



| Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance

Legislature USVI

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career goals. Again, academics must be used to support the students career choice and all students should be should undergo career exploration in elementary and middle schools. High school should be about beginning to walk down one or more career pathways, interning, observing, working, and shadowing mentors. All students should be participating in these activities. It is a proven, it is proven across the country that those who begin their career pathway early have the highest career satisfaction compared to those who stumble on a career after college or pick up pathway in the last two years of college. We are facing a significant problem. We are losing our CTE instructors and those positions are not being readily filled due to a teacher shortage, especially in CTE, where former instructors can double their teacher's salary and private industry. Since 2002, CTE programs have been reduced by 50% in 2002. Every junior high school had six to seven pre CTE programs. Currently it is down to pre to three pre CTE programs if we're lucky. We have lost the following programs in both districts at one or more schools. Boat building, architectural drafting, construction technology, carpentry, cabinet making, electronics, electricity, graphic design, industrial technology, automotive mechanics, diesel mechanics, plumbing, childcare, elder care, certified nursing assistant, certified medical assistant, barbering, licensed practical nursing, agriculture, advanced computer programming, pre-engineering, marketing, and entrepreneurship. According to the Association for Career and Technical Education, over 90% of high school graduates who earn two to three CTE credits enroll in college, and 80% of high school graduates who earn three or more CTE credits in a single program area enrolled in college. Additionally, CTE concentrators are more likely to graduate high school on a time than non-concentrators, 95% versus 85%. To address these challenges we must explore other means of providing instruction to our students including bringing in journeymen, sharing instructional time through technology, and partnering with businesses to offer internships for high school students. This significant shift in our teaching strategy will require funding a pilot program or several pilot

- 0:02:34 programs. We are requesting \$600,000 to pilot the Ms. Lena Schultebrand CTE fund named after a leading Virgin Island advocate and career technical education leader. The fund would be used to administer the program by identifying a minimum of three schools in each district that would utilize shared instructional programming using classroom technology industry internships preferably paid by both this fund and the employer or groups of students in CTE programs four to six journeyman instructors to support classroom learning each journeyman would be paid an industry going rate for three to six hours of instruction per week funding will also be used for emergency CTE needs such as repairing unexpected equipment failures supporting career technical student organizations, CTSOs, and professional industry certification of our instructors.
- 0:03:33 The composition of the Virgin Island Board of Career and Technical Education, the board currently has six of the nine members as mandated by the VI code. All board members were nominated by Governor Bryan and commissioned in late January 2020. We still need two board members from the island of St. Thomas and one from St. John. The office currently operates with an executive director and three staff members, two in St. Croix and one in St. Thomas. Through the VIC chapter 91 through 99 261 and 17 VIC chapter 21 through 23, the Virgin Islands Board for Career and Technical Education is the sole agency responsible for administering career and technical education programs in the Virgin Islands. The VIBCTE is charged through this authority with the responsibilities including but not limited to cooperating with the U.S. Department of Education and administering federal legislation related to career technical education, approving plans for cooperation with the federal government in carrying out career technical education programs, administering funds provided by the federal government and the legislature for the promotion of career technical education, promoting and aiding in the establishment of schools departments or classes for training and career technical subjects, prescribing qualifications for teachers and supervisors of career and technical subjects, establishing qualifications for persons engaged in the training of career technical education programs, preparing and issuing rules and regulations necessary for the proper administration of career and technical education, prepare an annual budget and make an annual report for the Legislature. The Executive Committee comprises myself, Joe Murphy, Vice Chairperson Dr. Anastasia Jackson, Secretary Dr. Susan McGrath, Treasurer Ms. Jenny Hawks, and the immediate past chair Dr. Michael Francois. The board meets every third Wednesday of each month via teams and a publicly accessible forum. The work of the board is directed by six committees which is
- 0:05:41 which meet at a regular intervals they are a professional administrator and instructor certification policies rules and regulations chaired by Miss Genevieve Whitaker curriculum review chaired by Dr. Anastasia Jackson scholarships chaired by Miss Whitaker finance chaired by Miss Jenny Hawkes and government liaison chaired by Dr. Francois the VIBCTE leases two office basis one in both districts at an annual cost of \$55,000 the board maintains two vehicles one in each district we spent \$15,000 on utilities the board has spent its allotment on various unfunded initiatives to support CT programs from our operating budget this includes \$20,000 in support of CTSOs and \$30,000 virtual reality goggles software and equipment for career exploration classrooms. These investments aim to provide students with hands-on experiences and exposure to different career pathways. Territorial scholarship. The board awarded 11 individual grants for the Raster scholarship and five for the Peterson scholarship. This year we are excited to have changed our essay submission to include a video essay to combat AI plagiarism. This innovative approach to academic work involves presenting the context of a traditional written essay through a video forum incorporating visual elements narration and potentially after multimedia components to convey the essays main points arguments and supporting evidence certification certification is an ongoing process this year the board has awarded 43 individual certificate certificates it must be noted that almost all of the hundred and five CT instructors have received certifications various levels and times currently 15 instructors have met all requirements and 30 instructors are in the process of reviewing for renewal certification the board of career technical education in the U.S. Virgin Islands evaluate CT instructor certification requirements CT instructors must demonstrate significant industry experience knowledge and training and complete various teaching certification requirements some states also offer alternative certification pathways for experienced professionals who wish to transition into teaching as the board considers potential changes to the certification requirements it will
- 0:08:14 be essential to balance the need for instructors with solid industry knowledge and ensure that they have the pedagogical skills necessary to instruct and mentor students effectively to that end we are looking at alternative academic coursework at UVI cell provides further the board realizes a difference and instructor requirements for HS and adult instructors versus primary and middle school instructors. VIB-CTE members have worked on the following goals which have been accomplished while others are in progress, following is an update summary. Goal 1, restructure CTE as an individual pillar within or separate from the IDE. CTE must be restructured as a separate entity or division within BIDE, but there were and are various reasons as to why this goal was not accomplished. These include a lack of resources to implement the plan from stakeholders, logistical challenges creating a new entity or division.

- 0:09:18 Significant resources, political support, and consensus-building efforts will be essential to achieve the goal. however this goal is crucial to the survival and success of CTE in the territory and putting it at the forefront of education we advise the instructor certification we advise we revise I'm sorry the instructor certification manual summer of 2023 updated and wrote new bylaws and updated and created new rules to ensure our internal processes are forward thinking Goal 2, Creating a World-Skilled USVI Chapter.
- 0:09:56 In the face of pandemic-induced hurdles and competition logistics, World-Skills has deferred VIBCTE's request for further deliberation until the fourth quarter of this year. Undeterred, we passionately advocate for our cause, emphasizing the critical need to foster inclusivity, celebrate diversity, and confront the lingering shadows of colonialism. The U.S. Virgin Islands boasts a rich culture, tapestry, and storied history, making our participation in the world skills significant and imperative. By exposing our students to diverse skill sets and perspectives, we pave the way for transformative learning experiences that transcend borders. As we eagerly await the final decision from the skills board, securing funding from the esteemed Ms. Lena Schultebrand CTE fund would be instrumental in bolstering our participation. Moreover, by assuming the mantle of ambassadorship, we elevate the territory's global presence, showcasing our unwavering commitment to excellence on the world stage. Together, let us seize this opportunity to ignite a new era of achievement and distinction for the US Virgin Islands, propelling our students to unprecedented heights of success on the international platform. Goal three, implementing new technology in the classroom. This is an ongoing goal. We acquired the virtual reality meta quest goals and career exploration software for classrooms in 2022.
- 0:11:26 Successful negotiations with the software company enable us to obtain additional programs and VR sets using existing funds. Notably, the Academy of Health Sciences now offer the patient care foundation module, providing simulations for various aspects of patient care. We have also added 30 modules for career exploration automotive technology modules leading to automotive service excellence certification bringing us closer to the 21st century CTE classroom. Goal 4 interagency collaboration this is an ongoing goal we have partnered with VIBE and now using the same online certification portal it is a work in progress requiring the initiation of instructors as to the process this will speed up the process for instructors and other CTE professionals who want to renew or apply for a new certification. We continue to participate in events sponsored by VIDE CTE and Department of Labor's Workforce Development. The University of the Virgin Islands through UVICEL is also an integral partner supporting instructor certification exams and coursework. For fiscal year 24-25, goal one instructor certification of professional development again it's an ongoing goal our commitment to instructor certification remains steadfast recognizing the diverse timelines inherent in this process where we made notable strides in certifying CT instructors achieving full certification demands individual engagement and sustained collaboration with the Department of Education. Currently our progress stands at 60% overall certification with a notable challenge in achieving a 10% increase in full certification. To address this we're actively pursuing additional pathways to full certification for our instructors collaborating closely with the state office of CTE we've established joint initiatives including participation in an online certification program offered by ACTE, Max Knowledge, and Harvard Business School. Moreover, we're dedicated to providing
- 0:13:40 ongoing professional development opportunities tailored to the needs of our instructors. Our proposal includes annual profession-specific courses with initiatives such as complementary OSHA 10-hour certification course. Recognizing the potential of financial barriers, we're exploring options for partial coverage through the Ms. Lena Schotterbrand CTE Fund pending approval. Through these concerted efforts we aim to empower our instructors with the necessary skills and certifications to excel in their roles ultimately enhancing the quality of education delivered to our students. Goal 2 incorporate journeymen and specialists as part-time instructors.
- 0:14:23 Our objective is to initiate a pilot program across five key CT programs of study, automotive technology, construction technology, cyber security, accounting, and medical assistance. Working collaboratively with our partners we will develop a well-defined implementation plan to aim at in ensuring the success of this initiative. Our primary focus is to showcase the value and effectiveness of incorporating journeymen and specialists as part-time instructors within these programs. With the ultimate goal of potential expansion to additional fields in the future, funding for this endeavor will be sought from the Ms. Lena Schultebrand CTE Fund pending approval. Number three, enhanced CTE and CTSO programs. We aim to invigorate the development of CTE and CTSO's programs, igniting a wave of transformative learning experiences. Among our top priorities is a meticulous refinement of the agriculture curriculum. Estimates reach across all great levels and seamlessly aligning it with the esteemed University of the Virgin Islands School of Agriculture. Or we eagerly anticipate the release of the curriculum for the agriculture program by the Department of Education for final approval. Rest assured that we are actively engaged in facilitating this process with a dedicated board member Dr. Jackson collaborating closely with the Department of Education, we are poised to navigate any hurdles and expedite progress. But our ambitions do not stop there. We envision pioneering new frontiers in education by implementing pioneering pilot programs led by journeymen and specialists. These innovative initiatives promise to

revolutionize learning paradigm, empowering students with hands-on experiences and industry relevant skills that transcend traditional classroom boundaries. As we embark on this journey of innovation and growth we invite you to join us in reshaping the education landscape and unlocking boundless opportunities for our students future success. Communication and marketing goal

- 0:16:33 four. Our objective is to amplify the visibility and appeal of all CT programs through multifaceted approach to communication and marketing. To achieve this we have implemented a dynamic initiative designed to captivate and inform our target audience. Central to our strategy is the establishment of a monthly online town hall meeting meticulously crafted to serve as a vibrant platform for showcasing the breath and death of our CTE offerings. These interactive sessions spotlight the diverse array of opportunities available, including dual credit and enrollment options, and foster meaningful community engagement through real-time Q&A sessions. In addition to our own town hall meetings, we leverage the power of social media and other advertising channels to disseminate compelling narratives about our programs. By harnessing the latest in the digital innovation and strategic storytelling we aim to penetrate diverse demographics and capture imaginations of prospective students. Through these innovative tactics and collaborative efforts we are poised to expand the reach of our CT programs and inspire a new generation of learners to pursue rewarding careers in high growth industries. Together we can raise awareness and ensure the enduring success of our CTE initiatives. Goal 5, interagency collaborations. We aim to cultivate impactful CTE initiatives through robust collaborations with the essential stakeholders such as the Department of Education, the University of the Virgin Islands, UVICEL, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor and the Virgin Islands Board of Education. Central to our efforts is establishing a comprehensive agriculture program spanning elementary to college
- 0:18:32 levels, paving a clear path toward an agriculture degree at UVI and lucrative career prospects and high growth sectors. We prioritize facilitating internships and on-the-job training opportunities for secondary school students while actively engaging adult learners through our workforce development program. Though ongoing collaboration, through ongoing collaboration, we ensure that our CTE programs remain responsive to our communities and students' evolving needs. Mad insure woman, investing in career and technical education is crucial for the future of our students and our economy. We can ensure that the Virgin Islands remain competitive and prosperous by providing our students with the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in rapidly evolving global workforce. We urge you to support our request for the Ms. Lena Schotterbrand CTE Fund and help us build a stronger, more resilient future for our community. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony, and we look forward to working with you to advance career technical education in the Virgin Islands thank you thank you Miss Murphy for your testimony colleagues we're going to go to a four minute round okay four minute round and we will start with Senator Marvin Blyton you may proceed Senator Thank you so much, Madam Chair, good afternoon, again to my colleagues, good afternoon, Board Chair Murphy and your assistant there with you, and good afternoon, Board Chair Calwood and your supporting cast there with you, and thank you so much for your testimonies.
- 0:20:26 I'm going to start with you, Board Chair Calwood. In respect to your testimony, you spoke to 619 applications that were received in the 23, 24 award period, and he appropriated 1,500 for each eligible applicant. How much of those applicants were approved? To allow Ms. Silvery Reimer, financially coordinated, to respond. The total applicant, sorry, good afternoon, Sylvan Irima, financial aid coordinator. Of those applicant, the acceptance number 500, 558, I believe.
- 0:21:23 558? Yes. Good. Thank you for that. Let me ask in respect to the postal report, page 5 of 8, outstanding vendor payments. You have 28 outstanding vendor payments, so a total of 97,526. What has been done to address that situation? So that number actually has been updated, Senator, but I'll allow Ms. Verdell Parsons, our accountant, to respond to that question. Please. Verdell Parsons, our accountant, good afternoon. date of that \$97,526.63, only two vendors were not paid from that list totaling \$8,090.
- 0:22:08 All other vendors were already paid. I'm happy to hear that. When do we expect to get those two vendors paid? The other two vendor payments just came in partially on Friday. I got partial payment for national school boards, and I'm still awaiting payment for central warehouse. So I'm hoping that this week we'll get more payments coming in. Very well. Thank you for that. The CTEK board, in respect to the post our report for your operation, it basically stated that are most of the information did not come in for this but to see them did you get the information for arm did you send in an information for perfect professional services contracts your leases etc bank accounts you have information about our I apologize. Okay, let's start. Let's start with your vendor payments. Outstanding vendor payment. Do you have any? I want that amount. Great stated numbers I'm submitted. Okay, do have outstanding balances for for our vendors at this point it stands at twenty one thousand eight hundred thirteen dollars and five cents. 30 seconds. For those outstanding amounts what's the plan to have them paid over the timeline for the payments?

