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FISCAL YEAR 2017 PROPOSED BUDGET

PRESENTED BY
MONA L. BARNES
DIRECTOR

Submitted to
Senator Clifford Graham, Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance

Legislative Building, St. Croix
June 23, 2016

4 *Your ability to remain standing during trials and tribulations should ensure your humility after*
5 *triumph.*

6 Honorable Senator Clifford Graham,
7 Chairman of the Committee on Finance and
8 all other Honorable Senators present, staff of
9 the Virgin Islands Legislature and those who
10 will view and listen to this presentation, Good
11 Afternoon.

12 I am Mona L. Barnes, Director of the Virgin
13 Islands Territorial Emergency Management
14 Agency (VITEMA). Because of your support
15 of my 2016 supplemental budget request I
16 was able to have every vacant Deputy
17 Director position within the agency filled.
18 Joining me today to present VITEMA's Fiscal
19 Year 2017 Budget are Ms. Allison DeGazon,
20 Assistant Director, Mrs. Debra Henneman-
21 Smith, Deputy Director of Administration and
22 Finance, Mrs. Renata Christian-West, Deputy
23 Director of Grants Management and Ms.
24 Denise Lewis, Deputy Director of Operations.
25 Mr. Todd Patton, Deputy Director of Planning
26 and Preparedness is not present, as he is
27 attending the Initial Planning Meeting for
28 Vigilant Guard 2017.

29 As the sole local government agency
30 empowered with the authority to supervise,
31 administer and coordinate preparedness,
32 response and recovery efforts for natural and
33 manmade hazards, VITEMA's mission
34 remains saving lives and protecting property.
35 This is achieved by our direct support of all
36 agencies involved in the preparedness,
37 response and recovery efforts for the entire
38 Territory. We do this through facilitating
39 training and exercise opportunities for first
40 responders, governmental and non-
41 governmental agencies, as well as strategic
42 planning assistance to those same
43 organizations.

Presentation – Snapshot

Director

Mona L. Barnes

Assistant Director

Allison DeGazon

Deputy Directors

Debra Henneman-Smith, Administration &
Finance

Renata Christian, Grants Management

Todd Patton, Planning & Preparedness

Denise Lewis, Operations

Divisions: Operations, Administration &
Finance, Preparedness, Grants Management

Legal Authority: (Act 7074) Emergency
Management Act of 2009

Employees:

General Fund 64.95

Federal Funds 16.05

Classified:

Filled: 41

Vacant: 12

Exempt:

Filled: 28

Vacant: 1

PROPOSED BUDGET: \$11,967,405

Appropriated Funds \$ 6,331,418

General Fund \$5,134,418

Miscellaneous Fund \$1,197,000

Non-Approp. Funds \$5,635,987

Federal Funds \$4,967,987

Emergency Svc Fund \$ 668,000

44 We also encourage citizens to prepare for all hazards through effective public education,
 45 awareness and outreach. Our overall objective is to create a community that is prepared to face
 46 and recover from all hazards.

47 VITEMA's four major divisions are Administration and Finance, Grants Management, Planning
 48 and Preparedness and Operations – with oversight of the 911 emergency system and the VI
 49 Office of Homeland Security. Daily operations encompass two 911 Emergency Communications
 50 Centers (ECCs), three Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and a homeland security Fusion
 51 Center.

52 In total, VITEMA has 82 funded positions — 53 classified and 29 unclassified. I am pleased to
 53 announce that every employee within the Agency has received a salary increase with the
 54 exception of the senior staff.

55

56 **FY 2017 PROPOSED BUDGET**

57 VITEMA's proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budget request is \$11,967,405, which represents
 58 **\$5,134,418** from the General Fund, \$1,197,000 from the Miscellaneous Fund, \$668,000 Non-
 59 Appropriated Funds and **\$4,967,987** in Federal Funds.

60 Of the amount cited above as Federal funds, approximately **\$2.5 million** is considered pass-
 61 through capital outlays for Pre-Disaster Mitigation Competitive Grant Program projects. Of the
 62 amount reported as Miscellaneous funds, **\$297,000** is sub-granted to the VI Rescue organizations
 63 and \$900,000 is obligated to sub-grants local match and grants bill of collections.

64 VITEMA's actual operating budget for FY 2017 is **\$8,270,405**.

65 Additionally, we have requested **\$668,000** from the Emergency Services Fund to manage
 66 equipment repairs as well as for operator training. The Emergency Services Fund is funded by a
 67 \$1 (one dollar) surcharge on communications lines, which is authorized by the New & Emerging
 68 Technologies 911 Improvement Act of 2008.

