



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
THIRTY FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
MAGENS BAY AUTHORITY

August 18, 2025

Good day, to Chairperson of the Committee on Finance - Novelle E. Francis Jr. Senate President – Milton E. Potter , Senate Vice President – Kenneth Gittens, all other distinguished committee members, all members of the 36th Legislature and to all persons listening and view these proceedings.

I am Monique Simon, General Manager of the Magens Bay Authority and I am accompanied by Ms. Barbara Petersen, Chairman of the Board of the Authority.

Today, I am here to provide a comprehensive overview of our operations, highlight our significant achievements, address challenges, and present our financial projections that will shape the Authority's future.

Established in 1946 through a generous donation from Arthur S. Fairchild, the Magens Bay Authority is dedicated to preserving Magens Bay for public use. This commitment is only possible with your ongoing support, and it shapes our mission and every endeavor. We strive to improve the natural beauty of the parks, initiate educational programs, and maintain the highest standards for our facilities and staff.

The goal of the Magens Bay Authority is to operate parks and beaches in a manner which improves the health and living standards of visitors and the populace of the Virgin Islands alike, through the preservation of the island's natural resources, the provision of education on native flora and fauna, and opportunities for unmatched recreational experiences.

Today, the Magens Bay Authority is responsible for the overall management of Magens Bay Beach/Park, Drakes Seat and Smith Bay Beach/Park.

Our mission is *To operate and maintain Magens Bay Beach, Smith Bay Park, and related facilities in a manner that conserves natural resources, enhances quality of life, fosters environmental education, and provides safe, inclusive, and enjoyable recreational experiences for all visitors.*

Finances

The Magens Bay Authority projected combined operating expense (for Magens Bay and Smith Bay Parks) of \$3,646,021.00 for the Fiscal Year 2026.

Approximately 68% of the Authority's expenses are related to payroll. The organization currently employs fifty-three (53) hard-working individuals. The Authority currently employs 16 full-time government employees, of which 11 are unionized. In addition to our full-time staff, we employ 37 part-time employees. We also have a total of eight vacant positions — three lifeguards, two security guards, two groundskeepers and one cashier, for which we are actively seeking qualified candidates.

The Magens Bay Authority staff are a hardworking and dedicated team, serving as the backbone of our operation. I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their hard work and dedication in carrying out the mission and vision of the Authority.

We prioritize engaging in constructive union negotiations to ensure fair compensation and support for our employees, especially given the current economic conditions. As part of this ongoing commitment, we have provided all staff members with a wage adjustment in the current fiscal year and are committed to implementing further increases in the upcoming fiscal year.

Even though Smith Bay Park's financial situation hasn't changed, it depends on Magens Bay to help cover some of its expenses due to differences in income. There is a strategic plan to transform Smith Bay Park into a tranquil retreat, setting it apart from the lively atmosphere of Magens Bay Park, to attract visitors and locals looking for a more peaceful environment. Both parks rely on entrance fees, open space, and revenue from activities and rentals.

Our beautiful parks generate revenue through a variety of means, including entrance fees, open space rentals, and income from various activities. In the case of Magens Bay Park, concession agreements are sourced from the following:

1. WOW Watersports USVU, LLC (Watersport)
2. AAA Taxi (Taxi Services) RFP for Taxi Service is Pending
3. DM Hospitality LLC (Beach Chair Rentals and Boutique/Retail Sales)
4. Elevated Hospitality LLC (Food and Beverage Sales)

The Magens Bay Authority created a competitive bidding process through the issuance of a Request for Proposal for each concession, across three (3) business ventures: food and beverage, boutique, and beach rentals. These ventures create diverse opportunities that not only enhance the park experience but also contribute to the maintenance of stable revenue streams.

Successes and Challenges

- The renovation of the ADA Ramp at Bath House #3 has been successfully completed, delivering a safer, more durable, and fully compliant structure that ensures smooth and reliable access for individuals with disabilities, parents with strollers, and all visitors, thereby improving overall accessibility and enhancing the park experience for the public.
- The dedication of The Elliot Mac Davis Trail on in honor of our esteemed former board member, recognizing his unwavering commitment to promoting health and wellness in the community.
- To enhance the visitor experience, we have procured additional picnic benches, ensuring ample seating and dining spaces for our customers and visitors.
- Prioritizing accessibility, we have installed three sets of ADA ramps to facilitate the mobility of our disabled community from the parking area to the beach.
- To further inclusion, we acquired five new water wheelchairs to replace ones that were damaged. We are committed to assisting all community members and visitors in fully enjoying our serene waters.
- We are thrilled to report the highly successful Fourteen Annual “King of the Wings” event at Magen’s Bay, which drew over 4800 visitors and successfully raised funds for the Nana Babies Home.
- The restoration of the Coconut Grove has been completed, further enhancing the appeal of our surroundings.

