increasing that in the event that you want to get these vacancies filled promotion will be key in that aspect of of getting the vacancies filled? Advertising and promotion goes more toward advertising and promoting our products. We do promote in regard to trying to fill vacancies. I mean, we use a variety of different sources. We use Department of Labor. We use Indeed. We use UVI Alumni. We post on our social media pages. We post in the papers, both digital and hard. But when you see advertising and promotion, that's not



necessarily for jobs. That's more for the programs of the agency.

2:27:04 And how many vacancies do you currently have? We currently have eight vacancies right now. Okay. Social media is always good. You can promote on there, too. It comes with a cost, but the reach is great, especially if you're trying to attract younger people to the workforce. Yeah, we do use social media. We use Facebook. We use YouTube. We use Instagram. I think we use Twitter. One last question, Mr. Chair.

2:27:34 May I ask for one more question, Mr. Chair? You may conclude, go ahead. Thank you. And how many of those vacancies are critical for operation for you right now? I would say all of our vacancies are critical. I mean, so we try to hire for all of those. All of our staff are needed in various areas. With SSBCI coming on, for instance, there are some vacancies within the bank and we're trying to fill those and we're re-evaluating those job descriptions now because we anticipate that the job load is going to be significantly more and we're looking for a little more experience in reference to persons who are kind of familiar with commercial lending which is a lot different than consumer lending so we're re-evaluating those but I mean I would say all of those are critical we have a very small staff and we have a wide range of products that we dispense in reference to economic development So for us, all jobs are critical, and we're trying to fill all of them. So if anybody has resumes or know anybody who, we have them posted on our website, feel free to refer people over to us, and we would be happy to interview them for positions. Thank you for your answer, CEO Biggs, and thank you for the time, Chair. And let me take this opportunity to just say congratulations also to you, Senator, from my team. Thank you, Senator Bulquez.

2:28:51 Yes. In reference to that, your answer, Ms. Webb, with the health insurance premium, why did you reference the 8%? That didn't have anything to do with that particular increase. With the way the numbers are reported, all the personnel costs to include the 8% restoration is in a figure. So that's why you're going to see that large area. Okay, you're talking about the line item for health insurance premium. Can you say that again he was asking why the number was higher um so why is 166 000 higher than the year before yeah okay so it also includes vacancies all the vacancies for the position okay they include the vacancies but it has nothing to do with eight percent because eight percent was money that was owed nothing was taken out for health insurance because your health insurance you pay on a bi-weekly basis but you you incurred the increase in an insurance premium or did we offset the increase for eda can we offset the increase for the other government agencies did we we did not receive any special appropriation okay so then that that's what it is because there was a there have been an increase for the last um two years and i think the next increase is coming so you're paying the increase out of your budget yes okay and also senator if i if i may when we budget we have to budget at the family not knowing what we bring people in we have to budget at a higher rate so that includes the the family rate for vacancies also this includes the eight um vacancies that you plan to bring on correct and all of those are vacancies not on new positions all vacancies all vacancies okay we do envision having potentially new positions um as i say we have 57 million dollars coming in through ssbci so we may gear up for that but ssbci can pay a portion of those positions okay what portion you think they're gonna pay 50 75 percent i i think

2:30:48 they're gonna pay at least 75 percent and how much is that that you're expecting uh we haven't we haven't done the full evaluation yet and we could get back to you in reference to those numbers we're evaluating that now and we just met met with the um the treasury team earlier this week so we're making an evaluation now okay senator james you recognize two one two thank you mr chair for the time i see in your testimony i quit i see your testing what can you hear me try it again go ahead Can you just briefly explain to me what was your role in partnering with them?

2:31:59 can somebody receive the question i'm i'm not sure um exactly so somehow i i don't know that we having a difficult time with with st croix today um try the question again senator can i get yes can you hear me yeah no no we're here go ahead try it again okay and as far as my time how are you going with my time i'm working with you okay good greetings once again to the people of the u.s board as i saw here in your testimony where you made mention of you partnering with dpnr for the fish and wildlife program a 3.6 million dollars in financial relief to to the fishery related stakeholder groups can you just explain to me what role you played if knowing that it was fun for covid19 yeah the role we played was we were the administrator of the program for them um in that um we marketed the program for them we developed the program along with them uh so we were the ones doing all the leg work and reference to creating the website creating the online application doing all the marketing and then once um the entities were approved we were also the ones cutting the check and doing the financing through um our finance arm and as we and as we speak about cutting the checks all funds were expended no um the the the eligibility issues um ran into some difficulties so not all funds were expended or have been expended at this time so we're actually DPNR is we're looking at the program and NOAA has given them the opportunity to fine-tune the program and perhaps assist fishers in in other areas so they're looking at this spend plan and seeing how they can make those adjustments now. So all the individuals who are eligible did they receive their

