



April 8, 2021

VIA EMAIL TO: cjoseph@legvi.org

The Honorable Carla J. Joseph
Chair, Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection
34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

Dear Chair,

Please find the Department of Tourism - Division of Festivals' testimony herein for the 34th Legislature's Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection on April 9, 2021 at the Frits E. Lawaetz Conference Room in St. Croix., which begins at 1:00 p.m. The Testimony will be presented during Block III at 1:00 p.m.

Ian Turnbull, Director, Division of Festivals will deliver the testimony.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Boschulte
Commissioner, U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism



April 8, 2021

The Honorable Carla J. Joseph
Chair, Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection
34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

Re: Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection
Hearing on April 9, 2021 at 1 p.m.

Good day, Honorable Senators, Legislative Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen in the chamber, members of the media, and the viewing and listening audience.

I am Ian Turnbull, Director of the Division of Festivals within the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism. On behalf of our Commissioner of Tourism, the Honorable Joseph Boschulte, thank you for inviting our Division to testify this afternoon before the Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection.

I am pleased to provide testimony on an overview of the Division, federal and local government funding, festival implementation plans, and current departmental challenges and proposed solutions.

My colleagues Assistant Directors Shamari Haynes (St. Croix), Leona Smith (St. John), and Halvor Hart, III (St. Thomas) are available to answer any questions.

Overview of the Division to Include the Enabling Legislation and Jurisdiction

Bill No. 32-0308 – An Act amending Title 3, Virgin Islands Code, chapter 19, adding sections 339, 339a and 339b, to establish the Division of Festivals within the Department of Tourism whose function is organizing and executing festivals and to re-establish the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute within the Department of Tourism, Title 33, Virgin Islands Code, subtitle 3, chapter 111, section 3088, to re-name



the “Carnival and Festival Committee Revolving Fund” as the “Division of Festivals Revolving Fund,” and Title 3, Virgin Islands Code, chapter 22, by repealing section 408.

Bill No. 32-0308 was passed unanimously by the 32nd Legislature and signed into law by former Governor Kenneth Mapp. It established the Division of Festivals within the Department of Tourism, its mandate to organize and execute festivals and to re-establish the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute within the Department of Tourism.

The core function of the Division of Festivals is to produce the three major annual events that display the rich history and cultural heritage of the Territory: Virgin Islands Carnival (St. Thomas), St. John Celebration and Crucian Christmas Festival (St. Croix). Each event features music performances, beauty pageants, sporting events and food fairs.

The Division of Festivals exists within the Department of Tourism, led by Commissioner Joseph Boschulte. The Division is led by a Director and three Assistant Directors, one for each island, along with support staff. A standard operating procedure manual for the Division is in the final stages of development.

Joseph Boschulte	Commissioner
Ian Turnbull	Director
Shamari Haynes	Assistant Director, St. Croix
Leona Smith	Assistant Director, St. John
Halvor Hart III	Assistant Director, St. Thomas

Statement of all Federal and Local Government Funding Received, Awarded, Allocated, Obligated, and Expended Which is Required to Operate the Division

The Division of Festivals does not receive any federal funding. The budget allotment is solely from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund (TARF), on a draw-down budget. The Division also pursues sponsorships, some through the Department of Tourism, and also with corporate sponsors, that reduce direct spending.



FINANCIAL BUDGET DEC 2019 - JAN 2021

Event	Date	Appropriations	Actual Expenditures	Sponsorship	Drawdown
Carnival Virgin Islands (St. Thomas)	April - May	\$545,000 (FY20) \$120,000 (FY21)	\$201,211.19 (FY20)	\$2,000	First Week October Half of Allotted Budget; Second Half of Budget in January.
St. John Celebration	June - July	\$320,000 (FY20) \$125,000 (FY21)	\$55,162.68 (FY20)	\$13,000	Full Allotted Budget in First Week of October.
Crucian Christmas Festival	Dec. - Jan.	\$520,000 (FY20) \$520,000 (FY21)	\$435,816.90 (FY20) \$133,925.41 (FY21)	\$92,000	Half of Allotted Budget in First Week of January; Second Half of Budget in March.