- 0:24:06 Senator, I didn't hear the question exactly. You want the timeline for payment? Yes, for those outstanding payments. It depends on the Department of Finance. It depends on the Department of Finance. We're waiting for their approval for most of them. Okay. Professional service contracts. Do you still have the same three contract or do you have any new contract in place? Sorry, Senator.
- 0:24:39 Are you referring that question to the CTE board? Yes, ma'am. Professional services doctor? Yes, Ms. Murphy. And your question is, are there any outstanding? No. You have the listing for the 24 budget, ABC sales and service, rich tech exterminating, and CTE board members. you have any new contracts in place or do you still have the same three contracts? That's on record. I'll let Dr. Jackson answer that. Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Jackson.
- 0:25:15 I'm vice chair for the board. We do not have any other contracts other than those listed. Okay, very well. And in closing, let me ask you in respect to the different categories that you stated in your testimony in respect to, in my opinion, what's going on in the territory, all of those different areas when it comes to technical jobs. And I think that's some point I look forward to seeing how I'm sure that you get all of your funding that's requested and that you continue on the path of increasing your instructors bringing on your journeyman etc in order to assure that the certification continued on our folks are trained in those areas thank you so Thank you so much, Madam Chair, for the time.
- 0:26:15 Thank you, Senator Blyton. Just quickly to the CTE board. Is the executive director on the line? Yes, it appears so, Senator. I'm afraid he has a very poor connection. He's not able to do this. The reason why I ask the question is because, know boards are provide support the organization through establishing the policies and you know those matters that are related to the uh running of the career and technical education board in particular but the executive director must be that person that's able to tell us you know we have to be careful with how we're setting precedent here in the territory and you know those of us who are responsible for following the law the executive director is that responsible person to in fact provide this information that we're asking for the budget board members deal with career technical education type matters with our schools and our commissioners etc a commissioner so he's not on the line it just feels very um unusual that the board would be testifying about how many contracts we have and those types of things it's very unusual to me i i just have to say something about it Senator, he's on the line right now, I believe he's able to communicate.
- 0:28:02 Can you just provide a response to Senator Blayden's questions, Mr. Actually, please put your name and title on the record so we can. Anton Dues, Executive Director, Board of Creative Education. Okay, did you hear Senator Blayden's question? In regards to contracts, we do not have any other contracts in regards to submitting the paperwork. paperwork was submitted on partly we had notice given to send them to another email address which we did we received a call back we forwarded all the documents as requested so they should be all in your mailbox I do not know why you why OMB has a reference to outstanding bills and stuff which I submitted in February and why the update wasn't done.
- 0:29:13 I submitted the requested paperwork from leases, including the execution of extended leases that are attached to the paperwork and sent in. MS. Okay, so thank you for that response. MS. Thank you for your response, and that information should have been provided to ... Did you provide that information to the legislature's post audit division? Yes, ma'am. I received a call from a young lady, and I have immediately sent the files that you have missing. I forward with her those files directly from the link where I send them to. Okay, so we have to read that. she told me that right away and I actually sent them within minutes I'm sure she had tried to get it in but somehow it didn't make it where it needs to go all right so we have to get that information updated mr. post editor please all right um board of education Okay. So when we look at the budget request 425, the budget book, did you guys get a copy of the budget book?
- 0:30:31 Yes, we did, Senator. So the budget book has a hard number of 2.387697. But when we add it up, it's actually, the number is actually off it's actually two million four seven seven nine six seven did you all find that discrepancy as well yes we did why didn't you share it with us in your testimony no this is this is um well not in the testimony we saw it in the post audit report when you got that today oh you saw it in it was today right online it says the two million 387 697 so no i was asking you if you did you get a copy of the budget book yes we did and did you see the discrepancy when when you did your review of the budget book. That's basically what I was asking.
- 0:31:14 So in terms of we didn't, once we saw that it was the same two million, we didn't add it up, basically add it up, but now that we went back to it, now we saw where the discrepancy is and we know where the error is. Trust but verify. The number is incorrect. Definitely. Okay, so we do the additions. All right. Can we, I could provide you the actual number where the discrepancy would have fallen. No, we're seeing it. We know what it is. Okay, so tell me then. So in personnel services, you will have an error instead of the recommendation that you have seen online for OMB at 1,000,000,010,917, it should be 1,000,000,011,917.
- 0:31:59 Okay, so this is what you're going to do, you're going to send back the information to us. Did you have it broken down in your testimony? No, we don't, but what we submitted to post audit would have the correct number. So OMB has

something different, what your post audit division would have the 1,000,000,011,917. Thank you. All right, Senator, what did I do with my name? Not sure who's next. Senator James, you recognize for your four minutes. James Sr., sorry.

0:32:47 Greetings to the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the time. If this question was asked before, my apologies. I just need to know from the CTEQ Board, or from CTEQ, Educational Board, what contributed to those past due payments? I'm seeing here outstanding vendor obligations. I'm not sure if that was outstanding at the time when you submitted those numbers, but I just need to find out here.

0:33:25 I'm seeing a lot of past due, and that's on page six of seven of the reports I report. I'm not sure if you have that. ANTON DEUS, ANTON DEUS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE BOARD OF CAREER TECHNOLOGICATION. Yes, sir, I certainly do have these numbers. These numbers were submitted in early of spring when the first request came out, and that amount has been cleared to now \$21,813.50. Out of that, there is one pending, one rejection. Everything else has been approved by the ERP, but no checks have been cut. This is one of the requests that we had in our testimony for a reinstatement of our lump sum budget so we can our pay our bills in time okay through the chair I would just like to request that information so we can have an accurate reading I'm not saying it's inaccurate time has elapsed but since it was submitted and what we are experiencing here and then I know there are several instances in the section for outstanding vendor obligation that speaks to recent entry or simply break that down for me recent entry as far as it was recently entered and if so if you can explain to us when these were entered do you have that data readily available and that still speaks six of seven of the post added report I do not have the exact dates that these payments were entered I know that my staff sends out every Monday a priority list of payments which are still in the system but have not been paid and what I received this morning is um what I submitted last week 21 thousand eight and thirteen thousand five cents and out of that money there is seven

0:35:27 five hundred dollars to ctec for the skills you can say um attendance of the national conference that was submitted over a month ago seventy five hundred dollars approved but not paid two thousand dollars to woodson approved but not paid um we have wire bills five hundred and twenty five dollars approved not paid another 513 dollars approved not paid another 525 dollars approved but not paid st croix business machines they have 130 1 830 which are held because the um account that it is appropriated for um ink is apparently uh empty so I have to reappropriate monies from another account uh global global tours has a 928 dollars outstanding which is approved but not paid um there are a lot of people to one that feels approved and not paid uh so basically the the issues that we have one minute these payments are they are approved through the erp however checks have not been cut to the vendor as of yet. Okay thank you for placing that on the record and being transparent with us. Like I said just submit that information to us because I just want to make sure it's a very small budget but we want to make sure that while we speak about the FY 2025 budget that those past due payments are not rolling over. Anything rolling over right into the in the next?

0:37:00 MR. No, the way we work our budget is that by August we should have all our insurances and everything prepaid and done so that we are within our allotted amounts. And I will let you use the remainder of my time to let us know what are your challenges, your financial challenges, when it comes to running this CTEC board? As we speak about our 2020 budget what are your challenges and I would end right there well the challenge I can work with the amount of money that was allotted to us to OMB however if you ask me to make a budget then and that budget is then cut into 12 equal payments then that re that ends up to be an issue that in certain months I have no funding to pay my bills and I have to wait until my next allocation or next month comes in if you ask me to give you a monthly item budget that's a different story right so I give I give you a yearly budget at least on a lump sum payment but if I put it in there that I uh travel allotment for the board and there is a month or board for conference I couldn't pay that out because I'm it's cut up into 12 equal payments so that's one of the challenges we have the other challenge is that we are understanding but then we are told no we have on one side and the other hand says no we don't so well you are very choppy but I think I can understand what you're saying my time was called I don't want to abuse my time as far as the Board of Education. Thank God the judge made the ruling. Let's see

0:38:54 what's gonna happen with VI history. Thank you Madam Chair for the time. Thank you Senator James Sr. Senator DeGraff, you recognize for your four minutes. Thank you Madam Chair. Good afternoon colleagues, good afternoon testifiers, all of you listening and present. Chairperson Calwood, what is your acts of 25, your request, budget request total? It's \$2,387,697, the same as this current, the current fiscal year. Okay, and what is your actuals for personnel, fringe, utilities, supplies, so I could get those here, for the 24 budget. What are your actuals right now personal our director Sandra Bess who can give you that information okay Sandra Bess interim executive director as of June 2024 our personnel services is five hundred thirty two thousand three hundred and \$238. Our fringe is \$278,402. Our supplies, \$50,124. Other services, \$383,721. Our utilities, \$13,847. A total of \$1,258,434 to date. I'm sorry, as of June 2024.

- 0:40:43 As of June 2024. Chairperson Murphy, what is your ask for the 25 budget total? The total that we're asking for, Senator, is \$1,284,681. Okay, and give me your actuals right now for the 24 budget. Personal, fringe, utility, supplies. What I have for the 24 budget is what we have spent thus far. In other words, understanding that the fiscal year is not complete. Right. go ahead personnel service personnel services we spend thus far \$191,578 for fringe benefits \$78,058 supplies \$10,979 for other services and charges \$108,880 utilities \$2,200 and capital outlay is \$288 as of today's date. In other words, it's not complete.
- 0:41:57 Yeah, sure. Could you say the, could you give me the personnel and capital outlay again, please? Personnel for 24 budget thus far is \$191,578. and capital outlay thus far is \$288. Okay, Chairman Calwood, did you have any capital outlay?
- 0:42:30 One minute. For 24, up to now. Ms. Bess can respond to your question, Senator. Sandra Bess, Interim Executive Director. To date, we have not completed the capital projects. They are in process. We will have a contracting meeting, contractors meeting next week, and that is for the administration building. So, excuse me, what budget you have budgeted for the 24 budget? What was the total amount?
- 0:43:02 Okay, so we had capital projects, \$90,000, and then as a miscellaneous, \$401,965,000. And how much has been spent to date? Nothing has been spent to date as we are in the process or in progress for those contracts. Time. Okay, so nothing has been spent for your capital outlay but in the 25 budget you're asking for So, what are you asking for capital? Zero, I think it was. In the 25, it's \$90,000.
- 0:43:44 Okay, \$90,000. Okay. I could add to that, Senator, if you'll allow me. For the capital project miscellaneous, this body provided us with relocation costs for our St. Croix office. Of course, that hasn't been done yet due to the new location. is still going on going construction so that'll be for furniture transportation cost that hasn't been done yet also in terms of the guarantee house we don't have an executed contract between property requirement yet so once we get that contract in a bulk of this money will be expended okay as long as the money now will cover into 25 it it will cover yes all right thank you madam chair Okay, so your total appropriated funds for fiscal year 2024 was \$2.3 million, \$2.4 million.
- 0:44:45 Yes. Yes, Senator. That's correct. And you have the same ask for fiscal year 2025 with an increase in your personnel services of 303 000 give or take yes so what's the purpose that is 30 it's actually more than 303 if you so it'll be the fix the number it'll be the three percent increase that we have added on for um salary adjustment for the classified non-union um salaries what is that total three what is the total of um the non-classic it's about i'll have to um i'll have to get a figure for you in a second If you give me a second, I'll get that figure for you.
- 0:45:27 Okay, Ms. Bess. Yes, Senator. We need you to provide that information because we need to be clear on that. And then you have an increase of \$10,000 in supplies. What's the purpose of that increase? And then under other services, you have an increase of \$103,000. What's the purpose of that increase? Senator, Sandra Bess, Interim Executive Director. I when I looked over it looks like there's just a classification adjustment in the 698 and the 7 because when I looked at my own classification which 698 what do you mean okay so we are talking about FY 2025 correct okay for other services and charges there is 698 total there. When I categorized it, recategorized it, it's actually 708, and then the supplies is 77,500.
- 0:46:30 Yeah, but last fiscal year, your other services were 595. So even if the number is higher, what is the reason for the additional amount in that particular category? Other services and charges, because this is what I see here, because what I see is that y'all are just shifting the dollars throughout your budget. And what I mean by that is in fiscal year 24, you had 401,966 for miscellaneous, which is associated with your moving from office space to office space, right? So now that goes away in 25, but what we're seeing that's happening is those funds were shifted throughout the other categories to make the number the exact same number.
- 0:47:30 That's sort of creative, but we need to know actual numbers, you understand? So you had a 2.3 because of the additional four, but the additional four is not available to you in FY25. So your budget should be, the difference should be less 401, 966 plus whatever the amount is associated with your non-union classified increases.
- 0:48:00 Make sense? Yes, Senator. So I need those numbers. is the projected salary increases associated with the non-union classified employees for FY 2025. Okay and then you shared with my colleague that spoke earlier that your utilities to date is 14,000 correct? Yes however your utilities category in your budget is 42,000 so in the the next three months, if you're at 14 as of June, how would you get to 42? So we need some actual expenses around your utilities, and your other services and charges category.
- 0:48:52 Senator DeGraff, you're recognized for your point of information. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Chairperson Caldwell, when I asked you what was your act, You said 2,387,697. That's correct. You said the same as 24. Right. Right, so that's what I was wondering how do you reflect wage increases and those things for personnel? So the wage increases would have been shifted between personnel and fringe for personnel. So that would be, if the difference between the 797,953 for the 1,001,1917 acts that we're asking, one seven acts away accent is a different at 213,964 in personnel for

that three percent okay but so when you look at your actuals now for 24 your personnel at uh five million three twenty three thirty eight five hundred yeah five hundred thirty two three thirty eight And then your fringe at \$278, \$472, it still don't see the bump up in \$25 to cover those wage agreements. So I guess what you're asking Madam Chair is once you send it, then we'll see it a little clearer. Right, so just to be clear, the 3% will will show in terms of the difference between the personnel and fringe.

0:50:20 I think the senator's concern in terms of capital projects and miscellaneous that you wouldn't have that fund, that's what she'll want to see the difference. All right. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. So, please provide an updated listing of your personnel services and your associated fringe benefits and then you could do another column. And the 3% has already been established? It hasn't been implemented yet, Senator, no. Not implemented, but established?

0:50:48 Yes. So you are for sure it will be a hard 3% across the board? So in terms of what they normally give in government for GS non-unit is 3%. So we kept it at the 3%. I'm not aware of any more than 3% that's going to be given. So attach that as another column so we can see the calculation. No problem. We can do that. And then we'll come back to what the bottom line is. Yeah. We can share that with you. That's not a problem.

0:51:16 You recognise your point of information, Senator DeGrasse. Senator DeGrasse, Mike. Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay, so you said for GS employees. So there is a pay schedule for your GS employees in 25. So it may not be across the board 3% because of the employees, the time and grade and everything. So in terms of the employees, GS, so it's only three exempt staff. other employees yes non-union okay so across the board you figure three percent three percent right because we wouldn't just give one person one another two that that creates employee morale conflicts thank you thank you madam chair senator fonseca you recognize for your four minutes yes thank you madam chair um okay quickly um i saw you gave the employees they got an increase in 22 right yes senator okay good um i was looking here at the the wapa the listing outstanding balance and i noticed that the board of education as of march 31 actually did not have a balance with wapa no okay good um i want to go to the um the student um delinquent loans the collection you had So far, 272, 130 collected, and you listed that the total delinquent was 1,282,513, and you were considering a write-off, possibly, of that?

0:52:56 One second, Senator. I think it's a write-off. What page is that on again? 11. 11. Okay. Yes. financial the committee and finance have discussed in terms of writing of those that with a maximum of \$100 so to just ensure that we could because for instance you may have some people that all maybe \$75 \$100 and we can't get in touch with them you write letters call so those kind of accounts of those individuals that we can get in touch with will make every effort to ensure they pay their balance. On page nine, the VIEDC beneficiaries, so those, just help me to understand, those are companies due to the program, the government program, they're obligated to make these contributions. I've noticed, for example, some of them, for example, I don't particularly want to call out any name, but just go to page nine here let's go to the first one right I mean to the second one there's a company here they have fiscal year 23 was 15,000 but fiscal May 31 24 it's zero what what's the explanation for that Sandra Bess interim executive director his certificate issued by the benefit by the the EDC is dependent on, it's a certificate that's given. Sometimes this beneficiary might have done five payments to make up the past, the late.

0:54:42 So it doesn't mean, I'm sorry, I interrupted you. Sorry, it's okay. No, yes, it doesn't mean that it's late, or it just means that sometimes they're making up or they're penalized for for not making the contribution previously okay so this one here the second one for 15 and 23 are you expecting another 15 or it's zero maybe not another 15 sir maybe 3,000 which may be the it's usually the standard or sometimes some of them have to do a 10 000 based on the type of industry that they are in senator okay um the teacher certifications um you know you noted you know education particularly um they just outlined there's a lot of teacher certification that program is run through you are there any benefits for the teachers to certify are Are there any penalties for them not to certify?

0:55:46 There are no penalties. As indicated, the hearing, the penalty is that they be terminated based on the Virgin Islands Code. That's the only penalty. The Board of Education doesn't give them a penalty. We have a small fee of \$30 for them to come in and submit the application along with the professional development hours or for those that's coming first in the system with the degree requirements, a transcript, and those, and then the committee makes a deliberation and ultimately the board makes a decision of either having you to get your certification. Madam Chair can I be allowed to finish?

0:56:20 This question is for Joan Murphy on St. Croix. Ms. Murphy you mentioned several times of shoulder brand fund utilization variances and you're requesting new uses. Give me some more detail of exactly what you mean there how we propose to use the money for the Schotterbrand fund yes we have a proposed budget and Total amount of the funds that we're requesting is \$600,000. Around \$30,000 will be for teacher instructor participating in video online classroom instruction meaning that let's say a teacher or instructor in St. Thomas have expertise that we would like to also have shared in St. Croix then we would use the latest technology the video technology so that information can be taught on

both islands at the same time okay can I ask you through the chair to provide that breakdown of the six hundred thousand utilization yes I believe we did but let me go I did put down fifty three thousand dollars for a contractual position but I would like to actually take that back because we do have a vacant position for a grant monitor that can substitute for that oh miss miss miss shared programs sorry miss Murphy can you provide information through the chair on the details on your

0:58:17 changes thank you madam chair for the time miss Murphy do you have that in testimony somewhere blood page i have it as but i didn't read read it it's available where in your testimony is it located it's one of the it should be attachment pardon what where in your testimony is it located it was an appendix if it did not get to you madam chairperson I apologize and I will get it to you immediately perfect but we do have appendix to the testimony perfect we did not receive the appendix so please forward it to the committee I will share it with all of my colleagues okay yes thank you Senator Francis jr. be recognized for your four minutes thank you very much madam chair and good afternoon to everyone certainly to dr. call with his team miss Murphy and her team and welcome miss best how long you've been have you been interim director At least a year and seven months. I'm sorry, Sandra Best, Interim Executive Director, at least a year and seven months. Dr. Caldwell, how long is Best going to be acting before she gets this award? The board will be making a decision in short order.

