STATEMENT BY THE ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST

SUPPORTING AN AMENDMENT IN THE FORM OF A SUBSTITUTION
TO BILL No. 30-0002

MARCH 5, 2013

David Born (if reading):

I am reading this statement at the behest of Mr. Ronald Lockhart, whose obligations to the St. Thomas Historical Trust has prohibited him from being present tonight.

GOOD AFTERNOON, COMMITTEE CHAIR SENATOR MILLIN-YOUNG, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE AND PLANNING.

MY NAME IS RONALD LOCKHART. I AM A NATIVE VIRGIN ISLANDER AND LIFELONG RESIDENT OF DOWNTOWN CHARLOTTE AMALIE. I OPERATE A HISTORIC INN, SERVE AS A COMMISIONER IN THE ST THOMAS COMMITTEE OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION AND HAVE THE HONOR TO SERVE THE OVER 150 ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST AS

PRESIDENT. I TESTIFY TODAY ON BEHALF OF THE MEMBERS OF THE TRUST.

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, THE TRUST WAS FOUNDED IN 1966 BY 12 VIRGIN ISLANDERS, MAKING IT ONE OF THE ISLAND'S OLDEST NONPROFITS. THE TRUST'S MISSION IS TO

IDENTIFY, PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE HISTORY, SITES, AND CULTURE OF ST. THOMAS.

BECAUSE THE TRUST OPERATES ON A NON-COMMERCIAL BASIS, WE FELT THAT WE HAD AN IMPORTANT POSITION TO RELATE TODAY – THAT OF AN ENTITY WITH NO DIRECT FINANCIAL STAKE IN THE OUTCOME, BUT WITH A STRONGER CLAIM –
THAT OF THE DEFENSE OF THIS ISLAND'S CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CHARACTER.

SENATORS, I AM HERE TO GIVE YOU FOUR REASONS WHY THE TRUST STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE AMENDMENT AND URGE YOUR FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION.

FIRST

BARKING STRESSES ALL VISITORS - LOCAL AND TOURISTS- AND THAT'S NOT WHY THEY CAME !

SIMPLY STATED, VISITORS COME TO CHARLOTTE AMALIE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, BUT MOST OF US CAN AGREE THAT THEY COME TO THE ISLANDS TO GET A RELAXING VACATION. RELAXING

HERE INCLUDES ENJOYING THE ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKE OUR ISLANDS UNIQUE:

- OUR BEACHES, OF COURSE,
- BUT ALSO OUR HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE,
- THE DANISH STREET NAMES,
- OUR WONDERFUL VIRGIN ISLANDS WAY OF SPEAKING, OFTEN IMITATED AND RARELY PERFECTED.

I AM SURE THAT ALMOST ALL OF US AGREE THAT A STROLL DOWNTOWN THAT INCLUDES CAJOLING, NAGGING AND OVERFAMILIARITY TO PROMOTE THIS MERCHANT OR THAT TIMESHARE, OR BUY SOMETHING, IS NOT IN THE DEFINITION OF A RELAXING VACATION.

SECOND

BARKING IS <u>NOT PART OF OUR CULTURE OR HISTORY</u>

USING FACEBOOK, TWITTER, TRIPADVISOR AND OTHER METHODS, THE TRUST HAS IDENTIFIED VISITORS IN EXPONENTIALLY INCREASING NUMBERS ARE COMING TO THE ISLAND TO ENJOY OUR HISTORY AND CULTURE.

THERE IS NO HISTORICAL PRECEDENT FOR BARKING ON CHARLOTTE AMALIE'S STREETS. IN THE PAST, VENDORS POSTED A SIGN AND SOLD GOODS TO PASSERSBY. WE ARE NOT OFFERING A VIRGIN ISLANDS EXPERIENCE IF WE ALLOW THE KIND OF HARASSMENT TYPICAL OF A SOUK, OR BAZAAR, OR RED LIGHT DISTRICT.

THIRD

BARKERS MISREPRESENT THEMSELVES AS EXPERTS AND THEN MISINFORM

WE REGULARLY OBSERVE BARKERS APPROACH VISITORS, REPRESENTING THEMSELVES AS LOCAL EXPERTS. INSTEAD OF PROVIDING ACCURATE AND EXPERT INFORMATION, THEY DELIBERATELY DIRECT THE VISITORS AWAY FROM THE VERY SPECIAL AND UNIQUE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE TOWN.

