

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES SHARE OVERVIEW

Date : February 27, 2019

ST. THOMAS- Members of the Committee on Culture and Planning, chaired by Sen. Myron Jackson, convened in a meeting at the Capitol Building on Wednesday, to receive testimony from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources on an update of the Historic Preservation, marine environment, Town's Blueprint, libraries, archives/museums and other related items.

Post Hurricanes Irma and Maria, FEMA determined that the Historic Preservation Unit sustained an estimated \$19 million worth of damages. However, DPNR's State Historic Preservation Office was awarded \$10 million to implement a recovery program for suitable archeological and historic sites that are on the National Register List. Sen. Jackson questioned whether DPNR received the \$10 million. DPNR Commissioner Nominee Jean Oriol stated that there was no distribution of funds. The National Park Service will issue a check.

DPNR's Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) monitors thirty-three sites in the marine environment for the Territorial Coral Reef Monitoring Program. Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease, which increases the coral reef mortality rate, was identified on the west coast of St. Thomas. Overall, DPNR Division of Environmental Enforcement has six officers for the St. Thomas-St. John District and the St. Croix District. However, a total of ten per district is needed. Sen. Janelle Sarauw inquired about the frequency of the enforcement officers patrolling the seas. In response, Oriol stated that there is only one officer who patrols the ocean and more officers need to be recruited.

Thus far, some of the achievements for the Town's Blueprint includes the initiative of revising the V.I. Zoning and Subdivision codes, meeting with members of the 30th Legislature to determine proposed dates, potentially placing them into bill form and choosing a vendor for legal services. To date, a contract is still not in place. Separately, the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums have sustained damages because of the hurricanes. Three facilities have extensive mold and contracts are in progress for remediation. FEMA is in the process of finalizing project worksheets for damages. DLAM also lacks adequate staff and funding.

As it relates to long-range planning, the Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan was last revised fourteen years ago. However, components of the comprehensive plan are updated. The timeline is as follows: In 2018, CZM created a revisory group to develop water use plans for seven anchoring and mooring areas. One year later, CZM is in the process of developing a territorial transient and day-use mooring plan. By 2020, the marine life plan will target "Areas of Special Concern."

Separately, the Board of Land Use Appeals (BLUA) shared an overview. John Woods, Chairman of BLUA noted that the purpose of the Board is to review and decide disputes between DPNR and the

public. Currently, there are three pending appeals before BLUA; two of them are on St. Croix, and the other is on St. John. Challenges include vacant board member positions, the need for an in-house legal counsel and the lack of funding decelerates the scheduling of hearings. ###