0:59:58 Or short order? 30 days, 60 days, 90 days? I'm thinking about 30 days or less. Thank Thank you very much. So are you in any way, shape or form revenue collecting? Do you have any fees, fines or any mechanism where you do collections? So only collection effort will be through certification where we actually collect money. How much were you able to collect during this fiscal year? I will allow Ms. Best to provide the figure for you. Sandra Bess, Interim Executive Director. As of May 31st, 2024, the collections unit has collected \$272,130.39.

1:00:49 And what happens to that money once you collect it? The money is recirculated to allow students to get loans. that's where we add the so that makes up that includes that that's what makes up the territorial scholarship fund and who accounts for that money to ensure that is being properly deposited and reinvested the loan officers deposit the money and we send the record to the Department of Finance who reconciles the account okay are you aware of any judgment or litigation pending against the the board no sir um miss murphy do you collect any fees fines um collection in any way shape or you charge um as the board of education thirty dollars for certification uh from how much money have you been able to collect only i'm sorry How much money have you been able to collect in FY24 thus far?

1:02:07 I'm sorry I didn't hear that. We have not collected any payments for certification yet. No payments. Okay. Do you have any pending litigation or judgment against the CTE? no no litigation okay dr cowell what's the when can the 2024 recipients uh be able to receive their scholarship award one minute so we're hoping by august that they will receive those awards um once the applicants turn in their required documentation it's immediately entered in the system for processing um one thing i would say the department of finance do work with us during that process to ensure that the students receive their checks timely and they already been the information that's required have been already been ever requested of them so yes they have been sent out not all have been submitted but those that have submitted we have begun processing okay and real quickly before my time ran out what is the trigger by which the EDC companies know the fire you of the beneficiary and then what happens do you just receive a lump sum check from from EDC from finance or what happened that triggers that money coming into your coffers Sandra Beth interim executive director the beneficiary sends us directly a check and we acknowledge receipt of the check and that comes in individually or collectively individually from each company individually from each company I'm sure if I may just wrap up all right and that is done automatically on um in may or um just randomly sent or what what happens there sandra best interim executive director they are sent randomly sir and we just we acknowledge receipt we report that we acknowledge receipt of it to the beneficiary and we also notify the

1:04:07 edc okay and the additional money you got fifty thousand dollars this time around based on your notation here that that too is then reinvested or um put into the pool for awards yes senator it is included in the territorial scholarship fund and um have you received any money from arpa cares or the office of um insular affairs outside of of um what you have reported here so far no sir no funding no funding thank you very much thank you for the leniency and time thank you uh senator francis jr uh i recalled the governor uh in one of his press conferences saying that he was giving a thousand dollars to every high school student that submitted an essay. How much of those funds or how much money has been expended as a result of that essay program? Sandra Best, Interim Executive Director. We have, I'm sorry, I was looking for it. It's \$669,000 dollars that was done in FY 2023. 669 it was a million dollars an hour correct?

1:05:41 It was a million dollars but it was broken down based on the applicants we received as of September 30th so what what happened was that they changed the amount we were able to upgrade it to one thousand five hundred dollars to each student and it was based only on the amount of applications we received as of September 30th, 2023. So it was for that

particular school year which would have been 2022-23 school year. That's correct. And it was \$669,000 that you paid out thus far? Sandra Bess, interim executive director.

1:06:24 Yes. On page eight, it talks about the \$669,000 that was given to each student for this, sorry, was given. \$1,500 was given to students for 2020 who school graduates of 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 for that period. So the total essentially is \$669 for those four together.

1:06:53 Got it. Received. All right. So the program has essentially ended. Yes, Senator. Got it. CTE, I think one of my colleagues asked a question about collections and you said that you have not collected any funding to date for, I think you charged \$30 for certification But in your testimony, I thought you said that you certified, I don't remember how many people, but you did certify individuals this year. So am I accurate or did I miss something on that? Yes, that's accurate.

1:07:34 We started a new certification, an online certification. It's a work in progress. It's not completely there yet. And the fee will be \$30, but we have certified We have 105 teachers who have received some type of certification over the past years, but I think there are around 60 teachers that are currently certified and 15 teachers that are fully certified. No, I'm not trying to establish how many teachers are certified. I'm trying to ask you.

1:08:06 But we haven't deducted any money as of yet for the new certification process. So the \$30 is something new? It is something new. something that we you know when is it effective one second just just focus on the question when when will the 30 program begin well i can say senator that the teachers have been notified we're hoping to start the the program in 2024. What does that mean? September 20. What month, when does the certification fee, when do teachers have to start paying a certification fee? I mean that... September?

1:09:02 Yeah you're kind of breaking up so that's why we're having a little hard time. Say that again. in September of 2024 they will be charged a fee okay so you haven't started charging yet okay we needed to be clear on that now going back to my colleague asked a question about the EDC funds and um the EDC funds we actually increased those funds did y'all see the fact that those funds were increased no senator please go back and look at the EDC laws as it relates to what should be coming to the Board of Education or have a conversation with ADA. But let's, so when you receive, how much money do you receive on an annual basis for AD, from the ADC companies? How do you know when a new ADC company comes online?

1:09:53 Sandra Beth, interim executive director. We really don't know unless we look at the list of EDC beneficiaries that are, EDC beneficiaries on the website. So there is no collaboration between, the law is clear about the fact that the Board of Education is to receive X, a certain amount of dollars. Please take some time, look at the law, reach out to ADA so you all could have some sort system in place because you should know who's coming online so you can hold them accountable for the funding right yeah absolutely correct yes so once you receive that money because then you should be able to um have a projection as to how much money you will receive right each fiscal year so when you receive those funds i know the question was asked but i i was not clear on on the response, those funds go into a path for the territorial scholarship?

1:11:01 That's correct, Senator. Grant or loans? So it's a combination loan and grant. Okay. So that's a problem. Combination. The EDC money is going into that path to give the students, not for it to be a loan. That's why I went back to the question. So please look at... And the law says that? It's a grant. So will we read a law to verify, no problem. Yes, it goes into the program for the students of the territory.

1:11:36 So I'm still not clear as to how you are treating these EDC monies and some of the other collections that you all have. So we give you how much money in scholarships annually? Outside of the named scholarships, we give you an additional amount, right? Yes, Senator. Ms. Reimer can provide that number for you. How much is that? Outside of the named scholarships. Your special letter C2. Sylvan E. Reimer, financial aid coordinator. Outside of the named scholarship, we received a territorial scholarship amount in \$1,192, Okay, so this \$1.1 million is a combination of loan and grant?

1:12:28 That's correct. So how much money is grant and how much money is a loan? The board has approved \$1,500 in loan and \$1,500 in grant. No, that's not what I meant. What portion of the 1.1 or the 1.2 is loan and what portion is grant? I don't think it's, I don't think we have it breaking down into that category. We do it based on the number of students that we receive and then we decide, because for instance, years ago it used to be only \$1,000 that the students used to get in loan and grant.

1:13:04 We have increased it. So what you do is you, each student gets a loan and a grant? Yes, Senator. So each student gets a minimum of \$3,000? Of \$3,000. That's correct. And you do that based on how many students apply? How many students apply, yes. So in last, well, I guess you haven't, have you done your chew up for this year? No, we haven't finished because we usually give the report to the Senate. So what about last year? Ms. Reimer Kupavaita for last year as well. Sylvani Reimer, financial aid coordinator, FY 2023, we contributed \$1 million 137,200. And that was Territorial Loan

and Grant.

- 1:13:46 And how much students did we impact? We had 470 students to include 387 in the Territorial Loan and Grant, 9 in service, 36. To include or? 177, Territorial Loan and Grant, which \$1,137,200, nine, the in-service training grant skills center, \$7,200, nursing, 38, and general scholarships, 36, so the total amount, \$1,514,400 was distributed. one million five fourteen four hundred and the difference in the amount of the one million that we receive came from the EDC and also our collection efforts let me tell you why I ask the question I ask a question because we should we We should be seeing a revolving door, right?
- 1:15:07 But we're not seeing that based on what you're providing, you understand? So your total, we give you \$1,137,000 and that's basically what you're pushing out every year. On top of, with the other, what do you call it, legislative grants included, that comes up to the 1.5, but you are not pushing out more than a 137. So what is the amount that's in your bank account that's associated with your loan payments?
- 1:15:46 Because that, the purpose of that is for us to have some sort of a replenishing system going on. We can give you a breakdown analysis of that information that you seek, Senator. You understand? Do you have that information? I understand where you're going with it, yes. We can provide information to you. Do you have that information? Not, I don't think we have that here, no. Well, we could provide that specific information you're asking, basically your question that you're generating. You all understand what's wrong with your program? I wouldn't say there's something wrong with the program until we could provide you that documentation to show what we're doing with the money. So, saying that we have something wrong with the program is only an assessment and assumption. Then you should be able to tell me.
- 1:16:25 should be able to say to me that once we receive our replenishment that annually we use 200 000 300 000 400 000 from the replenishment so the question is what are we using from the replenishment or we may not be getting anything back that's highly likely as well that that's basically what i'm trying to understand because at some point when last was this audited this um The scholarship program is audited at the end of the program. The staff always does that audit of those funds and provide a report to the board.
- 1:17:03 No, not staff audit. I'm talking about like an external. You can hire. I don't mean like an audit in that. Oh, okay. In a negative way. No, we haven't got an external audit. That's a part of the internal controls committee. That's something that they're getting ready to do. Yeah. So you should be having somebody. You do it yourself. It's your... internal for us but in terms of getting somebody that's something the internal controls committee is working to procure okay as part of the inspector audit generals audit it does something we require to do so I don't have a name of the auditor if you're asking who the auditor will be because that doesn't come to doesn't come to fruition yet I am not asking that I'm asking you mm-hmm who internally do you have an internal editor we don't have an internal editor okay so if you don't have an internal editor then you're not doing internal audits you're doing a check per se but you're not doing an internal audit so I'm suggesting that you at least get somebody external that you pay for to make sure that they're watching this so you could be clear on how you pushing the money in and out. Because as I look at this, the funding that you're using for your special, and I may be wrong, but just based on the numbers that you shared with me, it just appears as if it's just the money that you're receiving within that fiscal year.
- 1:18:26 Senator, we understand where you're going with it. Again, we're going to provide the information to you so the decisions that need to be made or the internal audit that we will do going forward will help to determine how effective the program is okay understood how long are we doing still through scholarships from 1942 a long time before i was born that's my point francis jr you recognize that's my point uh going back to the beneficiary contributions um dr callwood in respect to those individuals i have not paid um based on the listing i've been provided here we see several of the edsc companies that that have not paid yet. Is there a timeline for them to pay? And whether or not there is a penalty if they're not paying in a timely fashion?
- 1:19:18 I think they're supposed to be paid by the end of the year, but of course that's something we'll have to work with EDA to verify. Because what we do, once we get the monies, we immediately submit, I think at some point in the year, we submit a report in terms of these are lists of individuals that have submitted the monies. In terms of what they do, in terms the penalty because the board doesn't have the responsibility to levy a penalty against them but eda is responsible for um doing a penalty hence why you see some of them give these big number figures because either they were late and they have to add it on additional money so in terms of levying and who the enforcement piece eda has that responsibility great thank you i just wanted to make sure that there's some accountability and people are paying because this impacts our children of the virgin house thank you very much thank you for the question senator all right so So again, there must be a direct collaboration between EDC and yourself in addition to the fact that you provide your scholarships when?

- 1:20:20 We provide the scholarships in, in, by, by, but in terms of the checks in August, we make the decision in May. August, September, right? Yes. So when that money come at the end of the year, that one do not first end that year. Correct. there must be some system and we have to look at the law that says that they are to provide their scholarship money at a certain period of time frame that you need to have the money by agree this boss it to our children so if that's missing that should be a policy if it's not we don't have a problem making the amendment to the law but that needs to any whatever it is it needs to benefit our children i need the program that you're running as you're this responsible require this word to disburse those funds is that something you want us to send to your committee no we could look at it it's fine all right thank you um senator james senator maurice james you recognize for your four minutes thank you madam chair uh the discussion that you were having is is where i was going um because of my concern with the EDT companies and the Department of Education so the same concerns I have with the Board of Education I want to say to Dr. Calwood that the law says that the Virgin Islands Board of Education shall submit a list of all unawarded and unexpended grants to the legislature not later than 30 days after the end of each fiscal year so I am curious as to whether that has been done at all how many years have you been doing it or not been doing it senator every year that has been done the one for this current period as only one you don't have but everyone before that it's submitted to the legislature so that's
- 1:22:23 So you do have a list of un-awarded and unexpended there are funds available for the following year is that what you're saying? That's that's correct Senator. Okay the other question I have for you is I guess what I will do I will get that from who who is that to when it says at the legislature who does that go to we send it usually send to the senate president's office so we could um free forward that um to your office or well actually to all senators we'll just send those do you want for the last two or three years how long you want it for i'd like it for the last five years no problem we can send that to you okay thank you what's the the success rate of collections for the loans in terms of the dollar figure or in terms of the effort and process percentage like the percentage of um people who paid their loans a success rate that you have 90 percent of people um who have loans paid their loans time in a timely manner is there any data on your collections um that's a report that we could generate but i know it's not 90 i know that do okay um the i noticed in your testimony it talks about uh the fact that with the delinquency that many borrowers have relocated changed phone numbers or are elderly or deceased.
- 1:24:13 In most cases with the loans you do have co-signers don't you? We do. What about the co-signers? I guess I guess if well let me and let you answer. So in terms of the co-signers for those individuals that have co-signed we said if we can't get in touch with the actual borrower we send out to the co-signers too as well um in most cases the co-signers do respond and pay or if they are unable to pay then it makes some type of arrangement um with the board of education co-signers are usually the parents correct yes in in most cases in most cases yes thank you I will shift now to CTEC. I wanted to ask on page three of your testimony. Quick, Madam Chair, may I just finish with this one question that I have? You may proceed, Senator. Thank you.
- 1:25:15 Page three where you talk about that you've lost the following programs in both districts at one or more schools and you go into to me what I know the needed job skills that we need both building construction technology carpentry electricity cabinet making those are now the high demand skills that we need. I also saw and I asked the Commission of Labor about this and where I'm going with this is I saw where the Department of Interior had given a grant to Gold Coast Yacht which was great in the amount of \$400,000. Can this board apply also for those types of grants so that you have access to support the programs that you've lost? Because the reason I called those out is because he, in his grant, those are the areas that he will be providing training for. So can you please address that? Yes I do want to refer a part of the answer to Mr. Deuce but I think that we should look into that probably by filling the position for a grant monitor. I've been in touch with Mr. DeFede and Mr. Fenton about this program and we're gonna also see if we can kind of get our students involved in the program. So we've been talking to them about this so yeah and and we would like to be able to have grants that we ourselves can administer but we are gonna need a grants person you need a grants person that's part of the budget the that we're requesting the new the new monies right because there's so many lost opportunities and then you
- 1:27:21 know there needs to be and I keep saying this there needs to be synergy between labour private training apprenticeship programs and your program workforce development where the amount of money flowing into the territory is being maximized and that you're not duplicating your efforts but in fact you're each getting funds to support your respective programs so I will you know I would love to see where you're awarded a grant of your 400,000 for example so that that's why I went down that road thank you thank you thank you madam chair I appreciate the time all right senator carry on you recognize your four minutes thank you madam chair good afternoon to the members of the Board of Education and miss Murphy also and her team a few questions so let me ask you chairman Dr. Caldwell 100% of your budget comes from the general fund that's correct senator okay so none of the funding the receivables that you receive is used for operation purposes no that's just solely for well in terms of the the certification fees that we get that helps to in terms of paper and stuff that the staff needs to process those application but everything else is for the scholarship loan and

territorial fund. And in your territorial fund how much do you have in that account? Ms.