Past Events

- Crucian Christmas Festival 2019-2020
- St. Thomas Carnival Kickoff 2020
- Virtual Carnival Virgin Islands 2020
- Virtual St. John Celebration 2020
- Virtual Crucian Christmas Festival 2020-2021
- HOME WUK series with DJ Avalanche (done in conjunction with Virtual STT & STJ)
- USVI SHOP (outside of normal budgeted allotment for main Division of Festival events)
- USVI LIT (collaborated with Government House and Department of Tourism, no money used from Division of Festivals)

Additional Marketing Initiatives

- Uber Soca advertising November 2019
- Uber Soca promotion April 2020
- Nadia Batson Artform advertising. Directly advertised during her Virtual event February 2021
- Social Media Ads November 2019 - January 2021
- Coconut Vybez December 2020 - March 2021 (In conjunction with Tourism this will be paid from the Department of Tourism budget)
- Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights 50-year Anniversary VI History Month Live Stream (Local initiative with local artist) (no cost expended)

State of the VI Zoom Hall Meetings

- Artist/Entertainment Executed at no cost hosted on Zoom
- Parade Troupes Executed at no cost hosted on Zoom
- Steel Pan Executed at no cost hosted on Zoom
- Promoters Executed at no cost hosted on Zoom



Festival Implementation Plans for St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix

Carnivals throughout the region have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with many canceled events and festivities. However, the Division of Festivals has been proactive and innovative in executing virtual Festival/Carnival events. Based on the Division's results to date, we have an evolving and seasoned product that garners wide reach and greater national attention.

The virtual Carnivals/Festivals meet the need for people to focus on matters other than the global health crisis, and help to promote a fun, safe, cultural, educational and festive vibe in the comfort of their own home. These events are arguably becoming more necessary due to increased COVID-19 cases, particularly with the new variants.

The continuation of these events is also critical as it showcases local artists and provides them with a platform and avenue to highlight their talent. This includes musical entertainers, dancers, mocko jumbies and other cultural stakeholders. The events contribute significantly to the economic base of the Virgin Islands community. It also provides an avenue to enhance relationships and secure sponsorship opportunities with the business and philanthropic communities.

None of the events was open to the public for in-person attendance. We are working closely with the Department of Health to ensure that all of our activities comply with COVID-19 guidelines and protocols. Artists, crew, and any others who are producing the events must wear masks or facial coverings, must practice physical distancing, and are subject to COVID-19 testing. A number of Department of Tourism staff have received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Analytics for USVI Festivals indicate that the virtual events have been successful at reaching a growing audience.



USVI Festivals Virtual Villages & Jou'Virtual Livestream Reach (April 2020 - January 2021)

2.1 Million	Reach
481.1K	Post Clicks
465.3K	Reaction/Comments

Public Relations for Virtual Festivals/Carnivals

The Department of Tourism leveraged its Festival budget to execute the virtual events to build our brand and help keep the U.S. Virgin Islands top of mind. The coverage has generated strong journalist and travel writer interest and compelling media results for the USVI in national publications. A snapshot of coverage is below:

- Total Placements: 278
- Total Impressions: 73 Million
- Advertising Value: \$1.8 million
- PR Value: \$5.4 million
- Earned media coverage in **Essence**, **Travel +Leisure** and **The Miami Times**

Upcoming Schedule of Events

- Carnival Virgin Islands (April 26-30, 2021)
- St. John Celebration (June 28 - July 4, 2021)
- 70th Carnival Virgin Islands (St. Thomas: April 2 - May 1, 2022)
- 69th Crucian Christmas Festival (December 4, 2021 - January 9, 2022)

Current Departmental Challenges and Plan of Action to Resolve Challenges

The Division of Festivals, like many other units, is continually updating and adapting its products as we work through the COVID-19 pandemic. Those challenges will likely continue for the foreseeable future.

A more critical challenge is the budget for hosting Festival Arts events. The current budget was designed to support the three annual major events, as noted above.



After having successfully implemented four (4) festivals, both in person and virtual, the Department has an in-depth understanding of the budgetary requirements. We have compared the USVI budget allotment with other jurisdictions and provide the legislature with these findings as a point of reference.

The USVI's budget is US \$1.4M, distributed among three carnival events. Our closest competitor in population and offerings is the St. Kitts-Nevis National Carnival that receives US\$1.6M for a single Carnival. Other budgets are as follows: Barbados Crop Over US\$3M, Bahamas Junkanoo US\$7M - 11M, and Trinidad Carnival US\$20M - 25M.

The Department has expressed budget concerns to the Administration and we are working collaboratively to determine where the Department can get assistance. However, if the Senators have an available funding source, the Department will be more than willing to put it to the appropriate use.

The Division of Festivals' footprint has expanded and we are seeing increased engagement with our events. This is obvious from the increase in sponsorship and our online data. However, for Festivals to further succeed, we have to remain relevant and offer creativity and ingenuity. This applies not only to the local market, but to the diaspora, mainland and international markets, where we seek to be top of mind.

Thank you for your time. We are available to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Boschulte
Commissioner, U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism