

TESTIMONY OF DR. HALDANE DAVIES,  
VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION  
UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

COMMITTEE HEARING

BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION, YOUTH AND  
RECREATION

31ST LEGISLATURE  
OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

EARLE B. OTTLEY LEGISLATIVE HALL  
ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

OCTOBER 26, 2016

Good morning, to the Honorable Myron D. Jackson, Chairman of the Legislative Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and Recreation, members of the 31<sup>st</sup> Legislature present, fellow testifiers, members of the media, persons in the viewing and listening audience, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Shirley Lake-King, Vice President for Administration and Finance/CFO at the University of the Virgin Islands and I am here on behalf of Dr. Haldane Davies, Vice President for Business Development and Innovation at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI). He expresses his regrets for not being able to appear in person as he is currently off-island.

We welcome the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill number 31-0472, an Act transferring Parcels No. 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 Prindsens Gade, Kings Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and Parcels No. 21, 22 and 23B Hospital Line, Kings Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, the former J. Antonio Jarvis Elementary School, to the Department of Planning & Natural Resources and authorizing the purchase of Parcels No. 14, 15 & 16 Kongens Gade, Crown Prince Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, to be used as a School of Art for Conservation and Museum Science, a National Museum and a Cultural/Civic Center and other purposes; and authorizing the use of Parcels No. 21, 22, and 23 Hospital Street Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands as a school of architecture for the University of the Virgin Islands; and to speak about the involvement of the University of the Virgin Islands to the success of these projects.

In our quest for sustainability amid our current economic situation we are all called upon to respond with new and innovative ideas and strategies that will help to address our present realities and create a path for growth and success. We are expected to focus on our future; however, I am of the opinion that a great future is built on the foundations of the past, and the history of these Virgin Islands is a somber, yet inspiring reminder of the paths travelled by our ancestors and the poignant inscriptions of their wisdom, artistry, and enduring values that are etched in the corridors of time.

As the Territory embarks on this historic centennial project we pay homage to the ingenuity and skill of our fore parents/ancestors. They refined art and architecture, and erected structures that command our awe and admiration even today - timeless testaments to their hard work and pioneering spirits. The towns they built and inhabited showcased their creativity, originality, grandeur, and artistic flair. Their persistent commitment to excellence in architecture, design, engineering, and construction are evident in the structures on which this project is focused. At UVI, we are heartened that the vision for this centennial project, conceived almost fifteen years ago between the USVI and Denmark, is being brought to fruition after many years of thought, discussion, meetings, trips between the Virgin Islands and Denmark, cultivation of donors, and the commitment of public and private entities in both the Virgin Islands and Denmark to

rekindle the glory days of our territory by restoring and preserving our historic landmarks for the benefit of present and future generations..

On behalf of the University of the Virgin Islands, I hereby note our support for these two very good proposed aspirational projects provided that the administration, faculty and Board approve these academic projects subject to the submission of a plan, including the funding and operations of the schools by those proposing the projects prior to considering them for approval. Additionally, and although not a condition, if the projects are approved by the administration, faculty, and Board of the University, consideration should be given to the transfer of the properties noted in the Bill directly to the University of the Virgin Islands.

I have had the opportunity to interact with our Danish and local colleagues who indeed have a vision of greatness for these projects. The collaboration reflects a commitment of collective intellectual capital, academic prowess, architectural ingenuity and skills, and human resources to make this centennial initiative one that will not only document and showcase the past but also serve as an economic engine with Territory-wide impact. Through this partnership between governmental and non-governmental agencies in Denmark and the United States Virgin Islands, private entities and individuals, the University welcomes the opportunity to collaborate and assist with the implementation and management of the projects upon completion, provided that the conditions noted above are met.

Danish architecture is not only historic but modern and forward looking. In addition to the numerous historic landmarks in Denmark, the Virgin Islands, and elsewhere, Danish architecture has a long and fine history. Some of the more famous architectural buildings across the globe, including the iconic Sydney Opera House designed by Jørn Utzon to the world's best residential house in 2011 designed by Bjarke Ingels for '8 House' in Copenhagen, are but a few examples from which students enrolled in the proposed School of Architecture will gain experience. It is my understanding that a school of this nature is proposed to go beyond the ideas and thoughts of the best sources in Denmark to create a new day for the skill and art of architecture in the Virgin Islands, the Caribbean region, and the world.

These two programs are consistent with the Governor's vision for economic growth by helping to prepare a cadre of skilled and workforce ready individuals who will undoubtedly add to the Territory's capacity to attract and retain high quality businesses that will add significant economic value to the Territory.

UVI remains committed to engaging in opportunities that foster the growth and development of our students and Territory. We are fully committed to preserving our

history and culture as evidenced through the work of the Virgin Islands and Caribbean Cultural Center at the University. The opportunity to expand the collections, enhance the real-life feel of our history, and create a corridor for art and artistic expression falls within the expanded mission of the University to provide opportunities for education and growth within the context of economic development. These two proposed projects will further create a civic opportunity for not only students and the general public but also for the many visitors to this Territory to experience firsthand the rich history, culture, and traditions of the Virgin Islands. We are prepared to lend our support and collaborate with the entire team as the projects are approved by the University, and as funds are identified and made available for their execution and sustainability.

Although these initiatives may only be seen as a small part of the overall collaboration between Denmark and the Virgin Islands, we believe that they will make a significant difference in the lives of many residents and visitors across the Territory. UVI is fully committed to doing its part to build on the foundation that many of our elders have laid. While there may be challenges along the way and obstacles to overcome, there will be, I am sure, many success stories of youth, adults and visitors who will owe their education and livelihood to these projects should they come to fruition. Perhaps one additional future approach that may be considered is to have the University serve as the official clearing house for historical research, data collection and analysis for the Territory in collaboration with other departments and agencies. The task ahead is great and we all have significant work to do to improve the quality of life for our Territory. The challenges along the path are many but the vision to create a better Virgin Islands is achievable.

I would like to thank you, Senator for holding this hearing and for keeping the history and culture of these islands high on the agenda of the 31<sup>st</sup> Legislature. It is certainly an investment of time and resources that will pay great dividends in the years to come.

I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions in regards to this important measure. Thank you for your attention.