



## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES SHARES THE FY 2017 BUDGET OVERVIEW

ST. THOMAS – The Committee on Finance, chaired by Sen. Clifford Graham, met with officials from the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), during the FY 2017 Budget Overview at a meeting held at the Capitol Building on Thursday.

Dawn Henry, Commissioner of DPNR stated that the recommended budget for FY 2017 is \$27,901,004.67. Out of that money, \$6,915,420 is for the General Fund, \$4,027,596.67 for the Non-Appropriated Local Funds and \$16,957,988 for the Federal Awards.

The budget breakdown of the General Fund is as follows: Personnel is \$10,243,166, Capital Outlay is \$1,960,709, Supplies are \$1,553,16, Other Services & Charges are \$8,582,703, Utilities are \$831,105 and Fringe Benefits are \$4,730,159; according to Commissioner Henry.

Sen. Marvin Blyden asked, “Why is there an increase in the Fringe Benefits? Did the department receive raises?” In response Commissioner Henry said, “The enforcement officers are the only union that received raises for FY 2016.”

Sen. Graham said, “There is \$1.8 million of pending reimbursement from the U.S. Environmental Protections Agency and \$1.5 million from past indirect costs.” He asked, “What is the overall total of the monies expected to be recouped?” Althea Grant, Director of the Business & Administrative Services said, “In total, approximately \$4 million is expected to be reimbursed. In addition to the \$1.8 million and the \$1.5 million mentioned, we are still waiting for the \$1.5 million from the Division of Fish and Wildlife.”

“What is the expected date for DPNR to be completely reimbursed?” asked Sen. Graham. “DPNR is scheduled to receive all reimbursements by September 30, 2016,” said Commissioner Henry.

Separately, Sen. Myron Jackson said, “I am concerned about the lack of funding that is available to pay the contractor for their work on Fort Christian.” He asked, “How much money is currently owed?” Commissioner Henry said, “The Government of the Virgin Islands owes Custom Builders \$582,076.52 for Phase I of the project. In the near future, we will be requesting the aid of the Legislature to have a conformant order to pay the outstanding balance.”

“Are the funds available to pay for Phase II of the Fort Christian project?” asked Sen. Jackson. Commissioner Henry stated that monies are there. However, the contractor must be paid in full for their completion of Phase I in order for them to proceed to Phase II.

Sen. Tregenza Roach inquired about the outstanding balance owed to DPNR. Commissioner Henry said, “A total of \$1,472,458.29 is owed to DPNR from unpaid rent from different entities. Sen. Roach asked, “What is DPNR doing to collect the monies?”

Commissioner Henry said, “The Dept. has contacted 75% of delinquent tenants and the other 25% are in collections. DPNR is aggressively moving towards recuperating all debt owed.”

In addition to DPNR, the Virgin Islands Council of the Arts (VICA), Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission (VITC) and the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (VIEDA) shared their FY 2017 Budget with lawmakers.

Tasida Kelch, Acting Director of VICA said, “The total monies received from the NEA grant is \$315,500 which was matched with \$87,000 local appropriation for Territory-wide programs.” The budget breakdown includes \$50,000 for Arts Underserved Communities, \$10,200 for Arts Education, \$17,500 for Poetry Out Loud and \$237,300 for State of the Art Program.

Levron Sarauw, Sr., Executive Director of VITC said, “For FY 2017, VITC will receive a grand total of \$856,391.” The budget breakdown is as follows: \$513,500 for Personnel Services, \$229,767 for Fringe Benefits, \$30,224,000 for Supplies and \$82,900 for Other Services & Charges.

Lastly, Wayne Biggs, Jr., Acting Chief Executive Officer of VIEDA stated that the FY 2017 budget request is \$4,998,515. He said, “This will enable us to positively impact the lives of our residents, by facilitating investments in job creation and fostering economic growth to enhance the quality of life in the Territory.”

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