- 2:34:10 the funding? At the end because the individuals could not provide a documentation that was required during a specific period we did have I think 30 something application but none of them are really deemed eligible because of the requirements of the program for the spend plan and that's why NOAA is now allowing DPNR to go back and revise the spend plan and make adjustments to the spend plan to see how they can help that industry. So let me just get this clear, I want to make sure I'm hearing you clearly, no one was eligible for this program?
- 2:34:44 No one met the eligibility requirement based on a spend plan. It requires you to file taxes, it requires you to provide information in reference to your catch and basically identify your losses for the period and the documentation was lacking or was not turned in in regard to those areas and last but not least so that is that no fault of the agencies because of the applicant is what you're basically telling us correct okay I just want to make it clear and get an understanding of what are we what we are talking about here and I see where you mentioned a lot of products that you're working on and I'm happy to know that you're doing great things but as far as funding, I know you made mention that you want to have a building for conferences and what have you. That's you attracting individuals who come to the territory to do specifically that? Or is this something that EDA will be funding? Two minutes. Can you explain?
- 2:35:45 That's something EDA is seeking funding for. We know that the government has some monies in reference to conference centres and we may be seeing how we can tap into that fund if available. But if we're going to make the trade zone an active area that attracts investment and allows for business growth, there's some things that we need to do as a territory to prepare that trade zone. And one of them is to have this convention type center there. We'll work with partners.
- 2:36:12 If we have partners that are willing to invest, of course, we'll work with those partners. But a lot of this will require funding for preparation ahead of time. Okay, I just want to make sure that we pay attention to the funding, because you have a lot of great ideas, and all I'm seeing in my mind is funding, funding, funding, and I just want to make sure that we're not just spitting things out there, I want to make sure that we actually have the funding to do, so as we speak about a budget, but that's a long-term plan, I'm assuming, not a short-term goal. Long-term goal, yes. Okay, thank you. And as far as your budget that you have before us, I'm assuming that you're comfortable with everything before us I think you're doing a great job there's no need to even pound on you but as far as what you're requesting you're comfortable with that you have no need for additional funding from this body um we're comfortable i mean we think that that um allows for operations for fiscal year 2023 but of course if we had additional monies for marketing we can better market the territory um if we had additional monies for program we could um deliver more programs to the community and if we could get monies as we spoke about for um building the spec building or building the conference center in the trade zone that would be very helpful to us and in reference to attracting investment to that area also okay and as far as vendors um do you have any issues paying for vendors you're current with all your vendors yeah we're current with all our vendors we're current with all our salary increases we're calling with all our payments um so we have no problems in regard to to that area time I'm not Italian what's called okay here at a time so what we need to do is duplicate you and have you run a lot of these departments and agencies in government because you seem to be doing a good job um so it's a straightforward budget I have not much nothing else to really say um just hope and pray that when we do the budget markup if you do have those last minute requests you can just bring it to this body and we might just take it into consideration with that said thank you mr. chair for the time I'll make sure I send something in
- 2:38:15 Sanella, thank you for the invitation. Thank you, Senator James. You're marking up our budget. Well, thank you. Do you have anything in the miscellaneous section? I'm trying to, I'm just going to check and see. Do you have any marketed monies in the miscellaneous section? Yes. So we have \$500,000. Okay. So I just wanted to put that on the record. Sufficient, Mr. Biggs?
- 2:38:42 Yeah, I mean, I guess over the years I've requested that that marketing funding move towards operations instead of being in a miscellaneous. I mean, I think it's an integral part of our budget and we should be incorporated into our budget instead of miscellaneously done in regard to that. Into your budget as a line item or remove from the miscellaneous section and as a line item. The issue is that we want to make sure it's spent on marketing. So if we kind of leave it freely, hang it out there, we don't want it to be utilized.
- 2:39:13 I have no problem if it's like night time. My problem with the miscellaneous is it modifies and it changes from time to time, whereas your operation budget tends to stay fairly standard. So if we had that standard written into our operations budget, I think it's something that we have to do every year. So we would request that it be part of our operation budget, even if it's like night time, I say it has to be used for marketing. I don't have a problem with that. okay so colleagues we can seriously consider that that's not a that's not a big issue it's something that we could work on I'll look and see exactly where you are in the budget sent it the graph it's in one to thank you mr. chair good afternoon colleagues good afternoon testifiers of viewing listen I'm present it's a big that I support you and authority a hundred percent so um we you know um did you take a budget cut no our budget has remained um consistent okay great um i was looking at a 2022 um post

