

**TESTIMONY ON THE ST. THOMAS CARNIVAL CLEANUP PLANS**  
**FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

**35TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024**

**10:00 A.M.**

**ROGER E. MERRITT, JR. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**



Good afternoon, Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairperson, and other Committee members of the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislature's Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, and members of the viewing and listening audience. My name is Roger E. Merritt, Jr., Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority.

I am appearing before you today with Floy Sackey, Solid Waste Director and Petula Stevens, St. Thomas Solid Waste Collections Manager to provide testimony relevant to the Authority's cleanup plans, and collaborative efforts ahead of this year's St. Thomas Carnival such as curbside pickup, trash removal, trash containerization, and safety/security measures.

### **SOLID WASTE**

The Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority is responsible for trash collection and removal from all venues where activities are held by the Virgin Islands Festival Committee. The responsibilities of the Authority for St. Thomas Carnival 2024 are as follows:

#### **Villages:**

1. Clean and prepare the Fort Christian Parking Lot for the official opening of the Village. This includes the placement of a thirty (30) yard bin in the center of the parking lot for the booth owners to dispose of their trash (i.e., empty boxes, trash, etc.), cleaning and sweeping of the parking lot, and the placement of 64-gallon carts by each booth and other strategic locations in the parking lot and along the outer perimeter of the village for trash disposal by the revelers.
2. Placement of one- twenty (20) and one thirty (30) yard bin at two locations in the vicinity of the village for daily trash disposal by booth owners and contractors assigned to the nightly village cleaning. The bins are usually placed by the Fort Christian Parking lot bathroom and the other by the area of the credit union. Contractors are responsible for emptying the full 64-gallon carts,



emptying the contents into the 20 or 30-yard bin, and returning the empty container to its original location throughout the night.

3. In-house and contracted crews are assigned from 6 p.m. to 3a.m. (assigned shifts) for nightly cleanup and then at 5 a.m. for a total village and surrounding area cleanup which includes both villages, Emancipation Garden, Roosevelt Park, and Waterfront. All trash bags are placed on the outskirts of the booths (waterfront side) for the VIWMA rear-loader to collect and dispose of at the landfill. This may take two or three trips depending on the amount of trash. At times, we seek the assistance of one of our private rear loader contractors to assist, as the in-house crew also has the daily trash route to collect. Trash carts are also emptied, washed and disinfected.
4. Every morning by 6 a.m., the VIWMA roll-on/roll-off truck hauls the two full bins from the village and replaces them with empty bins for the next night. This happens throughout the duration of the village opening.
5. The vendor for the used oil places the used cooking oil containers strategically in the village. These used oil igloos can hold a total capacity of about 1200 gallons of used cooking oil. When an igloo is full, the vendor is called to pump and collect the oil.

**Events (Prince & Princess, Carnival Queen Show, Calypso Monarch):**

1. In-house staff along with one or two crews are assigned to each event. The event will dictate how many cleanup staff are needed. For instance, the Food Fair will need more crews than the Queen Show.
2. For all events, we place a 20-yard bin as well as 64-gallon trash carts at the event location. The assigned crew(s) will pick up trash and empty the contents of the 64-gallon trash carts into the 20-yard bin throughout the night. After the function is over the crew(s) will clean the entire venue in preparation for another scheduled event. The 20-yard bin is collected the following morning by the VIWMA roll-on/roll-off staff.



3. An igloo for disposing of Used Cooking Oil is placed at the venue where the event is being held.

### **Food Fair:**

1. On Food Fair Day there are four crews assigned: two for the morning shift (6 a.m.- 2 p.m.) and two for the afternoon shift (2 p.m.- 10 p.m.). The morning crew is responsible for cleaning and assisting in preparation for the opening of the Food Fair and the placement of the 64-gallon carts. Two - twenty (20) yard bins are placed in an area designated by the Festival Committee. During the day, the full carts are emptied and returned to their original location by the crew members on duty throughout the day. At the end of the Food Fair, a complete and thorough cleanup is performed. The full 20-yard bin is removed early the following day. The day before the Food Fair, the used oil vendor places an igloo for used cooking oil.

### **J'ouvert:**

1. The rear loader truck is parked by the bridge by 4:30 a.m. on the morning of J'ouvert because of the closing of the roads. All contracted crews and in-house staff assemble at the Cancryn bridge at 6 a.m. All contracted crews/in-house staff make their way up behind the last band. They rake, pick-up trash, and dispose of full bags into the rear loader. This happens up to the village where the cleaning crew now concentrates on cleaning the village and collecting bags from the outside of the village and disposing of them into the rear loader. We may seek the assistance of one of our rear loader contractors to assist due to the large volume of trash. A crew is dispatched back down the J'ouvert route to collect trash, as some vendors are still selling and more trash accumulates in previously cleaned areas.

