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TESTIMONY

GOOD MORNING SENATOR MYRON JACKSON, CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, YOUTH & RECREATION, AS WELL AS THE OTHER SENATORS PRESENT HERE TODAY AND ALL OTHERS GATHERED FOR THIS VERY IMPORTANT SESSION. I SERVE AS LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE NEW "CARIBBEAN DRAG RACING ASSOCIATION, INC." ("CDRA") A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED IN ST. CROIX IN 1984 AND REACTIVED IN 2014. THE BOARD MEMBERS ARE COMPRISED OF YOUNG MEN FROM BOTH THE DISTRICT OF ST. CROIX AND THE ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN DISTRICT. MR. RAFAEL FRONTAL, JR. WAS DULY ELECTED BY THE GENERAL MEMBERS THIS PAST JULY, 2015 AND ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT ABLE TO MAKE IT HERE TODAY, RAYMOND KEAN, JR. A CURRENT BOARD MEMBER FROM THE ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN DISTRICT IS HERE WITH ME TODAY.

THE SPORT OF DRAG RACING HAS ENCOUNTERED MANY CHALLENGES OVER THE YEARS, AND QUITE FRANKLY HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN SERIOUSLY OR GIVEN THE PRIORITY DESERVING OF THE SPORT, AS IS ACKNOWLEDGED IN OTHER CARIBBEAN ISLANDS AND ON THE MAINLAND. CURRENTLY, THE NEW CDRA HAS A SHORT TERM USE AGREEMENT WITH THE V.I. PORT AUTHORITY TO OPERATE THE DRAG RACING STRIP ON ST. CROIX, AT EST. BETHLEHEM,

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MIDDLE WORKS, LOCATED ACROSS FROM THE HENRY E. ROHLSSEN AIRPORT. WHILE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PORT, CARLTON DOWE HAS DBEEN VERY COOPERATIVE WITH THE ENDEAVOR AND WE ARE THANKFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY, THE SHORT TERM USE IS PROHIBITIVE AS IT RELATES TO LONG TERM PLANNING, SECURING SPONSORS AND UNDERGOING CONTRACTS THAT WOULD ALLOW THE OPERATIONS TO IMPROVE. IT IS A HERCULEAN TASK FOR A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION WITH A VOLUNTEER BOARD COMPRISED OF ELEVEN (11) MEMBERS TO ACCOMPLISH IN ANY MEANINGFUL WAY AND THUS THE MEMBERS AND SUPPORTS ARE SOMEWHAT DISCOURAGED.

THERE ARE MANY, MANY CHALLENGES TO INCLUDE THE FINANCIAL EXPENSES OF MONTHLY RENT AND LIABILITY INSURANCE TO THE PORT, AS WELL AS UPKEEP AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PREMISES, WHICH INCLUDES A HALF MILE DRAG STRIP THAT IS NOW DOWN TO 1/8 OF A MILE DUE TO DETERIORATION AND THE DIRE NEED FOR REPAIRS. THE ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN RACERS ARE UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE AS FREQUENTLY AS THEY WOULD LIKE DUE TO THE SKY HIGH UNREASONABLE COST OF BARGE SERVICE BETWEEN ST. THOMAS AND ST. CROIX AND THE DENIAL OF WAIVER OF PORT FEES.

IN ADDITION TO THE EXPENSE OF MAINTAINING AND PURCHASING RACE CARS, RACERS HAVE THE EXPENSE OF BARGE TRANSPORTATION TO AND/FROM EVENTS, HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS, ETC. FOR SOME OF THE PAST EVENTS ON HOLIDAY WEEKENDS SUCH AS THE BIGGEST DRAG RACING EVENT FOR AGRICULTURE FAIR RACES, CDRA IS THANKFUL FOR THE DEPT. OF TOURISM'S ASSISTANCE WITH SOME FUNDING FOR BARGE TRANSPORTATION THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR STT/STJ RACERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AG FAIR EVENT. FOR EASTER RACERS, CDRA WAS ABLE TO HOST TORTOLA RACERS ALONG WITH THEIR SUPPORTERS ALL OF WHOM RECEIVED THE RED CARPET TREATMENT. THOSE RACERS ARE EAGERLY LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER EVENT, WHICH AGAIN IS UNKNOWN DUE TO THE HIGH COST OF