auditor report and in your 21 2021 objectives your final bullet was negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement cba so i gonna start with the employees first and two things in your testimony i really like one that you got savant in it but i know the uh somebody your your your crew spells savant wrong i keep telling her that but it's you know but you You got Savant in it, that's number one. And number two, line 140. In this fiscal year, USVI EDA successfully negotiated a collective bargaining agreement with United Steel Workers.

2:41:06 Okay, has those individuals started being paid as yet? Not only have they started being paid, they were paid from October one of the fiscal year. That's what I wanted to hear. Is anybody owed any money? Not at this moment, no. As a matter of fact, in October of this year, again, we're getting ready to make the salary increases. Like I indicated, we're up to date with all our salary increases. Good. Now, you have exempt employees also. Do you have any GS employees?

2:41:37 We do have exempt employees. I mean, we have union and we have confidential or exempt employees. So what we do is, for the most part, we've provided increases for those individuals also. the supervisory and management got a smaller increase than the non-supervisory and management employees. They were given the same increase as the union negotiation, whether they were confidential or exempt employees. Okay, great. So, and like I say, you have any GS employees who are budgeted for the 23 increases? No, we have our own pay scale. So, yeah, we have our own basic step and grade, grade and step chart. Good. Everybody's been taken care of.

2:42:20 Because like I said, you bring such a force. Who left back at EDA working one? I mean, you bring back up up here today, boy. So I like that. Now, do you have any retirements? One thing we can have. Hold on. Any terminations? October 12, 2020. We had one retirement in October of last year, which we're in the process of hopefully refilling. That's somebody from the bank. Like I said, we're looking at those job descriptions to bring them in line, what we plan to do for SSBCI. We do anticipate one more retirement for the end of the year, and we did have one person that left to go to another government agency that we're back filling those positions. Okay, so that's three persons total. Two retirements and one person left. Actually, two retirements, I'm sorry. Two retirements. Okay, good.

2:43:14 And they are paid up to collect their retirement from GRS? everything well let me let me say this i mean our grs and everything is current um as far as i know they are collecting whatever grs um they're entitled to i haven't had any complaints from them saying that we owe um anything in regard to that so um we're current with grs we're current with all our vendors um in reference to payments all our contributions are made okay good any terminations uh no terminations terminations okay great and uh those two retirements count as a part of your eight vacancies now that you have yes okay a part of yes okay good uh how much revenue you generated for the for the year i'll give you a revenue generation i mean and we look at revenue generation for the authority um is a little different than revenue generation for the territory because as you know all our clients pay directly into the general fund tax base but um one second and we can probably give you that that number well I I know it's true you come with because I know you you tend to mention how much money we put into and I'm gonna leave you get your spiel on you know but what your your department first then you could you know big big up yourself and add a part to but for your department first revenue for EDA interest income which is generated from our loans as of june 30 2022 we generated thirteen thousand four hundred and twenty eight dollars um application and processing fees five thousand six hundred and twenty dollars other fees which includes um like copy income and um some indirect costs thirteen thousand three hundred and forty five thousand dollars and then for our edc industrial promotion

2:45:10 fund we collected a total of eight hundred and thirty one thousand seven or two um application fees of six the three thousand five hundred activation fees of thirty one thousand time Compliance fees of \$483,638.34. Noncompliance fees of \$253,564. For a total of... I think she gave you the total.