Implementation of new community-based programming including

- Magens Bay has consistently extended support to various faith-based organizations, many of which have utilized our facilities to host camps and events.
- We have engaged in collaborative efforts with multiple government agencies to facilitate employee events, retreats, and recreational outings, including partnerships with the Virgin Islands National Guard, VI Police Department, Department of Health, Human Services, Department of Public Works, and the Water and Power Authority.
- Our enduring Town Hall Meetings with the Taxi Association are geared towards nurturing a more robust and all-encompassing relationship, serving the objective of refining our service delivery to our esteemed customer base.
- In addition, we are conducting ongoing lifeguard training sessions with Red Cross facilitators to uphold safety standards and preparedness. Several lifeguards have also received additional Responder Safety and Health Concepts training, a practical and essential skill set that enhances your confidence and competence. A second session of this training will be conducted before the end of this fiscal year

Challenges

- Nature: Invasive plants, flooding, natural and man-made disasters and increased seaweed and sargassum on the shores.
- Human Behavior: loud music, abandoning pets being dropped off on the beach, glass bottles and other hazardous materials being brought to the park
- Unauthorized selling of goods and services on our parks
- Facility: Long lines, **aging facilities** and ongoing construction

FY 2026 Projected Projects

Facility Improvements – FY 2026

All of the following projects are scheduled to commence in Fiscal Year 2026 as part of the Magens Bay Authority's strategic plan to strengthen infrastructure, enhance visitor services, and maintain the highest standards of safety and environmental stewardship.

1. Bath House #1 Reconstruction

Following the extensive damage sustained during the 2017 hurricanes, Bath House #1 will undergo a complete rebuild. The new facility will feature ADA-compliant access, modernized restrooms and showers, and a design that is both functional and resilient against coastal weather conditions.

2. Renovation of Shed #1

Shed #1 will receive a full renovation to address structural concerns and improve safety. Work will include replacement of deteriorated support columns, and installation of upgraded fixtures to meet modern operational standards. The renovations will improve durability, ensure resilience against environmental wear, and provide an enhanced space for guest use.

3. Renovation of the Bridge

The bridge renovation focused on restoring this essential pedestrian and service route. Upgrades included the replacement of compromised decking boards, reinforcement of structural beams, and application of protective coatings to resist corrosion and weather damage. These enhancements have extended the bridge's lifespan, improved load capacity, and ensured safe passage for visitors and park operations.

4. Upgrade to the Septic System at Bath House #2

To accommodate increased usage and maintain environmental safeguards, Bath House #2's septic system will undergo a major upgrade. Aging components will be replaced with a modern, high-efficiency system designed to handle greater wastewater volumes while minimizing environmental impact. Improved filtration and drainage systems will also be installed to protect surrounding natural resources, improve sanitation, and reduce long-term maintenance requirements.

Collectively, these completed projects represent the Authority's commitment to preserving park infrastructure, improving the visitor experience, and ensuring compliance with safety and environmental standards.

Despite facing numerous challenges including limited resources and environmental factors, the dedicated team at the Magens Bay Authority has shown unwavering commitment to addressing and overcoming these obstacles. Their resolute determination drives them to operate the parks and beaches in a manner that enhances the experience of visitors and contributes to the overall health and well-being of both the local population and the esteemed guests of the Virgin Islands.

This involves preserving the natural resources to positively impact the mental health of our community, education about native plants and animals, and offering an exceptional recreational experience that contributes to the community's physical health. Moving forward, the organization is focused on three main goals that were created last year: to enhance user experience and promote environmental conservation. Preservation, Education, Facilities and staff form the foundation of our future improving user experience and fostering environmental conservation, which forms the core of our future strategy.

Our commitment to Preservation is evident through the completion of the restoration of the coconut grove. We are currently focused on rejuvenating the Arboretum by planting native trees, clearing pathways, and installing informational plaques. Rebuilding the Arboretum will help maintain the watershed, prevent soil erosion, and provide a wealth of educational opportunities, particularly during harsh weather conditions. The Nature Trail will also be a priority as it promotes our natural environment and the fitness aspect of our park. The pathway of the trail will be refurbished to mitigate the natural occurrence of erosion over the years.

The Authority looks forward to offering walking tours and workshops about Magen's Bay and the Virgin Islands flora and fauna. These programs empower individuals with skills, foster community development, and engage the youth. Our partnerships with educational institutions will contribute to raising a generation more attuned to nature's wonders and the importance of conservation.

Our foremost objective is to enhance the facilities and provide comprehensive support to the staff at both locations, acknowledging their vital role in delivering an exceptional experience for all visitors. With the imminent construction of the bathhouse, we are unequivocally dedicated to effecting significant infrastructure improvements. Additionally, we take pride in offering our employees customer service training, lifeguard courses, and supplementary educational programs aimed at fostering their professional development. These initiatives are designed to elevate the overall quality of our service delivery.

I would like to conclude by saying that our efforts are focused on providing exceptional recreational experiences, while preserving our natural assets. With the continued support from this esteemed body, we are confident that our vision will be realized.

Thank you once again for this opportunity and we are prepared to address any questions you may have.

Monique Simon, General Manager, Magens Bay Authority, Barbara Petersen, Chairman, Magens Bay Authority.