- 1:29:04 Reimer you have the that number? No I don't currently have that amount. I can pull up in terms of the report from last time and give you that that um that number very well yes that will kind of assist and I say you you have a company that does collection for you Raveco what's what's their role Sandra Beth interim executive director that's Grifco Grifco they assist with the determining the balance when the payment is made the balance and then generates the balance the late fee interest amount okay they're not directly collecting making calls they're just assisting you in the back end yes okay okay what initiatives is the board planning to really get a grip of this collection because your collection is very very weak what's the plan regards to that so love miss Rima to to respond to tell you some of the efforts of the committee and finance within the board is doing to address some of those areas because if the system this can help to if the system and program works as it is intended to work it'll be way more beneficial for the students and even for the board of education itself but Currently, your collections are poor. Sandra Beth, interim executive director. Currently, we have two loan collection officers.
- 1:30:54 They are working, we have the finance committee, the board's finance committee has asked or has requested that we go back to accounts that are \$12,000 and over and try to get those straightened up. We do have a- Let me ask you, what's your oldest outstanding account? One minute. Five years, no.
- 1:31:23 I would say maybe 25 years. 25 years. So it's about time you guys do a clean up and decide what's uncollectible and what is not. write some of those off um the highest amount in loan that you have if i can think about it it may be about twelve thousand five hundred twelve thousand five hundred thirty seconds so the issue then is that you need more personnel to assist you in collecting uh what's what's really the issue yes we do have we do we would need additional uh our last our 2024 budget i'm sorry we did request two loan two temporary loan officers but it's been a different issue because we've we've done extensive searches but it is a challenge because is it a budgetary challenge time what is a recruiting challenge or is the funding to cover what what's the challenge the recruiting challenge so crewing challenge for a loan officer that's interesting well definitely you guys need to work in that area and provide some. I'm sure I do have a few more questions maybe I could just two more. Thank you. Also I've saw here there's there's two I think students that you haven't awarded their pay. Why is that?
- 1:33:01 The two outstanding that haven't been awarded. Sandra Bess, Interim Executive Director. The Cares Act fund, we are the, okay so the OMB received the money and we send the name, submit the names of the applicants to OMB, OMB pays that. So OMB has indicated that those two have been sitting on their critical list and OMB pays it or submitted submits it to finance and then finance sends us to well no goes back to OMB and then OMB sends us when do you know when it will be awarded no sir you guys are following on it to make sure it does yes sir okay the last thing is with regards to your uh leases um i needed you to clarify for the record dr cloudwood because you stated in your testimony that there is a contract remove a PMP or Cephal Enterprise for the new place that you haven't moved in yet but the contract was established since 2023 are you currently paying rent for that space Sandra Best interim executive director no sir the contract was executed just so that we can hold or have the space priority on the space without any payment there's no payment do you know when you'll be moving into no sir at this time the developer was that whole has said he doesn't have a date he's building out the space he's still building out the space okay all right madam chair I want to abuse thank you Thank you so much for your leniency.
- 1:34:46 Thank you, Senator Carrione. Board Chair, have you ever, have y'all ever considered doing conducting an amnesty? Yes, Senator. And was one ever conducted? I will allow Ms. Bess to respond in terms of the amnesty. Yes, tell them about it. Sandra Bess, interim executive director. Honestly, Senator, that was prior my time. I see it on the website where we have requested students to come in if they have a loan. We've been asking students to connect with us if they're not working, if they need a deferment.
- 1:35:45 Okay, so that's not what I mean. In order for an amnesty to be effective, you have to put it out in the media, calling all Board of Education loan recipients who have not paid. You have to pay it forward because other students need to have the same opportunity that you had. Right? and then you give them you do an amnesty period what is a month you have to have a specific period of your amnesty you advertise it you send send out your letters to all the people that's outstanding yeah and you give them an amnesty period you decide that you're going to reduce the you're going to stay if they pay within the window then they don't have to you have to give them incentive they don't have to pay the what you call the interest and the penalties right but that's what you do you all have to get to an amnesty period do you know how much money you have on outstanding did you say that earlier it was um outstanding is one million two something it was you should be able to collect a good amount of money if you do an amnesty i really think so so before you get to writing off and all those things you i mean we don't really want to talk about writing off because i don't think you should i think that we should go through the amnesty period and see what you can collect that's outstanding from the amnesty period, from

the amnesty, just forgiving the interest, forgiving the penalties, and saying, look, just come pay a bill. What are your thoughts?

1:37:19 So you are correct. The amnesty period was discussed in the Committee on Finance in terms of execution, in terms of what date they're going to do. That's something they're going to do. I know we have work in terms of forgiving the interest and penalty for individuals. maybe have reached out to the board directly and really wrote a letter or as a proposal to the committee and finance to make any decisions in terms of that they can't pay but they have this amount of money that they could pay the committee has um done those for some individuals but in terms of our public amnesty that's something that we're getting ready to do when before the um end of the year yes of the calendar year yes i'm looking forward to seeing it you will definitely see it yeah it's I mean that'll help us to generate some funds we we have to we should have been at a closer point of dialing back the amount of the territorial scholarship dollars that we are giving the board because of how much money you understand I know we should have been washing it because we we actually had several ideas in terms of if we've been transparent we have several ideas in terms of the period of getting injuries to pay back one idea was to put all the names of these individuals in the newspaper um center public um press releases different things we wanted to do amnesty yeah do the amnesty amnesty is just uh just just one portion of it that's only can recap some of the funds but we still have to do other efforts to try to get all the funds that we need to pay with me i'm with you you start the amnesty we already do the amnesty then you keep progressively going you don't do all of them at the same time no i don't disagree with you senator i mean before the end before the end of the calendar year as i as i promised

1:39:06 that will be done we look forward to seeing it um senator k part she'll be back i think she just stepped on all right so um so we're gonna need to get from you your updated have you received your um allotment to cover the scholarships for this year the scholarships territorial scholarship um individual scholarships sylvani rhymer financially coordinator yes we have we received the release of funds fiscal year 2024 from OMB oh sorry all all of the funding um the majority yes we are waiting for update on the vi maritime and the increase for the caroline adams okay um and you share with us that the funding that you get from any collections as well as the EDC companies, it goes to a fund at the Department of Finance? Was that shared earlier?

1:40:33 Sandra Beth, interim executive director. Yes, Senator. It is, together with the, it's called the territorial scholarship fund, that's what we put it together. So do you have a general ledger report on your territorial scholarship fund? Not currently. I will have to provide that to you, Senator. So how do you reconcile against what they have and what you have?

1:41:05 What she said not currently means you don't have the report here to give to you. That's a report that we'll have to provide to you. But it's something that we do. You do get it. with Department of Finance is something we have to do internally based on what they have in their system to make sure it matches yes all right because so could you send that back to the committee yes that can be sent to you all right I am not seeing anyone else so I don't know if we have any other I just need to clarify with Miss Murphy just clarification on this fund the purpose of the fund is to to do specifically what was the specifics around the fund honorable your person the leader show to bring in fun will do several things including a pilot the journeyman program it would also support our CTSOs it will support the emergency needs that we as far as equipment that type of thing I wrote it down I don't know why it was not submitted to you but I'll make sure that it does get to you but it is broken down as to exactly how this money would be used but it is vital if we are going to continue with CTE in the territory in public schools we need something that directly supports these program right now we don't have it okay so let me ask you how do how do you collaborate or coordinate is the word with the department of education with regards to the state uh cte uh i can't remember what the name of it say that again perkin uh the federal perkins your state reporting or your state application

1:43:03 and then when the funding does come down back down to the territory how do you how do you work with the Virgin Islands Department of Education to determine the cohorts that will receive that support within our respective grant period or grant cycle okay we do work with the state office for CTE as far as getting understanding of how they are desire to spend the funds we are supposed to have approval or say as to how those funds are going to be spent. Mr. Dews also plays a role an integral role in looking at how those funds are spent. However as you know federal money can only be spent in certain ways and, for example, travel for CTSOs. That's not permitted with federal funds. Years ago we were able to use federal funds, not now, to support the travel for our students. Those funds cannot be used to pay for our, for example, the wages, the per diem for adult teachers that type of thing so there's a strict use of federal funds for CT programs but we do need local funds there's so many needs that we have and we do want our CT programs only to survive but to thrive in order to do that we have to have local support for these programs okay I understand that but I was trying to be specific with you when I asked about the collaboration between the Department of Education and the CTE board,

- 1:44:50 as far as what cohorts the federal funds are supporting and what cohorts the federal funds are not able to support. Because we keep hearing that you need additional money for this purpose and that purpose. But the board sets the policies around CTE, and then once those policies are set, then you collaborate with education. When education came before us today, they did not say to us that they have a need for CTE funding to support cohorts that are not being fully complemented with funding, et cetera. So you're hearing the, we need this, we need that, but you're all having the little pots of, I need this for this equipment, and I need that for travel.
- 1:45:49 But we need to know specifically how these funding will support cohorts that are not being supported by the federal dollars. And then in that ask, those funds have to go specifically to education to the respective district that the the program is to the funding is to be supporting I mean just go ahead I'm chair I would like to ask mr. Deuce if he could respond to part of that question to do this are you still I'm still here Okay, are you able to respond to the Honorable Senator? Anton Dews, Executive Director for the Board of Career Technical Education.
- 1:46:45 I certainly try to shed some light. The Board of Career Technical Education unfortunately has no access to the amount of career technical education funding that comes through either the Department of Education or the State Department of Career Technical and Adult Education. I understand that Dr. Faulkner in the state office works off the Perkins grant. Perkins grant were submitted under the consolidated grant. In that, it was easier for us to submit them timely. However, that does cost us a few dollars in in receiving those grants again the state office is really the responsive agency at this time even though that the law says that the board oversees Perkins no new state plan has been submitted yet it is my understanding that Dr. Faulkner and her staff are working on the state plan we have held several town meetings to support the state plan but again it is a very small amount it finances equipment within CTE schools it finances instructors it does not speak of any financial support to students this is our biggest concern and as I can tell you I'm sitting here in
- 1:48:32 orlando right now attending the fbld convention where not one student from the virgin islands has been able to compete we have no instructors or advisors from the district of saint croix i believe there is one instructor from the district of saint thomas that received an honor for having 20 years fbld advisor status i attended the skills usa ctso in atlanta the week prior to we had one competitor in culinary she did very well unfortunately not many people showed up at the airport to have a parade as we do for football players but that's a different story again these students were doing their fundraising which is nothing wrong with that but they need to be supported by somewhere usually they come to probably a senator's office and ask for some help in most cases we get the call at the office for help for cte students travel the shoulder brand fund would go and address some of these issues again like i said at the beginning perkins funds are for equipment but again it's a grant so the coordinators both in st thomas and st croix will ask the instructors what kind of equipment they need that is done ahead of time it usually comes two years later which means that within the two years there is no funding available to fix the stove a lift whatever a welding machine until the new equipment arrives that's what really the issue is and that's where the funds really needed that the board has somewhat of a the ability to to support students to support instructors and do those things. But that's all I can tell you.
- 1:50:29 The this the state office of career and technical education and adult education at this moment is in charge of administering the Perkins funds and so far we have unfortunately not received details I and we have not received the details from the Department of Education in what kind of funding in their total budget is allocated to CTE and I back to Miss Murphy all right thank you for your response I think that this whole Korean Technical Education Board and this State Department of Education, CTE matter has been, this sounds like a broken record. We had this over and over.
- 1:51:24 The legislature's rule is not to be the pinch hitter to address that issue. That issue has to be addressed between those two entities. This is about students and us giving funding to CTE board does not resolve the issues that we have with the lack of collaboration between the two entities, with the lack of education not feeling it important to have the requisite discussions with you. We thought it was improving. We actually thought that there was some improvement in that area. At some point I wish that we would be able to see, we are here in the middle of a budget hearing that this is the state plan, this is how much money we want to spend for these cohorts and this is what's available, will become available to us from the federal funds and this is the difference. That's what we should be seeing to make an informed decision, and this is not only from CTE board, but this has to be from education as far as Korean tech.
- 1:52:33 And actually we didn't ask them anything about Korean technical education this morning, and we really should have. But what happened is the Korean technical education state director was not here. But that's an important piece of this conversation. What are the cohorts for the upcoming school year or the upcoming budget year? funding is coming down from the federal government and what if any funding is needed from the local government to support this important work that's the piece that's missing I know about an instructor in st. Croix who does a lot of good work with his students and he shared with me that he don't get no funding he'd have to take the money out of his pocket to buy this stuff to support the children. So that's what we need to be seeing. It's one thing for the board to come and say we need this for this purpose.

What's the state plan? How much money is available? What's the consolidated plan? How much is... I'm repeating myself because I want to make sure we clear. How much is available for the respective school year and what is the fallout so we could figure out how much of it we can support? That has never been done. That's missing. So Colleagues, I think we've exhausted our discussion with the two boards.

- 1:53:59 I just, I am not necessarily walking away feeling, yeah, like warm and fuzzy about what we are doing as far as the scholarships are concerned, et cetera, and how we are utilizing the funding that we do have a handle on that piece. But we'll look forward to getting the information from you all, and then we could definitely have a follow-up conversation around kind of addressing that issue. The other thing that we didn't ask for, and one of my colleagues just told me to make sure I asked for it, we need to get a listing of the stipends from each board that was paid out in fiscal year 24 and what has been paid out to date in 25, from the Board of Education as well as the Board of Korean Technical Education, okay? And that's it. For now, if we have additional questions, we'll be sure to follow up with you, okay? Colleagues, do we have any other questions? Because the sports box and recreation is here. Senator Carrion, do you recognize?
- 1:55:21 Just quickly, Madam Chair, I am concerned about how we're monitoring some of these scholarships. For example, I know the Morris DeCastro Fellowship Scholarship Program has some requirements in there as I'm looking here at the law. And so I would like through the chair a listing of the people who have been granted this scholarship and what is their status. Because one of the G, one of the points within section 190 established a recipient is awarded shall upon completion of his studies be required to work in the territory of the Virgin Islands for not less than three years. In the event that the recipient does not return to the territory or work within for three years upon completion of his studies the grant shall become a loan payable upon demand so we following through monitoring that individuals that receive these type of scholarships we are getting the government is and the board what's required our buck for the dollar so just to be clear it's a separate board they have a Morris y Castro board specific for I'm awarding that scholarship. So the more as you cash the board will have to, well through the board of education, provide the information to you that you're asking for, Senator.
- 1:56:41 And who does the monitoring? Because they do the awarding. So who does the monitoring for the fulfillment of compliance? So in terms of the awarding, the monitoring will be the board of education. Very well. Through the chair, please. You can provide that to you. So you want the names of the individuals and what else? And how are you guys monitoring the fulfillment of the compliance of what the law establishes? provide that to you no problem all right so the Mars de Castro board is a board within your board they have a separate boards for instance I serve on the board along with the UVI president the administrator in st. John you have what's That's my personal director and then Beverly Joseph from St. Croix.
- 1:57:32 So the information that my colleague asked for through the chair, who's the chair? I don't think the board has a chair by default, but I'm the one that pulled all the meetings together. I don't have a chair with that board per se. So in terms of administrative, the Board of Education takes the lead in terms of administrative related tasks since that board is not given funding to do that.
- 1:58:03 Right. So then the question that my colleague asked is the responsibility of the Board of Education to ensure that once that individual... No, we did agree there in terms of providing the information to him. I was just trying to just let him know that is a, the Morsley Castro board is what decides of the person getting the award. In terms of the administration, the board of education deals with that. And we could provide the documentation he requested with the names and then ensuring that those individuals are meeting the requirements. So you have a system in place, I think that's what he's trying to ascertain, do you have a system in place where you are actually monitoring to ensure that they meet the Trier requirement etc etc that's that's the in terms of one day after they finish I don't not not specific to that no so no no so that's something that needs to be and who appoints the board members that's it's appointed by legislation of the of the law in terms of who those persons are also it's based and by virtue of their position correct got it okay got it got it all right we're gonna give you a 30-second close as the folks for sports box are right here waiting I'm certain that we have some additional questions but we will ask you them offline thank you madam chair and your wonderful committee members and staff thank you for affording the board of education the opportunity to present our FY25 budget request we will ensure that we provide the necessary documentation reports requested of this committee and we'll continue to charge of improving public education here in the Virgin Islands community thank you once again senator Fred Gregory thank you and we have a few through the chair requests one is the updated pass-through amounts on outstanding vendor obligations to include a date of the recent entries. Outstanding obligations, and this is for career and technical education. That was asked of them. Projected salaries for non-union classified employees for FY25. That's the Board of Ed. Actual utilities and expenses. Actual utility expenses to include actual utility and other services category expenses for FY24 and the projections for 25.

