

PEDRO CRUZ
COMMISSIONER -- DSPR
DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2015
TESTIMONY

HONORABLE MYRON JACKSON, CHAIRMAN AND HONORABLE SAMUEL SANES, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, YOUTH AND RECREATION. HONORABLE COMMITTEE MEMBERS, CENTRAL STAFF, TESTIFIERS, LISTENING AND VIEWING AUDIENCE, GOOD MORNING.

I AM PEDRO CRUZ, COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS, PARKS AND RECREATION. WITH ME HERE IS ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CALVERT WHITE AND MR. RUDY CLARKE, GROUNDS AND MAINTENANCE COORDINATOR, OF COKI POINT BEACH FACILITY.

I AM BEFORE YOU THIS MORNING TO PRESENT A REPORT ON COKI POINT BEACH INCLUDING MAINTENANCE, SECURITY, VISITORS' AND RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCE, RULES AND REGULATIONS.

DSPR HAS TAKEN A VERY SERIOUS STAND TO UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN THE COKI POINT BEACH FACILITY. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT FROM THE MAINTENANCE TO MANAGERIAL POINT OF VIEW; WE, DSPR HAVE BEEN DILIGENTLY TACKLING THE OLD ISSUES WITHOUT NEGLECTING THE NEW ONES.

UNFORTUNATELY, ON OCASSION, IT TAKES TIME TO SOLVE A PROBLEM DUE TO OUR GOVERNMENT'S BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF SOME MATTERS SUCH AS: REPAIRS OF RESTROOMS, SHOWERS AND WE HAVE MAINTAINED THE AVAILABILITY OF WATER. TAKING CARE OF THE COKI POINT FACILITY IS VERY EXPENSIVE.

FOR ONE EXAMPLE: COKI POINT HAS SHOWERS, AND TO PROVIDE THIS SERVICE WE NEED FRESH WATER. THE DELIVERY OF WATER MINIMUM COST IS \$1,000 PER MONTH.

WE HAVE BEEN GIVING COKI POINT SPECIAL ATTENTION DUE TO THE FACT THAT THERE IS GREAT DEMAND FOR THIS FACILITY BY BOTH, LOCALS AND VISITORS. WE WANT EVERY ONE THAT VISITS COKI POINT TO ENJOY IT TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITY. BUT, WE ALSO WANT THE COOPERATION OF THE RESIDENTS OF THIS AREA TO HELP US DEVELOP A PLEASANT AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AT COKI POINT BEACH.

TO NAME ONE PROBLEM: THE ATMOSPHERE AND ENVIRONMENT IN COKI POINT SHOULD BE SUCH THAT LOCALS AND VISITORS HAVE A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE AND A DESIRE WANTING TO RETURN. UNFORTUNATELY, ON VARIOUS OCASSIONS THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE. POLICE AND OTHER AGENCIES HAVE HAD TO INTERVENE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT TOURISM PROMOTES BUSINESS AND IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE TERRITORY ECONOMY. THEREFORE, DSPR SUPPORTS THE VENDORS WHILE LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOMING OPPORTUNITIES OF BUISNESS RELATED IMPROVEMENT.

TO THIS END DSPR HAS BEEN HOLDING MEETINGS WITH VENDORS AND WE ARE REVIEWING THE PRESENT RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR VENDORS ON THAT PROPERTY TO ASSURE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND ULTIMATELY TO PROTECT THE WELFARE OF LOCALS AND VISITORS THAT USE THE COKI POINT BEACH AND FACILITY.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT EACH PERSON, BE IT LOCAL OR VISITOR FROM OFF-ISLAND, FEEL SECURE AND ENJOY A PLEASANT ATMOSPHERE. I COMMEND THE ST. THOMAS POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE IN CONTROLLING AND PREVENTING SCURRILOUS ACTIVITIES. AND, I PLEDGE DSPR'S CONTINUED SUPPORT; AND, I ENCOURAGE LOCAL VISITORS TO HELP US MAKE OF COKI POINT THE BEST JOYFUL BEACH A VISITOR CAN EXPERIENCE.