69 The **\$5,134,418** in General Fund dollars consists of **\$2,786,406** in personnel services, **\$1,244,273**
 70 in fringe benefits, **\$631,062** for other services, **\$350,000** to cover utilities charges and **\$122,677**
 71 for supplies. "Other Services" include the costs of travel and transportation, professional
 72 services, property and equipment rental and repairs, automotive repairs, and communications.

73 Of the \$4,967,987 in Federal funds:

- 74 ▪ \$1,262,749 pays for salaries and fringe benefits,
- 75 ▪ \$23,183 is indirect costs,
- 76 ▪ \$76,651 pays for supplies,
- 77 ▪ \$523,183 for Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program grant projects,
- 78 ▪ and \$2.5 million is Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation grant funding slated for continued
 79 work on the Christiansted Electrical Underground Project.

80 The Miscellaneous Fund, totalling approximately **\$1,197,000**, includes **\$900,000** to be deposited
81 in the Disaster Contingency Fund, and **\$297,000** to support the Territory's VI Rescue
82 organizations.

83 The Disaster Contingency Fund is used to provide the local match for federal disaster related
84 grants. The Fund also covers the cost of local response efforts for major incidents that do not
85 meet the threshold for a presidential disaster declaration. The Fund is also used to reimburse
86 FEMA for disallowed disaster related costs of which we have a balance due to FEMA of
87 approximately \$1.19 million which will be paid in full no later than July 31, 2017. Recently, this
88 body voted to expand the use of the Fund, to cover the cost of reimbursing FEMA \$1.64 million
89 in disallowed costs. We currently have a balance due to FEMA of approximately \$527,250,
90 which will be paid in full no later than March 15, 2018.

91 64.95 positions are funded by the General Fund. Of the **64.95** positions, **44** are 9-1-1 employees
92 — **42** operators and two (2) managers one in each district. Of the 42 9-1-1 positions, 10 operator
93 positions are vacant.

94 Allow me to thank Governor Kenneth E. Mapp, the Office of Management and Budget, the
95 Division of Personnel and this body for answering our urgent call to create, fund and fill
96 mission-critical positions within VITEMA.

97 New staff positions include the Deputy Director of Planning and Preparedness, the Deputy
98 Director of Operations, an Emergency Management Outreach Coordinator, an Emergency
99 Management Planning Coordinator, an Emergency Records and Property Management
100 Specialist, a Human Resources Administrator, and a Financial Officer. I have also promoted Ms.
101 Nadia Fearon, from a 9-1-1 operator to 9-1-1 Manager for the St. Croix District, Adelle Silcott-
102 Williams, from Radio Frequency Technology to Emergency Management Project Coordinator,
103 Malinda Vigilant-Messer, from Disaster Program Specialist to Deputy Territorial Public
104 Assistance Officer and Mr. Devon Proctor, from a 9-1-1 operator to the St. Thomas Emergency
105 Operations Center Supervisor. The St. Croix Emergency Operations Center Supervisor position
106 recently became vacant with the promotion of Ms. Denise Lewis to Deputy Director of
107 Operations. We are currently in the process of filling this vacancy.

108 The FY2016 Budget included funding for 12 vacant 9-1-1 operator positions – six (6) on St.
109 Croix and five (5) on St. Thomas. The Agency has conducted interviews and have filled those
110 vacant positions. However, due to inhouse promotions and subsequent turnovers the agency
111 currently has 10 new vacant positions for which the Agency has conducted interviews and made
112 final selections. Those personnel actions should be completed by the end of June. My heartfelt
113 thanks to all those operators who have worked diligently and tirelessly with us as we continue
114 moving towards achieving a full complement of operators.

115 As we have only recently filled the vacant positions within the 911 ECCs, overtime costs remain
116 high. It is anticipated that this cost will be reduced drastically with the additional operators now

117 on staff. More importantly, fully-staffing our 911 centers will improve VITEMA's ability to
118 provide quality service to the community and to first responders.

119 During Fiscal Year 2017 the 911 ECCs will revert to a 12-hour shift schedule. In 2011,
120 VITEMA switched from a 12-hour to an eight-hour rotating shift schedule, projecting it would
121 save the Agency approximately \$250,000, however, that projection has not materialized.