- 2:00:40 Updated listing, that's the same thing, projected salaries. Updated personal listings to include associated fringe, that's Board of Education as well. And listing of all stipends from each board that were paid out in FY24 and 2025 to date for both boards and the listing of the names the the the listing of the names of the maris de castro scholarship and how much has been expended to date no i don't think that was the question it's the the reporting and compliance for the maris de castro scholarship which basically means whether it's when individuals graduate from the program who's monitoring to ensure that they're meeting the compliance requirements and we'll send you a letter but in the interim you can move forward working on it i have a question in terms of the stipends do you want to break down by board member or you just wanted lump sum it has to be by board member That's the question that I got.
- 2:01:53 No problem. We can give that to you. Yes. All right. We have exhausted our questions for today. The committee stands in recess for until, what time it is right now, 4.30. Transcription by CastingWords We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for listening. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll see you next time.
- 2:09:22 This is you, this is you The Committee on Budget Appropriations and Finance is back on the record. Madam Clerk, can you read block number three into the record? Block three, Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation. Invited testifier, Mr. Calvertay White, Commissioner, Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation.
- 2:10:22 this concludes the reading of today's agenda madam chair thank you madam clerk and good afternoon to the officials of the sports parks and Department of Sports Parks and Recreation we have Commissioner White here with his supporting cast good afternoon to y'all afternoon and we're gonna ask the Commissioner to put your name and title on the record and then my right your left you put your names and titles on the record and then the other side will proceed Commissioner white you may proceed good afternoon Calvert white Commissioner the Department of Sports Parks and Recreation good afternoon Carol Peters director of business and finance management good Good afternoon, Vincent Roberts, Assistant Commissioner of St. Thomas St. John District.
- 2:11:23 Good afternoon, Renee Hansen, Assistant Commissioner of St. Croix District. Good afternoon, Raleena Pell, HR Manager. Good afternoon, Jamila Henry, St. Croix District Administrator. Good afternoon, Elroy Hill, Deputy Director of St. John. Mr. Hill, this reporter did not hear you. Good afternoon, Elroy Hill, Deputy Director of St. John. All right, Commissioner White, you may proceed with your testimony. Honorable Donna Fred Gregory, Chairwoman of the Committee on Budget, Appropriation and Finance of the 35th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, other committee members, non-committee members present, central staff, listening and viewing audience, good afternoon. I'm Calvert White, the Commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation. Before you to provide testimony on the Department's proposed fiscal year FY 2025 budget. First, allow me to introduce my senior leadership team, my assistant commissioners, Ms. Renee Hansen, District of St. Croix, Mr. Vincent Roberts, District of St. Thomas, St. John, Ms. Carol Peters, Director of Business and Finance Management, Ms. Relene Uphill, Territorial Human Resources Manager, Manager, Ms. Jamila Henry, District Administrator of Sports, and Mr. Elroy Hill, Deputy Director of St. John. I want to thank our Senior Budget Analysts of the Office of Management and Budget, Ms. Leanna Jeffers, for our continued assistance. Through the utilization of parks, facilities for local events, sports tourism, and other forms of recreation for locals and visitors, DSPR contributes to the economic growth and development of the territory to assist in this to assist in accomplishing its
- 2:13:17 mission vision and strategic laws the SPR proposed fiscal year 2025 general fund budget is nine million two hundred and seventy two thousand forty dollars this consists of four million nine hundred sixteen thousand nine hundred eighty \$2,880 or 53% for personal services, \$2,822,209 or 30% for fringe benefits, \$248,945 or 3% for supplies, \$478,906 or 5% for other services and charges and \$805,000 or 9% for utility services. DSPR proposed FY 2025 breakdown consists of the following. Personnel services is \$4,916,980 and broken down into classified positions at \$3,846,792. Unclassified at \$972,688. Overtime at \$158,000, night differential compensation at \$19,500, and other differential compensations at \$20,000. Fringe benefits total budgets is \$2,822,209, and breaking down into employer contribution retirement at \$1,073,257, FICA at \$304,854, Medicare at \$71,298, and \$1,000.
- 2:14:59 Health insurance premium at \$1,317,644, and workers' compensation premiums at \$55,156. The supplies budget includes operating supplies at \$61,829, vehicle supplies at \$80,000, repair and maintenance at \$71,316, small tools and minor equipment supplies at \$23,000, data processing system at eight thousand two hundred and closing and cloth material at four thousand three hundred for total supply budget of two hundred forty six thousand nine hundred forty five the other service budget is comprise of debris removal at seven thousand four hundred ninety dollars repair and maintenance of seventy four thousand four hundred eighty seven automotive repair and maintenance at \$34,023, rental of land building of \$38,400, training of \$12,000, communication \$78,000, advertising and promotion of \$25,000, transportation which not travel of six thousand five hundred and then travel of eight thousand bulk airline tickets of two thousand five hundred

professional services of eighty two thousand five hundred and six dollars and the non operational miscellaneous grants of one thousand one hundred ten thousand leading to the proposed budget for other service at a total of four hundred seventy eight thousand nine hundred and six dollars in addition to personal free services free benefit FITS, SUPPLIES, AND OTHER SERVICES, DSPR'S PROPOSED FY2025 EXECUTIVE BUDGET INCLUDED UTILITIES BUDGET AT 800, 5000. DSPR'S PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR BUDGET IS DIVIDED INTO THREE DIVISIONS,

- 2:16:55 THE DIVISION OF FACILITIES, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACES, THE DIVISION OF SPORTS PARKS, SPORTS AND RECREATION, AND THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, BUSINESS OFFICE. THE DIVISION OF FACILITIES, parks and open spaces, oversees the maintenance of facilities, public parks, beaches, open spaces and recreational areas under the department's authority. The proposed operating budget for this division is \$3,958,342 or 43%. It consists of \$1,961,851 for personnel services, \$1,287,127 for fringe benefits, \$103,850 for supplies, \$64,834 for other services, and \$540,680 for utilities. The Division of Sports and Recreation organizes, promotes, coordinates, conducts, and develops diverse sports and recreational programs to enhance children's lives and the general community. The Department continues offering diverse, unique, and fun programs to the community of all ages. The proposed operating budget for this Division is \$3,079,055.
- 2:18:19 It consists of \$1,802,391 for personnel services, \$975,064 for fringe benefits, \$40,800 for supplies, \$28,800 for other services, and \$232,000 for utilities. The Office of the Commissioner, which coordinates, compiles monthly reports, manages human resources and payroll, and plans and develops capital projects. DSPR non-operational miscellaneous provides financial assistance to conduct and promote youth programs, amateur boxing programs, and literature programs throughout the territory. The Office of Business and Finance oversees the department's business and financial operations and provide support services to all activity centers. The proposed operating budget for this division is \$2,234,643.
- 2:19:23 It consists of \$1,152,741, or 52% for personnel services, \$560,016 for fringe benefits, \$104,295 for supplies, 275,271 for other services, 32,320 for utilities, and 110,000 for non-operational miscellaneous. DSPR has, DSPR has 126 positions comprising 14 exempts, 110 classified and two vacant positions. In the district of St. Thomas, St. John, DSPR has 64 positions, 57 of those are classified, 7 are exempt.
- 2:20:19 And St. Croix has 60 positions, 53 classified and 7 exempt positions. the department's two vacancies consist of the following a lifeguard instructor and a messenger receptionist due to budget cuts the department lost the following vacant positions a groundskeeper recreational leader one a recreation leader two and a recreational specialist the two vacancies are currently budgeted at 50 percent in the fiscal year 2025 budget The Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation received a budget cut of \$802,178 for the projected FY2025 budget, which could have significant impacts on the department affecting various aspects of its operations and service. This budget reduction would necessitate tough decisions and adjustments within the SPR, potentially resulting in reduced services, staffing changes, and deferred maintenance.
- 2:21:27 It would be crucial for the Department to carefully prioritize its remaining resources to minimize the negative effects on the community while striving to maintain essential services and amenities. The SPR is fortified by several key strengths that serve as the foundation of our operations. First, we boast a robust leadership team with a wealth of experience and a shared commitment to our mission. Secondly, the diversity of skill sets within our department enriches our approach.
- 2:22:02 We take pride in the team's innovative spirit, consistently seeking creative solutions to the challenges. The seamless coordination of events and a strong spirit of teamwork underscore our ability to deliver impactful program and services to our community. Moreover, our commitment to the community is reflected in the diverse array of programs we offer, contributing to the well-being and engagement of the people that we serve. In acknowledging our weakness, we recognize areas where improvements is imperative.
- 2:22:36 Communication is a priority and we are committed to implementing strategies to ensure timely and effective communication with the public through variation mediums such as social media and radio advertisement. Turning our weakness into opportunities, we are poised for positive transportation, modernising outdated facilities present in opportunity to enhance the quality of services we provide. While collaboration with entities such as the Department of Health and the Virgin Islands Department of Education have proven successful, embracing technology presents an opportunity to streamline operations, improve communication, and enhance overall efficiency. Strategically planning to invest in sports tourism within the next two to three years contributes to economic growth and community engagement. more. Upgrading playgrounds and facilities align with our commitment to provide top-notch recreational spaces for our community. Acknowledging the threats we face is essential for productive planning. Challenges such as low salaries affecting recruitment efforts and the lack of equipment and indoor gym facilities pose threats that we are diligently working to to address. Storage challenges, procurement process issues, and budget allocation imbalances also require attention. Our commitment to meeting deadlines and managing vendors and contractors effectively is also a priority. A

strategic priorities guide our path forward, securing additional funding to hire more employees and increase wages is imperative to ensure skill and motivated workforce. Efforts to secure additional facilities recognize the need for expanded spaces to accommodate our growing team. Exploring various avenues to generate additional revenue including parking fees, advertisements and program fields will contribute to sustaining and enhancing our services day-to-day operations as we strive for continual improvement within our department it is imperative to address the day-to-day challenges that hinder our efficiency

2 : 24 : 55 efficiency and over overall functionality i've identified several key areas that require immediate attention. Establishment of an enforcement division. Relying solely on external agencies such as VIPD, DLCA and others has proven not to be as effective in meeting our enforcement needs. Therefore, it is essential to create an internal enforcement division within our department.

2 : 25 : 28 This division will enable us to respond promptly to issues, maintain better control over enforcement procedures, and ensure the safety and security of our facilities, employees, and community. Salary increases to attract and retain talent. To attract highly qualified candidates and retrain our valuable employees, it is crucial to increase salaries. competitive salaries not only motivate and motivate our current staff but also attract individuals with the necessary skill set and expertise to enhance our department's capabilities recruitment of additional staff adequate staffing is vital for the smooth operation of our department we must bolster our team with additional personnel in various roles including recreation maintenance and custodial services, considering the flexibility and cost-effectiveness, the inclusion of part-time positions can meet our staffing requirements efficiently. Addressing these challenges is essential to fostering a cohesive, efficient and enjoyable work environment within our department. Human Resources. In the past six months, we have welcomed ten new hires across the welcomed 10 new hires across various positions within the department.

2 : 26 : 52 These include an executive administrative specialist, lifeguard instructors in both St. Croix and St. Thomas locations, a sanitation worker in St. Thomas, a youth community coordinator in St. Croix, a recreation leader in St. John, a groundskeeper in St. Thomas, and a recreation specialist in St. Croix. however during this period we have also experienced nine resignations and two retirements challenges facing the department and personnel include the impact of financial constraints on staff staffing levels leading to increased workloads for existing employees our department have seen a reduction in staff from an average of 132 to now 119 active employees moreover The lack of upward advancement opportunities within the department and comparatively low salaries contribute to difficulties in retention and recruitment. Many employees appreciate working for the department but find it challenging to sustain due to inflated costs of living.

2 : 28 : 04 These issues must be addressed to ensure the continued effectiveness and well-being of our department and personnel. The Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation is committed to improving quality services to the people of the territory and providing the necessary tools to the employees to enhance their performance skills. As such, we have performance goals linked to the key performance indicators or KPIs, which allow the department to achieve its commitment. Performance goals, to provide activities, programs that encourage community engagement run by the brewery of sports and recreation. Number of recreational programs, number of adult recreation programs, number of sporting and recreational programs offered for ages 3 to 17 annually, and number of training clinic professional developments held per quarter. Means of measurement, number of programs and activities offered per quarter or annually to ensure that all facilities are clean and safe for use, parks, open spaces, and beautification.

2 : 29 : 10 A, percent of unmanned facilities that are inspected and documented monthly. B, percent of staff facilities that are inspected and maintained monthly. And C, the number of days upkeep equipment is offline. Means of measurement, number of work orders, facilities equipment, and number of facilities rented per month to ensure that the public is informed about DSPR programs and events a the number of community engagement and outreach events held quarterly and be the number of department and non-department programs promoted and marketed monthly miscellaneous grants in addition to the departments of sports parks and recreation proposed fiscal year 2025 budget the department manages the miscellaneous grant appropriation of \$1,877,000 per Act No. 8759, Bill No. 35-0141.

2 : 30 : 13 This appropriation offers financial assistance to 48 non-profit organizations. The allotment to date amount is \$124,500 for seven non-profits, 14 non-profit applications totaling 962,500 are at OMB for further processing, and 26 nonprofits have not submitted a request to date for a total of \$790,000. Non-appropriated funds. The Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation also manages the following non-appropriated funds. The casino revenue fund, in FY2023, DSPR received \$372,233.56 for quarters one and two of FY2024, the department has reached thus for \$156,168.25.

2 : 31 : 14 The territorial park fund, this fund is derived through the collection of parking fees, rentals and charges for the use of facilities, concessions, open spaces, and recreational facilities which are under DSPR authority. DSPR have 95 vendor spaces territory-wide, of which 51 are in the district of St. Thomas St. John and 44 in the district of St. Croix. DSPR also have 63 recreational facility facilities rental spaces territory-wide 35 in the st thomas st john district and 28 in the st croix

district in fy 2023 the department collected 270 365 dollars territory wide to date dsbr collected two hundred thirty three thousand four hundred and forty five dollars and projects to collect an additional fifty five thousand eight hundred and ninety nine dollars by the end of fy 2024. the department utilized this fund to cover change orders for fema projects local matches printing and various signs gas coupons and etc the athletic fund this fund derives from the collection of sports and recreation program fees. In FY 2023, the department has collected \$113,250 and to date \$83,385 for FY 2024. The Tourism Revolving Fund, DSPR received the release of \$500 for FY2024 and projects to receive \$1 million in FY2025.

- 2:33:05 The Tourism Revolving Fund fiscal year 2024 expenditures are located in the chart below. The department received ARPA funds. The department currently has three ARPA grants. video surveillance, solar green charging workstations, and the Health and Wellness Program. The Economic Development Administrative Grants Award. The department was issued three sub-awards to EDA, totaling \$3,140,083 for the following projects. The Department of Sports, Park and Recreation, Oppenheimer Beach Facility, The Department of Sports Park and Recreation Coral Bay Recreational Facility also in St. John was awarded \$500,000 and the Department of Sports Park and Recreation Revitalization Retro 10 Playgrounds Territorywide at \$1,640,083.
- 2:34:18 training the department's post-partum recreation will continue to provide the necessary resources to ensure an effective and efficient workforce several employees receive youth mental health training from ubi the spr will continue investing in its staff by providing them with the necessary skills to develop themselves and succeed in their jobs therefore we have a budgeted 12 000 for training in the FY 2025 proposed budget and will utilize other funding sources if necessary for additional training for the entire workforce.
- 2:34:56 Opportunities for the future success of the department. While I'm proud of the current programs produced by the Division of Sports Parks and Recreation, I admit we can always do more. But doing more comes at a cost. There was a time when DSPR had well over 200 employees. Currently, we're down to 119 employees. We will need additional recreational personnel to promote new and creative programs. With the amount of real estate, facilities, and open spaces under our purview, more ground keepers are needed to keep up with our facilities, manicures, and maintenance. With a set date of December 2024 of the completion of Polly Joseph Stadium Big Field, we will need an additional three recreational staff, two maintenance staff, two custodians and four ground keepers to run that facility and several other unmanned facilities effectively and efficiently as activities and programs could be offered at those locations.
- 2:36:03 In addition to personnel, we will need equipment to upkeep the facilities. With new facilities comes an increase in cost of utilities. Recently, the Clinton 58 track was energized and has been added back to the department's list of facilities where funds are needed to maintain the facility. As we saw an increase in recreational programs, inter-island games and tournaments throughout the territory, the department saw the need to add to its fleet.
- 2:36:34 We have procured two vans for St. Croix and one additional van for St. Thomas to assist with transporting players and teams throughout the island. The added vans allow the department to save on transportation cars during these games and for our summer camp programs. The grounds department recently received additional trucks, one for St. Thomas, one for St. John and two for St. Croix. The new trucks will allow our staff to cover more areas more efficiently. The goal is to keep this department current and aligned with the country's best practices. In October 2023, Assistant Commissioner Roberts and I attended a Teams conference to learn how to further promote the territory as a sporting event destination.
- 2:37:21 Also in October 2023, several staff members attended the National Recreation and Parks Association Annual Conference. For more than 50 years, the NRPA annual conference has been the premier meeting of the Park and Recreation community. Annual conference attendees get an inside look at the latest products and services. The department continues to produce programs that the entire community can enjoy. The men and women in our community are making the most of what resources they have to change the lives of the people they serve. In closing, I want to thank my staff.
- 2:37:58 I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated individuals of the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation for their unwavering commitment to improving the lives of our community members. Your tireless efforts, often extended into long hours, are performed with the deep sense of pride and professionalism that sets our department apart. Each member's contribution, whether in park maintenance, event organization or program development is invaluable and deeply appreciated your passion and dedication are the driving force behind our department's success and i want to express my genuine genuine appreciation for your outstanding services together we will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve thank you for all that you do i now stand ready to answer any questions you may have Thank you, Commissioner Wade. You sure you want to stand? You want to stand to answer any questions? You say you know, stand. Yeah. Or sit. All right, colleagues.
- 2:39:10 We're going to go to a five-minute round with the Department of Sports Parks and Recreation as we know how important the work that they do is to the youths of the Virgin Islands. I saw a discrepancy in, what did I do with the paper, hmm, I

want to move on to the next sentence until I could find it but somehow you're off like two thousand dollars did y'all see that in the budget book compared to your um I can't remember what category it's in now where did I make my note did you see note that is it in Okay, it's in your testimony. That's where it is. So I think I checked them off. So under your personal services, \$2,8,29, your fringe benefits. Your fringe. Your fringe is off. The number in the budget book is \$2,820,209. And your number is \$2,822,209. So I don't know if that's a typo. It can be.