### **Boat Race**

1. The afternoon of the Boat Race, all contracted crews including the VIWMA rear loader staff will assemble at Griffith Park. All contracted crews/in-house staff make their way up the Waterfront at



6 p.m. when the Boat Race officially ends. Contracted crews also clean the side streets and the Emancipation Garden. They rake, pick-up trash, and dispose of full bags into the rear loader up to the village. A crew is sent back down the waterfront to collect trash, as some vendors are still selling and trash accumulates in previously cleaned areas.

### **Parades (Adults & Childrens)**

1. 64-gallon trash carts are placed along the parade route for revelers to dispose of their waste.
2. All crews and assigned in-house staff are assigned to the cleanup. The crews and in-house personnel assemble at the USO building for the Children's Parade. They follow behind the last troupe or floupe collecting trash from the route including backstreet, all side streets, and the waterfront. Trash is deposited into the back of the rear loader which follows behind the parade as well. The cleanup goes as far as the Old Lincoln School
3. The same applies to the Adult's parade. The only difference is that the crews assemble at Western Cemetery in the area of the old Silver Dollar.
4. The meeting times are usually 12 p.m. for the Children's Parade and 2 p.m. for the Adult's Parade.

### **Final Cleanup:**

1. On the morning following the last night of the village, all crews assemble in the village at 5 a.m. Crews are assigned to different areas. On the final day, we not only clean the inside and outside of the village, but we also clean from the area of Cancryn Bridge up to the area of Queen Louise Home. This includes Cemetery Road, Back Street, Mainstreet, all side streets, Emancipation Garden, Roosevelt Park, Government Hill, D Beltjen Road to Queen Louise Home, and back to the Village.
2. The crews are on standby for the dismantling of the booths. During the dismantling of the booths, a 30-yard bin is placed in the center of the village for the booth owners to discard their trash. After



all the booths are dismantled and removed, crews will clean the parking lot, removing all debris, raking, and disposing of bags into the 30-yard bin until everything is removed. The bin will be hauled, and trash disposed off at the Bovoni Landfill.

### **In- House routes during Carnival**

Although we assist with the trash collection for Carnival, we are still responsible for the collection of the VIWMA in-house routes. We get assistance from our rear loader contractor on days when it is impossible to do both. For example, our contractor assists us with the J'ouvert route in the morning due to the road closures.

The VIWMA contractor collects Mainstreet between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. on the day of both parades. Also, the in-house rear loader crew reports to work an hour earlier to ensure that the trash on the parade route is collected on parade days too. The route from Pollyberg down to Cemetery Road is collected between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. and then the trash on the western side of the island is collected. Once the crews collect all this trash it is disposed of at the landfill, and they will be ready to go back at the end of the parade by the designated time, which is usually 12 p.m. for Children's Parade and 2 p.m. for Adult's parade. If by chance, time does not allow us to collect the route as scheduled, our rear loader contractor will assist with the route collection to ensure that all the waste is collected.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

The Environmental Enforcement Division on St. Thomas two (2) officers and four (4) inspectors will be supporting the St. Thomas Carnival activities throughout the duration. The Waste Management Enforcement Officers and Inspectors are tasked with contacting all the vendors at the festival village to ensure that proper waste disposal is adhered to. The Waste Management Officers will be in full force walking throughout the village providing coverage and assistance to VIPD officers. Any illegal dumping caught by the Waste Management Officers will result in a \$1,000.00 citation. Village vendors will be



responsible for ensuring their waste is properly disposed of at the Bovoni landfill and not at the residential bin sites at the end of the festival. Inspectors will be monitoring the cameras and officers will be patrolling the bins sites to insure there are no illegal dumping taking place. Any booth owners caught dumping at the bin sites will be issued a \$1,000.00 citation.

### **SUMMARY**

I close by sincerely thanking the Authority's hard-working staff for their dedication and commitment to not only their day-to-day jobs, but in supporting the future vision of the Authority. I would also like to thank the Bryan/Roach Administration and the members of the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislature for their support as we continue to address the U.S. Virgin Islands issues public health and safety issues related to solid waste and wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal. This concludes my testimony, and my team and I remain available to address any questions.

Thank you.