2:45:46 The \$800,000 was the total, and then she broke down where it came from. Excellent. And then now, like I said, since my time being called, your spiel as to the ROI, you know, the return on investment. Yeah, definitely. I mean, I spoke in reference to the, you know, over a quarter of a billion dollars comes from EDC clients every year and our clients directly. So we have a significant impact on the tax base and the territory and our clients. Good. I'd like to hear that. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair.

2:46:17 Thank you so much. And it's important that the individuals understand the impact of economic development authority on the covers of the virgin islands and to also realize that states across the nation and other countries have similar programs so this is a competitive game we gotta remain competitive and i hear individuals on a regular basis oh do this do that and if you do this do that they're all gone it's it's just as simple as that uh senator before i go to senator sorrow the clean kitchen and st croix are you still considering the same building? Long story with that building, no. We're actually considering a different building.

- 2:46:55 In the town? In the town. A little early to talk, we're in negotiations in reference to that building, but you can't miss it as you're coming into Frederick State where it will be. That building, after we toured it with several legislators, PNP gave it to us one week and took it back the next week. So we had to find a different site and we've been looking for sites and we're just recently identified this site and we have the family interest in doing a long-term lease and reference to that so um i think this is going to work out and we'll be able to move forward with that project okay i'll sidebar and find out where it is senator sorry you're ready i'm born ready you're up thank you thank you mr um chair did you have a trip to thailand recently yes what was the cost of that trip um We haven't received the final cost, and why I say that is that the Department of Tourism made most of those arrangements and we're waiting for the billing from the Department of Tourism.
- 2:47:57 How many traveled? From the EDA, it was myself and the chairman from the EDA. So only two of you traveled from the EDA? Yes. Okay. And what was the purpose of the trip? The purpose of the trip was trying to, again, promote the territory on both the business side and on the recreation side to this conference that's called the Global Summit of Women that has over 500 women from all over the world that attend this particular summit. So also we're trying to get the conference here in 2024 or 2025. So only two from the ADA travel and the rest came from tourism?
- 2:48:41 Yes, I think so. Total amount that went on this trip, do you know? Not sure the total amount in reference to that. Roughly 10, 20? No, there were two from tourism also. I'm sorry, three from EDA. Who's the three? Myself, the chairman, and our business ambassador. Who's the business? Yourself? Oh, Mr. Rodriguez? Yeah, Mr. Rodriguez, the chairman.
- 2:49:08 And the business ambassador is? Ms. Brian and myself. Okay. how long the trip was roughly the day I think it this was the original portion of the trip and I'm thinking about it because I stayed a couple extra days myself on my own time okay because if we don't go if I'm gonna be fair if we if we wouldn't travel which is okay with me that's what you do we just need to make sure that we have a return of investment on these trips that we're traveling because oftentimes we take a lot of government trips and then you hear see nothing when it's done okay so i hope that in 2024 as you said yeah um we're trying to um get them here right in 2024 2025 and there was some interest and i indicated that in testimony also all right i wait for you to tell me the cost of the trip at some point. Now, can you come and sit here, please?
- 2:50:38 I'm just being presumptuous right now. The enterprise will not see you, correct? Okay. One minute, the name on title on the record. Pleasant good afternoon. My name is Nadine Marchena-Ken. I am the managing director of the Enterprise Zone Commission, a unit of the EDA. Okay. Thank you. Let me proceed. Quickly. So there's a commission to study. When you're going to commission a study to determine a demand for a shipyard in a trade zone, roughly how much would that study cost? Well, we're commissioning it. I estimated that the study should cost \$85,000 to \$100,000, depending on who essentially comes forward.
- 2:51:22 So you have an RFP out? First right of refusal is to the University of the Virgin Islands by law. Okay. And where is that \$85,000 to \$100,000 coming from, Ms. Thompson? What's your last name? Thompson Webb. In school, it was Thompson. That's why. Okay. Ms. Webb. um we had us appropriation for the social trade zone so we'll be coming from that okay good now let's two minutes let's jump over to you again miss uh machina ken what about the um you have the collaboration with the public private and non-profit partners to construct the agro funnel technology centers on st croix what is that costing you what does that build out look like what's the amount we are still in negotiations with the family with regard to that facility so final numbers we don't have at this point it is estimated that it will cost somewhere in the approaching a million dollars okay and to to to start phase one and two probably of that particular facility continue to speak onto the mic oh sorry eventually in order to complete all phases probably about five million dollars okay so let's go back so you said that family now this is for st thomas and st croix prayer testimony so are we referring to the family and st croix family and st thomas i'm specifically um speaking to the family in st croix or st croix okay what about facility in st thomas is a government-owned facility marcelli the former marcelli okay oh perfect good so we're going to repurpose that how much would it cost us to retrofit that or is the facility in good condition the facility has not been used for quite a while the first two phases will be 2.7 million dollars and in order to fully outfit the space
- 2:53:19 with all the equipment and so forth we're looking at another five million dollars total to complete the construction and also to add equipment certain pieces of equipment in there that will not be part of the private partnership so we have the 2.7 plus the five or the five is a total amount the aggregate plus the five plus the five so we're looking at five for St. Croix roughly and 7.7 million for St. Thomas yes ma'am okay so the funding source for that is what time we don't have a funding source for that right now that's why we said we're looking for grants i mean we're doing a variety of different things in reference to trying to move that project forward and grant funding is one of them okay mr mr chair please you may conclude go ahead and i'm asking these questions because it still adds to the overall government's budget and the revenue right um and just just lastly because i have a million more questions actually Ms. Machinikin, so we're saying agri-food innovation and technology centers, so how are you interfacing with the RT Park or is there no interfacing with