- 2 : 40 : 42 Ms. Your fiscal person, help me to just, Ms. Petoz? Ms. Petoz? Ms. Petoz? Ms. Petoz, Yes, hi. Ms. Petoz, It might be a typo because it's different in the book compared to what your commissioner shared okay i'll verify okay all right colleagues are we going to go to our four five minute round we're going to start with senator marvin blight and you may proceed senator blighton thank you so much madam chair good afternoon commissioner white and your supporting management team there again thank you for your testimony also on page seven of the budget book also speaks to a decrease and you know what in personal services and french of 140 000 difference also so you can look into that also um commissioner on a professional service contracts you have five of them totaling \$152,000. And they're funded from the general fund. Have all these contracts up to date. It's showing payments from 2023 to present. Page 9 of 36. Are these payments annually or? These contracts, are they annually or? What the time frame? Yeah, what the time frame?
- 2 : 42 : 32 There's no time frame. Excuse me, what are you looking at the post audit? Yeah, it's at the post audit report. On the professional service contract, there is no date no time frame i was just inquiring hi carol peters director of business and finance management the amount that you see here is the annual payment but the service itself is on a monthly basis okay very well um commissioner white before i go any further i need to ask you um in respect to your testimony when it comes to the parks and other areas and you have a listing here at the end of the testimony they have a charge with a bunch of different scope of work etc i want to ask you about two in particular the ezra fredericks park and nada park zero completion um ezra hendrix awaiting A&E and it's showing a date of December 2024. Go ahead.
- 2 : 43 : 43 Calvert-White Commissioner of Schools, Parks and Recreation. So Ezra Frederick is in the A&E stage right now. We was fortunate to get approval to change and do some great things at Ezra Frederick's. We are going to be adding a skate park, skate and bike park at Ezra Frederick, so that's in the design phase. At the Narder-Bow Park, a contract was awarded for the work to be done at that facility. The contractor was missing some information to proceed with that contract. Once he supplied that, that he'll be given a notice to proceed. I noted that with all of the different parks, the same contractor, is he...
- 2 : 44 : 22 Not really. Both of them. They had the same Roy Canton? No, Roy Cantan works for the department. He's not the contractor. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Yeah. He is the disaster specialist that is overseeing our contracts. He works for the department. Okay. Very well. And you spoke to your vacancies. You said you have 20, how much? 23? No, we only have two vacancies right now, but we did lose, I think seven vacancies once we receive the budget cut, but officially we only have two vacancies.
- 2 : 44 : 58 Okay. Let's speak to your equipments at the different parks. Do you have a schedule? How do you approach the different parks, fixing the different deficiencies, et cetera, and usually how long it takes to deal with it, those type of situations? Yeah. So we have a Calvert-Wides Toast Parks and Recreation. So we have a grounds and maintenance crew that goes around to the different facilities in the morning. However, it is our vision and our plan that if we could get sufficient equipment, we can store those equipment at the designated facilities where we don't have to have staff going around to the different facilities and employees at those facilities would now be responsible for the grooming and manicure of them.
- 2 : 45 : 47 You spoke to having your own security police. What would that look like and what would be the cost of such an addition to your team? So when I look at law enforcement for this department, I kind of look at the officers at the DLCA, Port Authority. We receive a lot of calls at our facilities where we have events. The beaches is one of the main problems that we have where we have a lot of, I don't want in disgruntled people, but we have a lot of days where we do need enforcement and we have to reach out to VIPD, DLCA or Port Authority, which I must say that they do assist the department, but having our own enforcement would just serve us better as far as timing is and reacting to those complaints.
- 2 : 46 : 37 And before my time is called, I know that also in St. John, the community centre, lots going on in that space, where we are in terms of the repairs for the St. John Community Centre. I'll let Director Hill give you a little background. I know we're still, I think about 80% in the A&E company design, but I'll let him give you some information. And what's the funding source? There's different funding sources. We're getting money from FEMA, hazard mitigation. We do have some funds in PFA that we're also going to add to that project. It's a hill The first of all the funding source we have funding from PFA Some grants that was written and I think we have 75,000 from the disaster recovery from Emma with that project I think I don't know for sure but close to three point something million dollar how much from PFA 500,000

and it's in design right now yes so it's gonna take some time yeah we're waiting for FEMA right now actually it's in FEMA sands right now very well thank you so much one I'm sure for the time thank you Commissioner let me just ask you quickly before I go to senator the graph did you resurface the basketball court in nada I did so there was something very troubling that I saw yesterday you know what it is right yes vehicles parking on the surface we we we have that issue and It goes back to us needing law enforcement. But we have that issue at many of our facilities where individuals just feel that it's not important to them and they park. They don't just damage the facility. What they do is they take away from the children they've used in the court. We had a big issue like that with Smith Bay where, you know, a lot of the children would want to play basketball. And we would see cars parked in there. so what we did was we had public works put boulders in front of the facilities so now no cars can get

2:49:00 into the facility you know the adults in our community have to be a little more responsible how how do you they have races yesterday and the people attending the races come to the neighborhood of the people of nada and park and their basketball court i see a big problem with that i was just driving by and saw it but that's something that if you're gonna have if we having races at at the racetrack that's not that's something yeah I got it the patrons that does not okay it's just not okay I agree with you son you know oil leaks you name it the damaging the we you know and the thing is when our when our parks are not up yeah is a bunch of complaining but we are not thinking about what we're doing to contribute to the damages to damaging our parks and that's unacceptable those people need to get they needed to be towed Senator DeGraff you recognize for your five minutes all right thank you madam chair good afternoon colleagues good afternoon testifiers of your to listen and present. Commissioner, when I heard you talk about budget cuts, we didn't cut your budget, so where them budget cuts came from?

2:50:20 I think all government agencies receive a budget cut. Okay, done by OMB? Yes. Correct. Not by us. Correct. We're going to fix what we have to fix. So when I look at your personnel and fringe, I calculated fringe at about 57 percent. That's basically what your fringe is? Hi, Carol Peters, Director of Business and Finance Management. To answer the first question as it relates to the fringe, our fringe is actually correct, the one 2008-22-209 that's in our testimony. The fringe in the post-addit is the \$2,000 short.

2:51:03 As I relate to the 57% that you asked, yes, it's correct. OMB started using live numbers and not a percentage, so the fringe is correct according to the positions that we have. Okay, each individual. Yes, that's correct. You had any wage increases in the last fiscal year or the year before that going forward in 25 is being covered? Perlina Pell, HR manager. Our last wage increase was done in 2019. Negotiations is coming up this year though.

2:51:40 Okay, you have any GS employees? No. No, okay. So wage increase, what union is that negotiating? We have Sufera's union and steel workers, supervisors. Sufera's and which one? Steel workers, supervisors. Steel workers, okay. Okay. So it still shows that your personnel went down from last year. Were you lost employees or how come the significant going downward backwards for your department? The personnel was decreased because of the budget cut that the department received.

2:52:20 so how much vacancies did you lose ralina pell hr manager nine nine um okay so capital projects zero capital for 25 and zero for 24. you know is is the line of rubber stadium one of your that comes under sports parks. Laino-Roberts Stadium is a major landmark, and it needs some work. We have funding to address what is federal monies or the local matches or anything like that for Laino-Roberts.

2:53:00 Calvert-White, Commissioner of Sports Park and Recreation. We do have some federal funding to cover some of the deterioration of Laino-Roberts, not all of it. We do have a current contract with a contractor. We did receive some FEMA funds to change the lighting in that facility. We did some work to the bleachers, but we did do a structural analysis at that facility and it was deemed not sufficient. So a decision, we was waiting for a decision to be made by an engineer of whether we can strengthen that facility or it needs to be demolished and build back up. Okay. Also for the St. John facility, schedule timeframe for that?

2:53:50 25 fiscal year? So, with the FEMA projects, the difficulty of giving a timeline is a lot of these, when you move on to different sections, approval is needed from FEMA. FEMA. A lot of the time you're waiting weeks, sometimes months for a decision to be made, you cannot move on on that facility unless FEMA said, yes, you can move on. So that's why it's difficult to give that. But we are hoping that by the end of this year, next year, that that facility can do some type of groundbreaking.

2:54:24 Okay. Your utilities went down. One minute. What accounted for that? Again, the utilities were known because of the budget cut. We received a ceiling from OMB, and we had to make the necessary cuts across our different objects. So utility was included in that cut as well. So would that mean lights would have to be off on somebody's- Well, it's one of the things in my testimony that I said is concerning. 30 seconds.

- 2:54:58 What happened is, because we are doing a lot of work in our facilities, you're not seeing a lot of traffic going through there. So we're using less utilities right now. However, a lot of sports park and recreation facilities are now starting to be completed, which means that those facilities are going to be coming back online, which concerns us because we're going to have to pay to keep the light and water on. Yeah. Okay. So, and in closing, could I have your present fourth quarter, personal fringe, supplies, utilities, other things? Time? Fourth quarter? For 24. 24 budget. What's your allotment to date?
- 2:55:41 The six points. Personal? 6.7. No. So, that's overall. But break it down for personnel for me. What do you have so far for personnel? fringe utilities other services okay I'll have to get that information okay yeah all right if not now then through the chair you could submit that all right thank you thank you for the time madam chair Thank you, Senator de Grave.
- 2:56:16 So what is your actual, or what was your actual utility expenses in FY23, and what are you tracking right now in FY24? Okay. Our fiscal year 2020, Carol Peters, Director of Business and Finance. Our actual expenditures for utilities for fiscal year 2023 was approximately \$857,000. We budgeted \$923,000 in fiscal year 2024. That was based off of at the time when the budget was being prepared. We based that off of our actuals and estimates taking into consideration our unmanned facilities.
- 2:57:05 In thus far, as of May of 2024, we have expended approximately a little over \$600,000 in utilities. So you're projecting a savings against your... The 923. The 923. That's correct. What's your monthly amount? Our monthly amount is... I'll have to... If you spend 6th May... other than a hundred approximately a hundred and a little over a hundred thousand I can get the amount for you you know okay so we're gonna need to get that information from you your 24 expenses and then your projections from June well June you should have already received your June billing so your June actuals and then your July August and September projections okay yes and please note like the Commissioner mentioned in a testimony the Clinton faith horse track just came back online and we haven't received utilities for that facility as yet but that is under the SPR as well okay so then that brings me to this question so when we have races at Clinton Phipps we currently do not have a promoter correct we don't have a permanent promoter we have a temporary promoter which is the department right so we don't have a promoter the intent was to have an outside promoter so we don't have a promoter however their revenues that are collected at the race track correct all right who collects those revenues the department but but I could tell you
- 2:58:55 senator it's not a profitable I didn't ask if it was profitable I'm asking who collects the revenue department how much of how much revenues have been collected thus far for the first race I think it was a hundred and twenty five thousand however we was in a raid from our bills for that grace this race was just yesterday so I haven't reconciled with that so you collect 125 key for the carnival races? Correct but getting the facility together I think we it was almost about a hundred and fifty K. And how do you count your how do you know that you are generating the correct amount of revenues at your gates? How is that being audited? When you say how do I know? How is it being audited? You collected a hundred and twenty-five K at an event that had how many people? At the last time we are estimated about five hundred and five thousand five hundred people at the carnival race. Okay, all right, that's about right, give or take. Okay, but while you're on that the Senator, the plan is to find a permanent promoter so that they would take full responsibility of that facility to include utilities, maintenance and management of that facility. Absolutely. So what is happening now to get or to get to a permanent promoter? So myself, the Horse Racing Commission as well as the St. Thomas St. John Horse Racing Association all got together as far as
- 3:00:47 what the territory would be looking for we sent up an RFP or draft RFP to PNP we later figured out that instead of doing an RFP we need to do an RFQ first to find qualified people to run the facility I am in communication with the evaluation supervisor to get it a more a more was the word I'm looking for detail RFQ out to the public so that we can see potential people that is interested in being a promoter so we have not submitted the RFQ it's a property in procurement we're working with them to get an RFQ out that's what I meant we haven't put out one we have not put out one here it was never the intent when we did the work that we did that the responsibility of running the antennae phipps racetrack would be that of the government because i think i heard miss peters made reference to the fact that i yourself that you you ended up in the red um so y'all need to look at your expenses so all of the all of the activities that's going on over there there's security all that stuff is on you yes okay so then it means that as you seek out a promoter you have to figure out how to file within your numbers because the last thing any of anybody wants to hear is that this responsibility is going to be borne by the government as you know you know you know the energy that came around this particular project so we have to do everything in our power to ensure that one we get promoter and in the interim we figure out how to stay within the lines of the revenues that you're generating do you have any of the
- 3:02:47 concessions yes we we have the liquor concessions however the food concessions we rent we rent out of mr. smart so you have the liquor concession so you gotta make sure you your expenses your your revenue stay in line with your Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I guess good afternoon to the team SPR, and I want to say that it's not expected that you'll

be making a profit on day one of our business opening so you know and there is some a number of growing pains as you take on that responsibility but so I want to really say congratulations at least two successful race day of course carnival race and then the one yesterday and thank you for your comprehensive report thus far even though you shall change me with just a sentence about Polly Joseph Stadium I'll take it but can you give us a little bit more meat and the bone in regards to what's happening at Polly Joseph Stadium, I know you've seen a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel, but what is expected there?

- 3:04:03 So first, I want to say that the Department of Public Works have been just awesome in assisting us with this project. Tawana Nichols, who's the engineer who's leading this project, is toe-to-toe with us. We did receive that the estimated timeline for the big field, completion of that will be at the end of the year. And I'm just solely talking about the big field, not the Terrence Martin or the festival village. Can you explain that a little bit in terms of big field compared to...
- 3:04:33 Yes. So for those that don't know, the Pali Joseph Stadium consists of two different fields, which is the big field, the main field, and the Terrence Martin field, which would be the smaller field. In addition, we did come back to the Senate for an a la carte for some additional things to include the festival village. speaking with the contractor uh we we think that we will have the completion of the big field by the end of the year okay and of course thank you again um because i think that you answer a lot of my questions i usually ask about the revenues um you gave a detail of the revenues that's coming into sports park and recreation are you having um success in making sure that they're timely deposited and that there's good accountability for the revenues coming into SPR? I'll let my financial person answer. Yes we have an internal procedure in place and our deposits are made within 24 hours of collection. Well thank you for that. So you spoke about the enforcement aspect of your division and And I can see the need for it, but I think it's critical that you're able to develop a white paper or some type of feasibility study. That is a tremendous amount of culpability, liability, and responsibility that's coming with a law enforcement agency, law enforcement component to your agency. You know, I've done it for a number of the various agencies, and we really want to take a look at that. and so I think it would be a good idea if you could submit a white paper on that and then a determination could be made on moving forward on that.
- 3:06:18 The Franklin Powell Park in St. John has now turned into a Vendors Plaza, pretty much. I got some complaints over there during the food fair and as I've been over there over the last few days that the community feels a little bit disenfranchised about not having access to the park. What is being done is there, are you going to move towards relocating the Vendors Plaza to some period of time, or there's some level of permanency of the vendors in that park?
- 3:06:51 Thank you for the question, Senator. Calvert-White, Department of Sports, Park and Recreation. So it was never the intention to use the Frank Powell Park for vendors. If you look at Frank Powell like Emancipation Garden, you don't see vendors in Emancipation Garden. That's why we have Vendors Plaza. I think what happened in doing my research, in the early 1900s, there was a gentleman who started an art fest or an art show at the park. So it was only used for special events where you would see vendors in the facility. One minute. During former Commissioner Cruz tenure, he started to allow vendors within the park on a daily basis. When I took over in 2019 and in speaking with the historic preservation, because it is a historic district, we decided to downsize. So under the authority of sports, park and recreation, we have about 10 vendors that utilize the park, but it's not an everyday use.
- 3:07:50 They do it, I think, three times a year. The problem is, is doing festival in St. John, you see about 15 to 20 additional vendors who are not under the jurisdiction of Sports Park and Recreation, they are under the Division of Festival. So those of Festival, we partner with them, we allow them to use the facility. But again, it's just for the carnival season, after carnival they're supposed to be removed from there.
- 3:08:19 Alright, I'll actually take a good look at that because there seems to be some level of permanency. These individuals don't even just set up and just leave their stuff there during the course of the night or whatever and just move there. So they've been there for quite some time. several times I've been there. I've seen the very same vendors in the very same location. I'll have a conversation with Mr. Turnbull from Festival. I know Commissioner Roberts and Mr. Turnbull have talked about those vendors being there and mandating that they follow our rules and regulation that the department have. But we'll have that conversation with them. Okay. I'll ask Mr. Hill to also take a look at it because that is a situation. I'm sure you get the complaints. Right, Mr. Hill?
- 3:08:59 Yeah, we'll do. Real quickly, Madam Chief, I may just wrap up with at least two more real quick. In regards to your resignation, are you doing exit interviews to determine what's happening in that space? I mean, we've seen that through our government where there's a lot of people that seems to be resigning and moving on. Is there any particular trend that you see developing here with these resonations? For Alina Pell, HR manager, yes. Due to salary, low salary, people want to move on because they get better opportunities.