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BARGE TRANSPORTATION. THE RECENT V.I. PUERTO RICO FRIENDSHIP RACES WAS TO INCLUDE PUERTO RICO RACERS BUT THAT DID NOT HAPPEN DUE TO THE CHALLENGES WITH THE HIGH COST OF BARGE TRANSPORTATION. THE EVENT WAS HELD ON A MINIMIZED ONE DAY SCHEDULE WITH STX RACERS ONLY AND WAS POSSIBLE DUE TO SOME ASSISTANCE FROM V.I. LOTTERY FOR WHICH CDRA IS VERY THANKFUL. HOWEVER, THE PLIGHT OF THE RACERS IN THE TERRITORY CONTINUES TO BE IN A STATE OF DEVASTATION.

THE POTENTIAL FOR SPORTS TOURISM IS RIPE AND READY FOR THE PICKING, BUT NOTABLY LACKING IS THE SUPPORT AND PRIORITY OF OUR LEADERS TO PUT DRAG RACING IN THE FOREFRONT AND ALLOW IT TO GENERATE THE REVENUES AND TOURISM BOOST THAT CAN FLOW WITH A SPORT SUCH AS DRAG RACING. CURRENTLY, CDRA HAS OVER 3,000 FOLLOWERS ON FACE BOOK AND GROWING DAILY. THE ORGANIZATION IS GRASS ROOTS, HAS TIES AND CONTACTS WITH OTHER LOCAL RACING ORGANIZATIONS TO INCLUDE THE BIKERS CLUB, THE VOLKSWAGON BUG CLUB, THE STT/STJ RACING ASSOCIATION AS WELL AS CARIBBEAN DRAG RACING ASSOCIATIONS FROM NEIGHBORING ISLANDS SUCH AS ANTIGUA, TORTOLA, PUERTO RICO, ST. KITTS, ST. LUCIA AND SEVERAL OTHER ISLANDS.

ALMOST ALL OF THOSE CARIBBEAN ISLAND RACING ASSOCIATIONS ARE SUPPORTED BY OR ACTUALLY RUN BY THE ISLAND'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, WE PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED YOU WITH A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE FROM THE ANTIGUA OBSERVER ENTITLED "DRAG RACING TRACK TO GET \$420,000 UPGRADE". ON THAT ISLAND THE GOVT. ANNOUNCED THAT THE FORMER ROADWAY WILL NO LONGER BE A PUBLIC HIGHWAY. THE TAXPAYERS THROUGH THE GOVT. OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA WILL FOOT THE BILL FOR THE DRAG RACING STRIP, WHICH WILL TAKE THREE (3) WEEKS TO COMPLETE AT THE COST OF \$420,000 TO BE READY IN TIME FOR THEIR MAJOR RACE, INDEPENDENCE DAY ON NOVEMBER 1, 2015.

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WE ALSO IN THE V.I. NEED TO TAKE DRAG RACING SERIOUSLY IN ORDER TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL. WITH STREET RACING AND ILLEGAL DRAG RACING, PARTICULARLY IN THE STT/STJ DISTRICT WHERE THERE'S NO DRAG RACING FACILITY, IT CAN BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. LIVES HAVE BEEN LOST, BOTH LOCALLY AND ELSEWHERE FROM ILLEGAL DRAG RACING ACTIVITIES. BY HAVING EASY, AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO A RACE TRACK BY BOTH DISTRICTS, THE RACERS CAN GO BETWEEN ISLANDS FOR INTERISLAND RACES, AND CAN INVITE OTHER CARIBBEAN ISLANDS AND RACERS FROM THE MAINLAND, ORLANDO, MIAMI, ETC. THAT ARE ALL EAGERLY WAITING FOR THE GREEN LIGHT TO COME TO THE V.I. TO RACE.