the RT Park?

2 : 54 : 32 The RT Park has been working on doing technology with regard to general economic development. Specifically this project is the brainchild of the communities in which we are working and so they have asked us to step forward and do that we certainly will reach across to the tech park as we move further into this but it is really the tech the community that has stepped forward and saying that they want um grassroots type of of activities for their young people in their communities and for the people of the Virgin Islands so they're not talking about investors coming in necessarily they're talking about making sure that our young people have the the training to meet the requirements of the workforce that is coming so so and I'll put a mic down now so you don't embarrass me what's your timeline in all of this are you looking at a five-year plan this is a ten-year plan like what does this look like the time frame thank you for the latitude mr. chair with regard to the Marcelli facility we can actually get things started we are really at that moment that if we have the funding right at this moment we can start phase one immediately we're looking at perhaps the end of next year to have the full facility ready to to go with machinery ready to order.

2 : 56 : 12 Mr. Chair, also quickly, is the Marcelli School, do you have an MAU with education or did property and procurement deed the school to the EDA? And thank you for the latitude. The property and procurement, the property and procurement now has that facility, is no longer on the Department of Education. And we have an agreement with property and procurement to use the facility for that purpose. reading agreement it is an a letter moa they are working and we're entering into a lease agreement with property and procurement for that facility okay for the st croix clean kitchen you were allocated what two point something million was the amount we did put aside some monies like two years ago two million dollars it was two million dollars that is sufficient for phase one Not exactly. There is, and I would have to go back and review language, but it speaks to outfitting, I believe, the space, and we need to actually repair the space. So I just want to make sure that we could go back and look at whether we can use it for that specific activity.

## 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.

|    |                                                                                                                                        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3x | <b>Senator Kenneth L. Gittens</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Giddens, Gittins                                                     |
| 2x | <b>Governor Albert Bryan Jr</b>                                                                                                        |
| 2x | <b>Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Bolques Jr., Bulquez                                     |
| 2x | <b>Senator Fred Gregory</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory                             |
| 2x | <b>Senator Janelle K. Saro</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Saru                                                                    |
| 2x | <b>Senator Marise C. James</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr<br>heard in this transcript as: James |
| 2x | <b>Senator Marvin Blyden</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Blyden                                                                    |
| 2x | <b>Senator Novelle Francis</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Francis                                                                 |



## Bills and acts referred to

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

- Act 8559**      Act 8559 · March 24, 2022 · An Act amending the Virgin Islands Code, title 29, chapter 12, sections 708, 708a, 708b, 710, 711, 712, 713a(b)(5), 715 and 723 relating to Economic Development Program, amend the incentives to beneficiaries to further their commitments to investment in the Virgin Islands community
- Act 8376**      Act 8376 · September 25, 2020 · An Act amending title 29 of the Virgin Islands Code, chapter 19, section 1007 relating to the powers of the Enterprise Zone Commission, to expand its authority; amending section 116 to designate the South Shore of St. Croix as an Enterprise Zone; and adding subchapter 11A to govern the Virgin Islands South Shore Trade Zone ---0