- 3:09:29 Yeah, I figured that was the case. And I'll tell you that your salaries are pitiful, especially when you talk about your grung-skipper. If I may add to that, Senator, so the starting salary of a grung-skipper or rec leader for the department is \$27,000. We have lost a number of good employees, and I'm talking about athletes who love what they do solely because of the salary. And for some reason, we seem to always lose them to the fire department. I have a lot of athletes who are now firemen, and this is no knock on that profession, but I knew if we had a competitive salary with the fire service, they would rather be with the department. But when you're talking about the difference of \$10,000, it's a no-brainer for you to choose and go work with fire EMS.
- 3:10:15 And you're also competing with construction workers. You have today, laborers are making \$250 to \$300 a day there, so I'm sure that you're losing some of those to that. What is the status of your grants? I know you spoke about your grants here, but you didn't give us a status of those grants that you have received, the \$1 million, the \$500,000, and the \$1.6. What is happening with those grants? So the \$1 million, I think, is for Oppenheimer. That is, I think, 90% completed, Ms. Hill, 90% completed in A&E. The \$500,000, which is for Coral Bay, We did recognize that there wasn't nothing for children to do on that end, so in communication with the commissioner of education, me and how was going to come up with a plan to put some type of recreational facilities on that end. And then the last one was the cameras that we wanted to put throughout all of our facilities.
- 3:11:17 That contract was a what? Not the contract. um that that contract was a what not the contract the contractor was selected but the contract was not awarded uh thank you thank you um for that and uh of course my time has expired and the chair have been more than in the hands uh thank you madam chair for the time and opportunity thank you uh senator francis jr so let's go back to the paulie joseph stadium So we recently got an update from the Commission of Public Works with regards to where things are. And of concern to us and myself in particular is we know that we have spent a large sum of money, funds for the Polly Joseph Stadium, which is not an issue.
- 3:12:14 But what we want to know is what is our return on this investment. And I know that a few years ago when I became a senator around 2019, we had a discussion about beginning to feel out the sporting arena on the national level to, you know, make a determination as to what what do you call them what what teams will be interested in coming to the Virgin Islands to St. Croix in particular to actually for that training etc there isn't really I didn't hear in the discussion a like a hard date certain of course the goalpost can move as to when this facility will be completed which is frustrating but i want to know from your end what type of conversations have you been having with external individuals external teams with regards to the the potential opportunity that we have here in the Virgin Islands that should come online shortly, because that's important. We need to be able to show that we've been doing our due diligence in the interim.
- 3:13:39 Look, we have this available. It's coming online X, Y, Z time, image change, but we need to be having those discussions. We shouldn't wait until this project is completed. I'd like to hear from you what what have you all been doing to, you know, secure potential training teams here on the ground. So I think when you use the word secure, I think it's difficult because of what you just mentioned as far as the goalpost continuing to move. Anytime you have an event organizer looking into a potential destination, they do their research. So they see that this facility has been going on since 2012. They see that the post keeps moving back and back. And I think that's part of the difficulty in us getting commitment from some of these organizations as far as them coming to the territory. I have no doubt in my mind, Senator, once that facility is completed, myself as well as both of the assistant commissioners have gone to conferences where people are, we want to come to the Virgin Islands, we want to come. We need to see what it is you guys have. have. So I don't have no doubt that we can get people to use the facility. The problem is just getting the facility finished for people to come in.
- 3:14:54 So what's that discussion and collaboration between yourself and the Commission of Public Works with regards to when? Yeah, they push, I mean, like I said, Tawana, who's the engineer, who's in charge of this project, she's a bulldog when it comes to this project. You know, we have a contractor that we're working with to get this there completed, and I think if we can at least get the big feel, I think we can start now organising some events at this facility. I mean, I know, A.C. Anson, you have spoken to a couple of people in the mainland about, you know, different baseball and softball, so maybe she can speak to what that conversation sounds like.
- 3:15:37 Well, she don't have to because there isn't anything concrete as far as us knowing when we could see some light at the end of the tunnel that's concerning because you know you many of you are here athletes so you know that when the olympic is deciding to go to a particular city that city is not built up that city ain't ready however once they win that bid that's once a city wins that bid that city begins to prepare and we should not treat this Paulie Joseph Stadium opportunity no different we have we have to push because if we don't push on it then this contractor that's been allowed to hang out here forever and ever amen we'll just continue to linger so from my perspective there should be some collaboration between yourself yourself the leadership is the word I'm trying to use and on the leadership of the Department of Public Works with regards to where are we going with this and what we can do externally we this is it's a serious matter we have

spent I think it's 40 something million dollars on this thing. I don't think we're that high yet. Wait, is it 30 something? I think we're 32.

- 3:17:04 32, you're right, you're correct, it's about 32. And then there's another, there's going to be another axe for another component, which isn't really the piece that they do for the festival, the festival piece. But 30 something million, that's a lot of money. We have an opportunity though, to actually make good of it. And, you know, it's all about how we prepare to do that. That's my pet peeve on this. And I follow you. And I think we can start having those conversation now. Most events start planning their events two years out. I am confident that within two years we'll have a functionable Polly Joseph Stadium. So I think we can start having those conversations as far as getting um teams from the mainland to the territory i'm on the same page with you that's my point i am i am very serious about it i you know i think it's something that's very doable and to get ahead of the eight ball then you know we end up looking like we're planners we have to do some planning that brings me to are you aware of the interest of the the the federal the federation of track and field about keeping holding a track and field event you are right yeah we had a conversation i think you were anything i i i stay close contact with the track and field federation they do have a miscellaneous um allotment that comes to us but we did talk about bringing in a number of teams from the mainland to the island of saint roy and we also talk about refurbishing the track at the Ivana Udurakin to do a big track meet there so I am familiar with what you're talking about okay so is how serious are these discussions because we did have a conversation with um god his name escapes me St. Croix he lives in St. Croix he's the federation
- 3:18:58 Smith Smith Michelle Smith yes Michelle Smith's father yes um very serious as a matter of fact we spoke with the organizers that currently holds that same track meet I think in the Bahamas and they're looking to move it from the Bahamas to the Virgin Islands so we have had serious conversation. Yeah because you you are aware that we have a world-class track at Ivana-Udorken School that the government spent millions of dollars on somewhere about 2008, 9, 10 somewhere wrong way so I'm certain that at this point the track needs to be refurbished but what we need to do is we have to begin to put our money where our mouth is if that's something that will generate revenues hotel stays etc then if we have to make an investment around it that's all we should do so I you know in speaking to him he we haven't heard back from him but I think it's a very it's a great venture for us to to participate in and you know it also gives an opportunity to get some upgrades at that track for those those children at that school once the meet is over it's just again back to what we talked about with regards to the olympics and the preparation out all right All right, Senator Fonseca, you're recognized for your five minutes.
- 3:20:19 Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Greetings to the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation. Well prepared budget, easy reading. Okay, so the recommendation is \$9,272,40. there's a budget cut of eight hundred and two thousand one seventy eight you know some we're looking at all the departments some departments don't have a cut but this sports rec parks and recreation has a big cut almost ten percent so you have a hundred and nineteen employees you have nine vacancies and they all the vacancies are hundred percent budgeted you said two vacancies okay we lost nine positions oh you lost nine positions the two vacancies are 100% budgeted budgeted at 50% 50% okay competitive salaries when was the last time a wage increase was given in this department Verlena Pell HR manager 2019 2019 so I think you're a little bit behind on that too so so that's not looking good because we already discussed that your your starting salary for the ground maintenance guy some is 27,000 which is less than 13 hours hour so okay so then you got to look at revenues you mentioned the parks fund you collected 233,000 you're projected 55 899 so you're You're going to get \$289,000, but that's already utilized. Your athletic fund program fees, \$83,000, that's used.
- 3:22:12 Tourism revolving fund, you're projecting \$1 million. Is that already allocated? So, yes. We received, for the last couple of years, we received \$500,000, and for \$25,000, we're receiving \$1 million. Okay. Okay. Okay. So, you know, we got to look at additional revenues. You mentioned the parking fees. What is the plan? How do you plan to get additional revenues? How much can you get from the parking fees, etc., etc.? Well, I think we have a number of facilities where if we installed, and we've talked about this now for quite some time, a parking arm where people actually pay to come in and leave the facilities, we kind of had a big vision of us putting a parking garage at the Emil Griffith parking lot. But, you know, in doing some research, you look at the Red Hook Parking Land, in the first three years that they just collected parking fees, it paid for itself. You know, parking is something that, you know, continues year after year. And we do know that we have a parking situation, a parking issue in the territory. So I think if we could somehow, you know, get a two-story parking or something like that, we did look at the Mill Griffith Park. There's some other facilities that we talked about putting park in arms where people would pay.
- 3:23:43 That's additional funding source for the department. I think that's a very good idea. Real quickly here, it's Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation. The governor had signed in where we got the park spot. Is there any federal funding available? Had you looked into that as far as the parks? we we have received i think in 2020 um we did we did go after

some federal grants um i think we got one or two that's how we got our garbage truck the the issue with with that with a small department is this is finding somebody to write write the grant um we didn't have a grant writer fortunately at the time miss Henry uh came from a background where she knew how to write grants so she wrote that grant from us and we did receive the monies to buy a brand new garbage truck but the issue again is just personal not having anybody to write the grants for well it seemed like miss Henry is pretty good so I would encourage you to continue using the skills of miss Henry okay great quickly before the second before we finish up the miscellaneous grants those 48 non-profit organizations there's several of them hasn't submitted a request like the Boys and Girls Club 150,000 he's just 300,000 correct the Swimming Association 55,000 you mentioned a track and field so that's covered what's what's the status of that they just late so since we submitted that list it has been updated a lot of the times the issue is just accountability receipts them trying to locate them to turn them into the department. I have an individual who manages our miscellaneous and unless you have all your receipts she is not processing your release and allotment. So a lot of the times they just need to get the documentations together but again since we submitted that some of these people have either applied for their release or have been

3:25:51 granted the appropriation. Madam Chair, I just have one addition. Okay, quickly um you mentioned paulie Joseph you're gonna need 11 more employees i want to ask you about the Clinton Phipps race track um the the prizes comes from your budget or it comes from someone else budget and do you collect from the parking how do you generate revenue i know it's a losing event but you pay for the water all that is free now so that's a great great question um you know So part of the agreement that the government had with Southland Gaming was they are required to produce \$600,000 a year for purses. In addition to that, we do receive funding from the lottery, specifically for purses.

3:26:43 So that's where that money came from. There was a great private stalwart and decided to assist us with the event. didn't have to but they did um but that's where the purses came from okay thank you thank you madam chair for the additional time sorry i just i saw the look when i turned around i must put on the record that i also got uh additional sponsors from various people in the community to include the 35th legislature for one of the persons. So I apologize for missing that. I saw that look that you had, Senator. That's why when I turned around, you were staring right at me.

3:27:27 Yeah, but it wasn't for that. It was a text that I just got. But you said to include the 35th legislature, but that's not quite the case. To include members. Let me correct myself. Yes. It was in the entire 35th. There was, I think, six members from the 35th that each put up funding for the administrator's cup. Okay. I'm glad that you put that on the record.

3:27:55 You're welcome. I'm happy that you put that on the record. Okay. And I'm certain that you all are working on improving how you put out your booklet because apparently there were some challenges with the legislators that actually sponsored one of the races i was one of the sponsors and the booklet just happened to have my name under the race but there was another section of the booklet that spoke to all the sponsors so could you speak to exactly what happened i will be honest with you senator having the first race in what was it seven years eight years since 2017 um it was an enormous task um not just on the department but just all involved the commission the horsemen association um and it wasn't nothing intentional um a lot of stuff was done last minute uh you are correct on the purse itself had had your name but it was corrected in the back where we listed all six senators who sponsored the race um again was nothing intentional um that was done and i understand that you know y'all were just like you said getting back to races to racing horse racing so there was a lot of excitement around it but i'm glad that you put that on the record um let me just ask a question so you spoke about retail space that you rent you lease retail spaces correct do we lease yes yeah we our office in sink or we are leasing so you no that's not what i mean what are you asking oh the vendors yes yes yes yes yes the vendors so you have a you have a couple of vendors that you rent you lease out spaces to them right and um those funds that you generate you're supposed how much based on

3:29:49 if you were to receive all of your dollars tied to your leases how much money would you generate it on an annual basis. One minute, one minute. While we're at it, while she's looking, let me just ask you, once you receive those funds, those funds go into the general fund or it's a special fund, how are those funds recorded? Those funds are posted into a special fund, the Territorial Park Fund.

3:30:23 territorial platform you have the number you could you could give it to me when you when you find okay no hurry okay all right and you use those funds for what again did you say so as of late what we've been doing because the territorial park fund we a lot of our projects where we have to use that 10% coverage for facilities we've been using that fund for that 10% all right so I carry on you recognize for your five minutes she said thank you good afternoon Commissioner just on that same subject so that fund you guys reported within this budget process as receivables so it's it's it's identifying this budget that you guys are presenting no it's not okay and why is that we usually do not our omb do not um ask per se for our projections our revenues it needs to be identified because we need to know So going forward, it needs to be identified as revenue that comes in and needs to be identified as a percentage within your operating budget, what is used

for.