IN MOVING FORWARD TO ASSURE A SECURE AND PEACEFUL PLACE AT COKI POINT WE HAVE INSTALLED SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS AND FOR THIS I EXPRESS MY UTMOST THANKS TO COMMISSIONER NICHOLSON-DOTY, DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM FOR THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION.

IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, THIS BEACH HAS UNDERGONE PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS. AND OUR DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN PROVIDING SECURITY FOR BEACHGOERS, TOURISTS AND OTHER VISITORS.

THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED:

- A CAMERA SYSTEM HAS BEEN INSTALLED ON THE PROPERTY FOR INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES. THE CAMERA IS ABLE TO PROVIDE A VIEW FROM ALL LOCATIONS: THE BEACH, VENDORS' PARKING LOTS, DRIVEWAY ENTRY POINT AND ALSO THE SPORTS PARKS AND RECREATION OFFICE. FURTHERMORE, THE CAMERA IS AVIALABLE FOR POLICE VIEWING.
- POLICE PRESENCE HAS BEEN OBTAINED DAILY WHEN THERE ARE CRUISE SHIPS IN PORT. THIS IS A GREAT WAY TO KEEP TRAFFIC FLOWING SMOOTHLY AND IT IS ALSO A WAY TO PREVENT THEFT, WHICH HAS BEEN A MAJOR CONCERN TO US.
- A TAXI STAND HAS BEEN PUT IN PLACE AS OF LATE NOVEMBER. THIS PROVIDES A RELIEF FOR TOURISTS ESPECIALLY. THEY NO LONGER HAVE TO WAIT AN EXTENSIVE AMOUNT OF TIME TO GO BACK TO THE CRUISE SHIP. THE TAXI STAND ALSO HELPS TO KEEP THE TRAFFIC FLOW MOVING.

- COKI POINT FACILITY HAS BEGUN RECEIVING A FACE LIFT STARTING WITH THE PAINTING OF THE RESTROOMS. BECAUSE OF THE ON AND OFF AGAIN INCLEMENT WEATHER, AND WITH A GREAT MANY CRUISE SHIP PASSENGERS ON THE BEACH, PAINTING HAS SLOWED DOWN. THE PAINT HAS BEEN PURCHASED AND IS IN DSPR'S STOCK.
- IN ADDITION, PUBLIC WORKS HAS BEEN ASSISTING US IN SEVERAL WAYS. ONE, BY CUTTING DOWN BRANCHES FROM TREES THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY STRIKING THE TAXI PASSENGERS WHILE IN THE TAXIS. AND TWO, PORTIONS OF THE ROAD TO COKI POINT THAT HAVE BEEN DISINTEGRATING ARE PRESENTLY BEING REPAIRED BY PUBLIC WORKS.
- ADDITIONALLY, WE ARE WORKING ON PROVIDING THE WAITERS AND WAITRESSES OF COKI POINT BEACH WITH IDENTIFICATION CARDS, WHICH WILL ALLOW MANAGEMENT TO HAVE BETTER CONTROL OF SPECIFIC AREAS.
- PRESENTLY, WE HAVE ONLY ONE LIFEGUARD ON DUTY AT ANY GIVEN TIME, AND THIS ONLY FIVE DAYS A WEEK. THIS SITUATION IS A CONCERN. WE NEED FOUR. RECENTLY, ONE LIFEGUARD RETIRED AND WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF HIRING HIS REPLACEMENT PLUS ONE OTHER.

BEFORE I CONCLUDE, I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS DEEPEST THANKS TO COMMISSIONER DELROY RICHARDS OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, COMMISSIONER GUSTAV JAMES, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS FOR THEIR CONTINUOUS ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND THE INFRA-STRUCTURE AT COKI POINT.

ALSO I WANT TO SAY THANKS TO ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CALVERT WHITE AND MR. RUDY CLARKE FOR THEIR WELL DONE JOB AT COKI POINT. I BROUGHT THEM WITH ME THIS MORNING BECAUSE THEY ARE WELL ACQUAINTED AND DIRECTLY INVOLVE WITH THE COKI POINT DAILY ISSUES.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR CONCERNS AND CONSIDERATION. WE STAND READY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.