HOWEVER, THE REALITY IS THAT THE FUTURE OF THE SPORT IS IN ST. CROIX. IT HAS AN IDEAL INFRASTRUCTURE OWNED BY THE PORT AUTHORITY THAT INCLUDES A DRAG STRIP THAT IS ALREADY IN USE BY THE NEW CDRA. IT IS AN EXCELLENT SETTING FOR SPORTS TOURISM AND WILL HELP TO FEED THE BURNING DESIRE OF YOUNG MEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 16-25 TO ENGAGE IN THE SPORT LEGALLY. THERE'S AN EDUCATIONAL ELEMENT INVOLVED THAT THE STUDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE AND REMAIN ACTIVE AS THEY LEARN ABOUT THE SPORT AND WHAT IT HAS TO OFFER, INCLUDING THE MATHEMATICAL AND ENGINEERING ASPECTS RELATED TO DRAG RACING.

BOARD MEMBER, RAYMOND KEAN, JR. WHO IS PRESENT HERE TODAY IS THE KEY CONTACT PERSON DEALING WITH THE BARGE WOES AND SO HE KNOWS FIRST HAND THE CHALLENGES AND DISCOURAGING HURDLES INVOLVED IN INTERISLAND RACING. BARGE PRICES RANGE FROM \$7,000-\$8,000 DOLLARS AND THE AVERAGE STT RACER CAN SPEND UPWARDS OF \$1,000 ON A RACE WEEKEND, AND MORE FOR RACERS COMING FROM FURTHER AWAY. THE WAIVING OF PORT FEES FOR THE VESSELS WOULD GREATLY ASSIST IN KEEPING THE COST OF THE VESSELS DOWN. THIS IS HANDS DOWN A WIN- WIN SITUATION IF THE MALES IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP AGES 16-25 CAN BE

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ENGAGED ON A REGULAR, ALMOST WEEKLY BASIS WITH SANCTIONED DRAG RACING ACTIVITIES. QUITE FRANKLY, T'S A NO BRAINER THAT THERE WILL BE A DENT IN THE CRIME RATE TERRITORY WIDE IN ADDITION TO THE REVENUES THAT CAN BE GENERATED FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

LASTLY, I PREVIOUSLY SHARED WITH YOU FOR LONG TERM CONSIDERATION, THE EXTENT OF INVESTMENT THAT OTHER JURISDICTIONS PLACE IN THE SPORT OF DRAG RACING. PARTICULARLY, I SHARED WITH YOU THE LINK FROM THE HAWAII ISLAND THAT RECENTLY RECEIVED A MILLION DOLLARS FROM A 2.8 MILLION DOLLAR HUD GRANT TO MAKE THE DRAG STRIP ADA COMPLIANT ALONG WITH SOME OTHER RENOVATIONS. THE DRAG STRIP IS OPERATED BY THE COUNTY DEPT. OF PARKS & REC IN HAWAII. CURRENTLY, HORSE RACING IN THE V.I. HAS A SIMILAR SET UP WHICH CAN BE MIRRORED BY DRAG RACING. THE V.I. DEPT. OF HOUSING, SPORTS & RECREATION, I BELIEVE, HAS A LEASE WITH THE PORT AUTHORITY AND IN TURN CONTRACTS OUT THE HORSE RACING DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS TO TRAXCO, A PRIVATE ENTITY. THERE'S FEDERAL FUNDS AVAILABLE THAT THE V.I. GOVT. CAN TAP INTO BUT THE INITIAL STEPS HAS TO BE TAKEN BY OUR LEADERSHIP TO MAKE DRAG RACING IN THE TERRITORY A PRIORITY SO THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE V.I. CAN REAP THE BENEFITS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME. WE JUST NEED TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE SUCCESSFUL WAYS IN WHICH OTHER JURISDICTIONS HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THE GOAL OF PROMOTING SPORTS TOURISM AND TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN IN THE V.I.

THANK YOU MOST KINDLY FOR ALLOWING CDRA THE TIME AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THIS VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN THIS IMPORTANT ENDEAVOR.

BY: NATALIE NELSON TANG HOW, ESQ.
LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE NEW CDRA