- 3:31:57 So it needs to show coming in and going out. Regards to the courts, I think there was actually, I know we had some issues with the contractor that was before. Some of the courts were damaged. You saw them cracking. The contractor was supposed to redo those courts, what's the status on that? Because that's our money. So the contractor that was awarded was territory-wide. All of the courts on St. Thomas, St. John are completed. We were able to do, I think, five courts on St. Thomas. We did have some... St. Croix. Sorry, on St. Croix. About five courts on St. Croix.
- 3:32:35 We have an additional six to complete. But he has to complete. They have to complete. Okay. As of late as the last week or week before, we did speak to the contractor as far as getting his truck from St. Thomas to St. Croix to finish those courts. I will say we've been in a back and forth with his contractor for some time to come in and finish this, but as of last week, we did say that we're trying to get his truck from St. Thomas to St. Croix to complete the remaining courts.
- 3:33:05 Okay, because he was paid in full for all of them. Well, no, he's not paid in full. He's only paid for what he's completed. Those that are damaged the ones that was damaged he was paid for but he did recognize that he needs to come back and fix them okay so with Apolly Joseph stadium what's the hold up right now that you don't see activity happening I can't speak for the contractor um there's days when we go there and we see a lot of contractors a lot of workers there and then there's just you you go there and you see four people there.
- 3:33:37 Weeks to go there, then you don't see anything happening. Yeah, but then who speaks, who holds this contractor accountable for what's in the contract? Well, like I said, DPW has been, yeah, my sorry, my fault. DPW has been, again, they're the engineer of records who is managing this project. And I know Ms. Nichols have been very aggressive as far as them completing their timeline and staying on their project schedule. Well, I'll tell you, DPW was here, and they didn't speak on Apollo GSF stadium because they said that you would speak on it, and you would provide the details of which I found it a bit... What?
- 3:34:16 Kind of strange. In fairness, it is a DSPR project, and I did speak to the committee about that, and he said he would leave it out of his testimony for us to speak on it. Like I said, I work really close with DPW as far as the progress of that project. Are you coming back to us for money for that project? No. Okay. Not that I know of right now. It will be completed this year. The big field. The big field. So this contract had no timelines on it?
- 3:34:45 Well, there is a project schedule. And are there penalties or anything for not fulfilling the timeline schedule? Within your contract, I think there is penalties for not completing. And are we following through with that? Because we have an issue in the territory. We don't hold anybody accountable for anything. And things don't get done and things just slip on the side and nothing happens that mentality and that way of operation just has to stop one minute because you have contractors then they come and take advantage because we have that reputation somewhere along the line we need to hold these contractors accountable for what we're binding into a contract with there's breach there's violations there should be penalties if not then they're going to just continue to do the same thing to this government yeah so it has to stop somewhere just moving right along let me get out of that with regards to the increase that you mentioned so one of the issues you're having in salary increase do you have a plan then to deal with that issue, with retention?
- 3:35:56 Raleena Pell, HR manager, Senator. They are classified employees, so therefore they have to go through the union contract. Right now, Sufera's union have a negotiation the week of July 22nd. So Joe, my question, sorry to stop you. What role do you commission and your department play in this process? Because you are the one being affected. So, you know, I hear commissioners and directors say the same thing. We need better salaries.
- 3:36:25 People are leaving because of the salaries. It's a negotiation process. But is your department being affected by it? So what active role are you playing in the process? What do you play? So I think what we've been doing as a senior team is looking for position titles that have a higher salary. We just had a meeting last week. last week. And doing away with some of the older positions and finding new positions that basically have the same job score. So for example, a recreation leader one, which may have be \$27,000, moving that person to a recreational specialist, which is kind of doing the same thing, but at a higher salary. Those are the things that we have been doing throughout the territory.
- 3:37:09 Okay. Finding creative ways to try to increase it. Because you hired 10, but you lost 11 okay and just for the record one of the issues I've been seeing lately is the fact that some of the agencies and I've received that are receiving cuts or agencies that have to deal with children and youth and program activities I just have to put that for the record and other agencies that don't provide those services some of them are don't have a ceiling or have increased in their budget and we have to take a look at that madam chair because I think that's unacceptable. Thank you Madam Chair. Thank you Senator Carrion we're gonna close in a few I see the scenario first looking to change but we're gonna move to wrap up this meeting but the reduction in your personnel how many positions is that you have a 369 thousand reduction nine positions really enough HR manager nine positions and those are nine vacant positions those vacancies so that's what I'll give you

nine ten they were vacant but we lost them do you lose them yet the recommendation is for you to lose them we need to send you you need to send us a listing of what those nine positions are in addition to the other two that are currently vacant and the other thing that's troubling about how this was submitted is realistically how in the world can you fill your two vacant positions that were given to you when in fact they were only funded at 50% that's me you got wait until half the year to

3:38:55 fill all of them. Because either though you could wait, you could fill one and then the other one won't get filled. So you have to have some, every department, it can't look the same for everything. Some things require a little more thought process in order to make it work for the respective agency. Send us the update. With regards to the associated fringe benefits we have to go back to the office of management and budget to get what these fringe benefits are i know some departments don't all of them don't look the same because the higher amount depends on whether you're single or family with your insurance so we gotta figure out how to balance that and then i see that your supplies were cut some seventy four thousand five hundred why what is it that you don't need anymore well carol peters director of business and finance management we need everything but we was given a ceiling and we had to make the necessary cuts across all the objects to come back to the ceiling now we have some non-appropriated funds that we plan on using if necessary for supplies and other services okay so you need to provide us with a listing of your non-appropriated funds and the current balances and the territorial park fund no not oh you can send it back oh okay yeah you don't have to give it to us now okay and then um commissioner i was born bred and raised in wrongly field and And the situation that's happening with the ballpark there is not good.

3:40:49 It has changed the entire face of that community. We got to bring back that community. That's one of the original St. Thomas communities in this district. I heard you providing an explanation to Mr. Savanero, Senator DeGraff, but I'm still trying to figure out what is the holdup with us bringing back Lionel Roberts Stadium. I mean, they got robots right there. What's the holdup? No, I'm serious. I mean, listen, when my father moved, come from St. Croix to St. Thomas, they lived in a bus right on the side of Lionel Roberts Stadium. We got to fix the stadium. It has to be fixed. We can't keep... This is seven years in that's that's the stadium we look forward to for lots of our activities it's just not fair in addition to the fact that it has caused that community to become a depressed community because there's no activities taking place there so you have children living in that community there's a whole lot but there's nothing for them to look forward to anymore so talk to me so the statement as far as no activities happening there is not quite accurate there's plenty of activities still happening in our facility a matter of fact after being dormant for several years we just started back with it doubly just started back doubly in our facility we are still utilizing the facility baseball is still being played in there football is still be playing in there we have one two three three summer camps in there right now so we get fixed say that again when we get fixed we're in the process of doing that I noted new LED lights have already been ordered The contractor showed us that the other day.

3:42:37 I'll be honest with you, Senator, my opinion, the field needs to be demolished and fixed back to a new field. It's an old facility. Then fix it. We did... I agree with you. We did do, like I said, a structural analysis and it concerns us. The integrity of that structure really, really concerns us. So that's why we don't have... I'm no engineer, but we're waiting for the engineers to come back and let us know. Can we shrink in this facility or we need to demolish it and pay it back? So is that the reason why we don't have carnival-type activities in there anymore because you're concerned about the...

3:43:11 Not at all. And I'm glad you asked that. Let me put this on the record. We have never stopped carnival activities from being held in that facility. Good. I've never done so. The issue that the department had with carnival was when they built a stage in the facility, when they removed the stage out, the amount of nails that used to be left behind. but we have never stopped carnival activities I don't know where that came from but myself assistant commissioner Roberts have never said we cannot have carnival activities within a facility that's good to know what we did say is let's find an alternative to building the stage so we don't have to use water and use nails because I'm talking about thousands of nails that the department now going after and we have to pick up off the fee okay what about the direction of the, I don't play baseball, the direction of the field, because I think the direction is facing the sun. What's the conversation around now? It can't be willy-nilly, leave it so, don't tell me that.

3:44:16 If we are making changes, our changes are supposed to be for the better. Vincent Roberts, Assistant Commissioner. I know several years back they had a charrette which turned the field around. I think the home plate end up being done by the fish market side. So I know they had a charrette so that's part of the plan is if they ever decide to demolish it and rebuild it.

3:44:45 That's an important staple to this district. I'm going to talk to you some more about it, Commissioner White. You have some FEMA dollars, but I suspect that your FEMA dollars cannot do everything. That's what the concern is? Yeah, again, I think if we're going to do it, let's do it right. And if we're going to change the field, that now change where the bleachers

are. So one way or the other, we have to knock it down. I think we need to come up with a comprehensive, you know... Yeah, we can't just fix it or fix it. Infrastructure has to be for the better. It has to be for the better. We have to know that we receive funding for this and this is what a new look is.

3:45:24 You know, Assistant Commissioner Roberts made a good point. You know, one of the issues around there is the mahogany trees that are damaging the facility. We know that them trees ain't going no place, so that's a concern of ours. The roots are starting to grow into the facility and are cracking the infrastructure. Well, if that's happening and it's cracking the infrastructure, we have to get the, what you call it, the abatomists coming out and handling. We have to do what we have to do. We can't continue to see that community and that particular battlefield in the condition it's in. It's very heartbreaking. It is.

3:46:07 It's heartbreaking. I agree with you. like I say want to put a record there is still plenty of activity happening in that facility. Okay you're putting that on the record that is plenty of activity. No problem I will correct that. We need to fix it up to the 21st century. Agreed. That's what the issue is. Agreed. Let's get it done and then going back to the vendors in the in St. Jean that my colleague brought up earlier there is I I don't know if you are aware of the conversation that's occurring with the Department of Property and Procurement and a business owner on St. John, but there's an opportunity for Vendors Plaza somewhere not too far from that space. Are you aware of that?

3:46:52 I am not aware of that. That conversation has been going on forever. It's like we don't have analysis to paralysis. I am not aware. I knew they wanted to move the vendors over, by what you consider the old lumberyard? That's below the old lumberyard. The same space you start. Okay, that was the conversation that we have. However, I'm hearing that there's a new business supposed to go there now. Okay, so these are things that we have to think about because the footprint in Cruz Bay is small.

3:47:27 And we do have to make sure that we also ensure that there is economic development, economic opportunities. So you can't just shut down the vendors. have to figure out you know what works best for the space i know there was a lot of conversation when we did the um cultural center and i'm certain that now the conversation is around the land and water use plan that all those things would come into play so you know while we're hearing concerns about it there must be a a clear comprehensive approach to what we're trying to do and of course that's that don't necessarily lie in your hands but you have to do what you have have to do in the interim okay so we asked you for some information so we're gonna close because I think everybody has asked their questions and I know that the one thing I have to commend you and I remember when I started out as a senator like in 2019 2020 when you were working on the when we were doing the non-profits there was a lot of issues around it and your department has improved significantly on how you account for the non-profits how you issue the non-profit dollars etc so I have to commend you on on that yeah that's definitely work who is it who's the person responsible for it Ms. Rifa Esther Rifa and Ms. Bouganou in St. Croix they do an awesome job with the I do want to add that every year we submit to this body a number of non-profits that don't request their funding, however, we see them being placed back on it. I know there's some great non-profit organizations that are really, really seeking some funding. Off the top of my head, the St. Croix Junior Dragster program. They have to send in their requests.

3:49:18 That's what they have to do. I agree with you that, you know, this year we're going to have to really take a different look, a harder look at that and make some different decisions because you can't keep running the same non-profits year in, year out, and then not applying for the funding. Correct. So I agree with you. And the department also will be sending in the same request for the RBI program. We sent it already. Oh, you've already sent it? Yeah, we sent it already. Okay. I tell people all the time, you know, although basketball is my sport, softball within the last three four years is probably at the pinnacle of sports now and we really want to keep that going and help out that program so we will be sending in a request for that and the one thing i need to ask you to really take care of for us is the um i don't even know what to call it the league east west mcbean we got to clearly know who this money going to when we put it in our budget we need to clearly know when we place it in our budget that we're using the right name because we just have made a change to one of our i think it was west in st croix well i'm probably saying around one we changed that to some other name and girls it was st thomas st elrod hendrix and alvin mcmahon merge becoming macken no it wasn't that's not the one i called you about and when we spoke to the gentleman who is the district administrator he was like they ain't got no name say macken so we gotta get it straight please um let's get that straight for this upcoming fiscal year when we call for that particular line item we need to get a right the right um name um so there There was a couple of true to chair requests, the utility expenses for FY24 in total, and then 25 utility expenses up to June, and then the projections out to September. we could get a true number as it relates to utility expenses, and then the updated listing to include your nine vacant positions. Your nine positions that are not funded here in 2025, and then you have two others, so that's 11, correct? And then the listing of all your non-appropriated funds include the amounts, okay? Excuse me, I love the information, but I guess we can send it in for the fiscal year 2024 utility.

- 3:52:12 Go ahead and send it in. Okay. Send it in so we could, you know, have it in rating and it could be clearer for everybody since some of my colleagues have already left. So Commissioner, we're going to give you a 30-second close. You come in the middle of the afternoon. Let me ask you a question. When everybody . So you get blatantly. But the Olympic Committee is in here. But we passed, the Olympic Committee is a, we, the funds are good directly to them or you are the pass-through? No, I'm the pass-through. You're the pass-through.
- 3:52:51 So we appropriated some funds for the managers of the teams that recently won the gold, was Is it a gold? Yeah. Basketball? Yes. Have y'all requested the funding from OMB to go to the Olympic Committee so we could pay to these managers because they've been texting and asking about it? I had a conversation and I don't want to lie to you. I had a conversation with Senator Francis and I am not sure if... At the time he told me it never went through to OMB and I know they've been calling about those funds. What happened with the previous funds is the Olympic Committee paid it and then was reimbursed by OMB. I don't know if that's what they're gonna do again this time, but I have not seen that \$5,000 for me to request it from OMB.
- 3:53:42 It was an appropriation that was passed. Now I don't know how the legislation was written, but if you had... Yeah, I don't know if they went straight to OMB if they passed through the department. It'll go straight to OMB. OMB is responsible for releasing the money. So a letter has to be written to OMB, correct Ms. Pito? To release the money. To release the money. So that, if you can please take care of that, because it has to come back through you to go to the Olympic Committee, okay? Yes, ma'am. Yes. What point is it?
- 3:54:14 Sports. Go ahead. Senator Carrier, you recognise for your point of information. Thank you. Thank you. Commissioner, with regard to Act 87-34, it has to be appropriate in the sum of \$350,000 for the building of the steel roof of a state profit basketball court. That request was sent to Wembrey. Oh, sent to Wembrey. I do know that that request was sent. Okay. Okay. Because I didn't see it. You didn't see anywhere in your testimony today, but very well. Thank you.
- 3:54:48 It was sent. note saying that that's Department of Tourism. I don't know if the funding was coming from the tourism revolving from, but in any event, regardless of where you're coming from, the letter still has to be written for the funds to be released. There was a question that I got earlier and I almost forgot. I was asked for you to provide an update on the lighting for the Campo Rico basketball court. Okay, so we have two projects in both districts for lighting, LED delight in. Contractors was already submitted, selected, sorry. We're just waiting for the contract to be executed from property and procurement to give a notice to proceed.
- 3:55:30 All right. So I'm also learning that you have to ask for the requests to have those funds released from tourism. Say that again? The 500, I think it's \$5,000. Yeah. So that's why I was saying I don't remember seeing it. Maybe the pass through is the Department of Tourism and not Sports, Parks and Recreation. Okay, we're going to look at the legislation. I just need to see the legislation. All right. We'll look at it and verify what should happen and we'll get back to you. But it's been a minute. You just need to give them the money. All right. We're going to allow you a 30-second close with regards to your FY25 budget requests. Thank you for your opportunity for us to come and champion for the Department of Sports, of sports park and recreation um i i always make it known that the individuals that you see here at the table with me and the other hundred and 120 we have 119 12 additional employees of this department um all of them together is what makes this department what it is um i'm going to continue trying to champion to get you know higher wages uh more resources for this department um what they do and the services that they do for this community i can say that that they love doing um this department kind of raised the bar doing covet and i personally feel since we've gotten back to the normal things that that we've kind of forgotten the importance of this department, but we're going to do what we have to do with the resources that we have to continue giving, you know, wonderful programs to the community. But me personally, I want to thank all the employees for the department for the work
- 3:57:21 that they have been doing and the work that they're going to continue doing. Thank you. All right. Thank you. And thank you to your team for your presentation today. And we will send you the letter with the request, and we will definitely be in touch with you further as we go through and finalize this budget process. Thank you. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the central staff employees, my staff, for the work that was done today to ensure that we were able to finalize these budget hearings.
- 3:57:54 Parks and Recreation should have been here. I think they were supposed to be here last Friday? Last Thursday, they were all dressed up, dressed alike I'm sure, but our system wasn't working. We continue to be challenged with, once we have individuals in the St. Croix Chamber community room, we continue to have a problem with that. So it worked out good this afternoon because we didn't have anyone over there, but we did have some challenges earlier.
- 3:58:26 So safe travels, enjoy your festivities and happy third and most definitely happy 4th of July, happy emancipation. The Committee on Budget Appropriations and Finance for today is hereby adjourned. You

People named in this transcript

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

- 5x

Senator Dwayne DeGraff
heard in this transcript as: DeGraff
- 5x

Senator Novelle Francis
the surname alone also matches: Aracelis Francis
heard in this transcript as: Francis, Francois, Michael Francois
- 4x

Senator Samuel Carrion
heard in this transcript as: Carrion, Carrione
- 3x

Senator Marise C. James
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, James Sr
- 3x

Senator Marvin Blyden
heard in this transcript as: Blyton, Marvin Blyton
- 2x

Governor Albert Bryan Jr
heard in this transcript as: Bryan
- 2x

Dr. Kaiser A. Calwood
the surname alone also matches: Linda Calwood
heard in this transcript as: Calwood
- 2x

Senator Ray Fonseca
heard in this transcript as: Fonseca

Bills and acts referred to

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

- Bill 35-0141**

Act 8759 · An Act providing an appropriation from the General Fund of the Treasury of the Government of the Virgin Islands for the operation of the Government of the Virgin Islands during the fiscal year October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024 ---0
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