

VIRGIN ISLANDS CARNIVAL AND OTHER ENTITIES SHARES FY 2019 PROJECTED BUDGET

Date : August 20, 2018

ST. THOMAS- Members of the Committee on Finance chaired by Sen. Kurt Vialet, held a meeting at the Capitol Building on Monday, to receive testimony from officials from the Virgin Islands Carnival, Festival & Cultural Organization of St. John, The Crucian Christmas Festival, The Department of Tourism and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority on the FY 2019 budget appropriations.

The recommended FY 2019 budget for the Virgin Islands Carnival is \$545,000 the Festival & Cultural Organization of St. John FY 2019 budget is \$320,000, and the Crucian Christmas Festival FY 2019 budget is \$520,000.

“If there is nothing to hide, why hasn’t the V.I. Carnival Committee provided detail information on all the monies received?” inquired Sen. Nereida O’Reilly. Halvor Hart III, Executive Director of the V.I. Carnival stated that the information on the document, “Transaction Detail by Account” has the breakdown for the \$545,000. “Although the \$545,000 is detailed, there is missing information for the additional \$292,371 given to the committee through various sponsorships,” said Sen. Vialet. Hart stated that he would compile the information and submit it to the Senate.

“This is disrespectful to the first branch of government that documents were subpoena and still there is a lack of transparency for the use of government funds,” said Sen. Janelle Sarauw.

Sen. Tregenza Roach inquired if it is possible that carnival and festivals can be self-sustaining to the point where government funds are not needed? “This will boil down to charging people who attend the concerts in the village,” said Davidson Charlemagne, President of the Crucian Festival. Leona Smith, Chairperson of the Festival and Cultural Organization of St. John added that

economic sustainability is contingent upon the state of the economy.

The Virgin Islands Carnival, there were 369 complimentary tickets for the Prince and Princess Show, 369 complimentary tickets from the Queen Show and 301 complimentary tickets disseminated by the Calypso Competition. "Why were 33% and 25% of complimentary tickets distributed, when these are revenue generating events?" asked Sen. Vialet. Hart stated that complimentary tickets distributed for intermission performances such as majorettes, bands, and singers. "This is an enormous amount of free tickets compared to low sales," said Sen. Vialet.

Smith stated that the Festival and Cultural Organization of St. John disbursed 20 complimentary tickets. Charlemagne noted that there were six complimentary tickets distributed by the Crucian Christmas Festival.

Separately, the Department of Tourism and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority shared the FY 2019 budget. Beverly Nicholson-Doty, Commissioner of the Department of Tourism, shared that the budget request for FY 2019 is \$20,668,404. Out of that, the General Fund is \$2,283,404, and the Tourism Revolving Fund is \$18,385,000. Additionally, carnival activities are \$1,385,000, Sports Tourism development is \$1,000,000 and marketing/promotions is \$16,000,000. The breakdown for the General Fund budget request is as follows: \$1,440,889 for personnel, \$585,540 for fringe benefits, \$22,000 for supplies, \$159,123 for other services and charges, and \$75,852 for public utilities.

Commissioner Doty stated that some of the goals and objectives for FY 2019 include, working with operators and attractions to implement recommendations on St. Croix, supporting the Bureau of Economic Developing "Made in the Virgin Islands" program and create mechanisms to cooperatively market and to establish innovative ways to market cultural activities and events to develop channels to increase visitor participation.

Robert Graham, Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority stated that the FY 2019 budget is \$9,553,554.

Senators present are Kurt Vialet, Janelle Sarauw, Dwayne DeGraff, Neville James, Tregenza Roach, Brian Smith, Myron Jackson, and Nereida Rivera O'Reilly.

Photos: <http://www.legvi.org/committeemeetings/Media>

###