FOR EXAMPLE, BARKERS HAVE TOLD VISITORS AND TRUST MEMBERS THAT THERE IS NO MUSEUM, AND/ORTHAT THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED.

*HOW MANY VISITORS HAVE MISSED OUT ON THE ONLY EXCELLENT **AND FREE** MUSEUM IN TOWN BECAUSE OF THIS MISINFORMATION?*

ONE OF OUR BOARD MEMBERS WHO COULD NOT ATTEND TODAY ASKED THAT WE RELATE HER EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT:

> *"AS I MANNED A TOURIST INFORMATION BOOTH IN THE CARDOW ALLEY I WITNESSED ONE OF THE "DIVINE DESTINATION" DISCOUNT VACATION CLUB STREET "BARKERS" WALK UP TO TWO TOURISTS AND TELL THEM THAT HE WAS FROM THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM. HE FLASHED THEM AN ID CARD THAT WAS ON A STRAP AROUND HIS NECK THAT APPEARED TO LOOK LIKE AN OFFICIAL VI DEPT OF TOURISM ID CARD, AND ASKED THEM HOW THEY WERE AND IF THEY WERE ENJOYING THEIR VISIT. THE*

COUPLE KEPT WALKING, TRYING TO IGNORE HIM, BUT HE WALKED BACKWARDS IN FRONT OF THEM AND STARTED HIS PITCH. I SAW THIS SAME SALES REPRESENTATIVE CONTINUE TO APPROACH PEOPLE IN THE SAME MANNER THROUGHOUT THAT DAY, FLASHING THE ID CARD AND ALL."

OPPONENTS TO THE AMENDMENT ARE GOING TO SAY THESE INCIDENTS ARE NOT TYPICAL, BUT THAT IS NOT CORRECT. THESE INCIDENTS ARE **FREQUENT** AND ARE THE ONES THAT STAND OUT IN PEOPLES' MEMORIES AND THE ONES THEY RELATE TO OTHER POTENTIAL VISITORS.

FOURTH AND FINALLY:

BARKERS HAVE MADE LITTLE EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THEIR VALUE TO THE TOWN.

DO THEY DO ANYTHING TO INFORM THEMSELVES OR OTHERS ABOUT THE TOWNS HISTORY?

HISTORICALLY: NO, BUT RECENTLY: YES.

HISTORICALLY, WE HAVE HAD NO BARKERS COME TO OUR MUSEUM (AS SEEN IN MY DECEMBER 2014 STATEMENT). BUT AS OF LAST WEEK, WE WERE APPROACHED BY AN INTERESTED MEMBER OF THE DOWNTOWN SALESPERSON COMMUNITY. THIS ANONYMOUS INDIVIDUAL APPROACHED THE TRUST WITH THE IDEA OF BARKERS LEARNING SOME OF DOWNTOWN'S HISTORY AND EVENTUALLY, PERHAPS, LEADING HISTORIC WALKING TOURS. HE ALSO OFFERED IDEAS ON HOW TO PROMOTE AND FUND THE RESTORATION OF CHARLOTTE AMALIE'S HISTORIC STEP-STREETS,

BY "SELLING BRICKS". THESE CONCEPTS WOULD INDEED GO A LONG WAY TO HELPING BENEFIT THE HISTORIC VALUE OF OUR TOWN, BUT, IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE TRUST HAS BEEN APPROACHED IN SUCH A REGARD.

TO CONCLUDE:

INSTEAD OF WORKING IN THE INTERESTS OF THE TOWN, BARKERS

- **DETRACT**
- **DISTRACT**
- **STRESS AND**
- **MISINFORM VISITORS**

ABOUT OUR TOWN AND ITS CULTURE AND HISTORY.

NOTHING LESS THAN OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY, OUR REPUTATION AND ULTIMATELY OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE ARE AT STAKE, WHEN WE ALLOW DETRACTION, DISTRACTION, STRESS AND MISINFORMATION TO BECOME THE FOREGROUND FOR VISITS TO OUR BEAUTIFUL VIRGIN ISLANDS.

YOUR VOTE FOR THE AMENDMENT WILL SUPPORT THESE VALUES.

I HUMBLY THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO MY TESTIMONY AND CORDIALLY INVITE YOU ALL TO JOIN THE ST THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST AND MUSEUM, ON ROOSEVELT PARK.