122 I would like to note, however, that the Agency continues to experience serious challenges with
123 completing background checks of candidates for vacant 9-1-1 operator positions. I was recently
124 notified by the VI Police Department that since VITEMA does not fall within the Public Safety
125 arm of government, we can no longer submit requests for background checks to the Virgin
126 Islands Police Department.

127 We were already experiencing significant delays in receiving completed background checks
128 resulting in an additional burden on the Agency. We may have to seek the services of a private
129 company in order to have the background checks completed and at a cost to the local
130 government.

131 Union negotiations with the United Steelworkers, which represents 911 operators, are ongoing.
132 We have met with the newly-appointed Chief Negotiator and we are in the final phases of
133 reaching a collective bargaining agreement. The Chief Negotiator is also reviewing my proposal
134 for operator salary increases – the final piece of the agreement.

135 Regarding the status of backpay, United Steelworkers is currently reviewing documentation
136 provided by my staff. Once the union's review is complete, we will be able reopen discussions.

137 As you are aware, we have had some issues with the recording system within the St. Thomas 911
138 ECC and we were unable to record emergency calls. I am relieved to report that we have
139 resolved that situation and the system is now fully functional in both districts. Please note that
140 the hardware and software used within our centers are quickly approaching the point of
141 becoming outdated. The system needs to be upgraded at an approximate cost of 2.5-3 million
142 dollars and we will be seeking funding for that project.

143

144 **FY 2016 Notable Accomplishments**

145 In addition to a fully-staffed VITEMA, FY 2016 yielded other notable achievements.

146 Our Grants Management Division has worked diligently towards bringing the US Virgin Islands
147 into good standing with the US Department of Homeland Security. Thanks to the effort of Mrs.
148 Christian-West and her staff, I am delighted to report that as of October 2015, VITEMA was
149 removed from the manual drawdown restriction. This is a strong indication that the US
150 Department of Homeland Security has renewed faith in our ability to manage its grant portfolio.

151 Additionally, in April 2016, a FEMA Region II Grants Business Management Team conducted a
152 compliance site visit to review our Homeland Security and Emergency Management

153 Performance grants. On May 17, 2016 I received notification that there were no findings and no
 154 corrective actions necessary by VITEMA. I again want to publicly thank Mrs. Christian-West
 155 and her team for their efforts. I pledge today that VITEMA is committed to maintaining a good
 156 standing within our Grants Management Division.

157 Finally, as it regards Grants Management, the division has requested the closeout of Tropical
 158 Storm Jeanne and continues to work with FEMA on the closeout of November 2003 Flood. We
 159 are encouraging sub-grantees to complete open projects under the remaining disasters, submit
 160 documentation for completed projects, or request alternate projects instead of de-obligations.

161

Disaster Name	Disaster Number	Open Applicants	Federal Share Awarded	Federal Share Expended
November 2003 Flood *closeout ongoing	1503	0	\$ 1,689,416.27	\$ 1,617,201.09
Tropical Storm Jeanne *closeout requested	1567	0	\$1,760,452.01	\$1,690,856.72
Hurricane Omar	1807	70	\$9,220,418.84	\$6,548,481.29
Hurricane Earl	1939	40	\$ 2,859,993.09	\$702,430.25
Tropical Storm Otto	1948	24	\$981,583.32	\$2,159.19
Tropical Storm Tomas	1949	21	\$ 2,008,712.28	\$141,372.90
TOTAL			\$ 18,520,575.81	\$ 10,702,501.44

162

163 Other highlights of FY 2016, include:

- 164 ■ Securing \$312,500 in Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant funding to acquire and install a
 165 1,500-kilowatt emergency generator for the Juan F. Luis Hospital. The grant was
 166 awarded in response to an island-wide blackout that left the hospital without power for
 167 several hours. We thank FEMA-Caribbean Area Division for working closely with
 168 VITEMA and hospital officials to secure the grant funding. We also secured a generator
 169 for the American Red Cross of the Virgin Islands on St. Croix. As you know, this
 170 organization is a critical component of any emergency response operation.
- 171 ■ In December 2015, VITEMA conducted the first-ever full-scale Maritime Response
 172 Exercise to test the first responder capabilities in managing a major incident at sea. The
 173 exercise was set in Pillsbury Sound, the body of water between St. Thomas and St. John.
 174 The scenario included an explosion aboard a ferry carrying 60 passengers on an
 175 excursion to St. John. Our first responders and emergency managers were evaluated on
 176 on-site incident management, marine search and rescue operations, communications,
 177 Emergency Operations Center management, on-scene security and protection and
 178

179 triage/pre-hospital treatment and medical surge. More than 20 local and federal agencies
180 participated.

181

182 ▪ In March 2016, VITEMA in partnership with the St. Croix Rescue Academy, graduated
183 the first high school Teen Community Emergency Response Team (Teen CERT), on St.
184 Croix. Thirty-three St. Croix Educational Complex High School students volunteered to
185 join the ranks of Teen CERT and are now trained in basic disaster response skills, fire
186 safety and suppression, light search and rescue, disaster medical operations and team
187 organization. The students also completed Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
188 training as part of the program and each received an American Heart Association CPR
189 certification card.

190

191 ▪ We significantly improved participation in the annual Caribe Wave Tsunami Response
192 Exercise which was held on March 17, 2016. We supported tsunami evacuation drills for
193 the Legislature of the Virgin Islands, the VI Water and Power Authority and three
194 public schools – Juanita Gardine on St. Croix, Ulla Muller on St. Thomas and Julius
195 Sprauve on St. John. The VIWAPA and the VI Legislature had approximately 95%
196 participation on St. Croix and 100% participation from the three schools. A number of
197 businesses as well as hotels held tsunami walks on that day.

198

199 **Looking Ahead, FY 2017**

200 FY 2017 promises to be an exciting year for VITEMA. As we press forward, among our top
201 priorities is the revitalization of VITEMA’s Hermon Hill facility, which is included in the
202 governor’s proposed capital projects bill. I continue to strongly support this project, which
203 returns VITEMA to its own facility. My vision is to build a state of the art headquarters on St.
204 Croix to house all of VITEMA’s components as well as the Bureau of Information Technology
205 and a police substation.

206 In May 2017, VITEMA in partnership with the VI National Guard will conduct a Vigilant Guard
207 exercise. This is a national level exercise program sponsored by US Northern Command and the
208 National Guard Bureau. The exercise will provide us the rare opportunity to test our coordination
209 with the territory’s federal and military partners in response to a catastrophic event. In addition to
210 federal and military participation, territorial agencies, private sector entities and volunteer
211 organizations will also be major participants in the exercise. We anticipate participation of
212 military components from Puerto Rico as well as from across the US mainland to include New
213 Jersey and North Carolina. The exercise is expected to bring approximately 2,000 participants to
214 the Territory. The Vigilant Guard Initial Planning Meeting is taking place on St. Thomas as I
215 speak.

216 In April 2017, the Territory’s Tsunami-Ready status is up for renewal by the National Oceanic
217 and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). I am confident we will retain this status. The USVI

218 Tsunami Readiness Program continues to improve and enhancements include installation of
219 additional sirens and signs, improved warning capabilities, providing tsunami guidelines to the
220 marine community and updating our tsunami evacuation maps. These preparedness initiatives
221 are funded through NOAA's National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program grants.

222 Our goal in the 2017 fiscal year is to programmatically and financially closeout Hurricane Omar
223 and to begin the closeout of Hurricane Earl, Tropical Storm Otto, and Tropical Storm Tomas.

224 We will also consider the feasibility of changing the Public Assistance grant reimbursement
225 procedure for small projects so that the full award amounts are paid to the Territory rather than
226 reimbursements based on actual expenditures. The Territory continues to send back unused
227 funding for small projects due to local limitations, when Federal regulations allows the Territory
228 to retain unused funds for the purposes of completing other projects that serve the public welfare.

229 Finally, the VITEMA Underground Electrical Project is slated for completion in 2017. Burying
230 of electrical lines that lead to VITEMA on St. Thomas will ensure our headquarters remains
231 energized in the event a major storm impacts the Territory's infrastructure. The VI Water and
232 Power Authority will remove overhead electrical cables, place the electrical lines underground,
233 and tie VITEMA into Cyril E. King Airport's direct connection to the utility.

234 I would like to take this opportunity to remind the public that the 2016 Atlantic Hurricane Season
235 began June 1st and ends November 30th. Now is the time to ensure you are prepared. Although
236 this year is forecasted to be a near normal hurricane season, it only takes one storm making
237 landfall to negatively impact the Territory. Put together a family disaster plan and stock up on
238 emergency supplies. Businesses should also have emergency plans in place so that employees
239 know what to do before and after a disaster strikes.

240 Senators, this concludes my testimony. My team and I thank you for the opportunity to speak on
241 VITEMA's proposed FY 2017 budget. We are ready to take your questions.

242