

Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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The Honorable
Angel Bolques, Jr.
Senator-At-Large
34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

CHAIRMAN
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, & Parks

VICE-CHAIRMAN
Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture

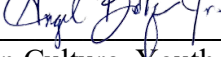
MEMBER
Committee on Rules & Judiciary
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety
Committee on Housing, Transportation, & Telecommunication
Subcommittee on Energy & Infrastructure Development

COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: **The Honorable Novelle E. Francis, Jr.**
President, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Ms. Kurell A. Sheridan, JD
Executive Director, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Amos W. Carty, Jr., Esq.
Chief Legal Counsel, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

FROM: **Angel L. Bolques, Jr.** 
Chairman, Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks

DATE: May 10, 2023

RE: **REPORT | Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks**
Hearing—Friday, April 21, 2023, at 10:00 am

Pursuant to the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands Rule 605, the attached Committee Report is submitted for the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks hearing held on Friday, April 21, 2023, 10:00 am at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on the island of St. Thomas. The following represents all members, staff and testifiers in attendance, and the status of all agenda items.

Legislative Attendance

Committee Members & Attendance:

The Honorable Angel Bolques, Jr., **Chairman - Present**
The Honorable Marvin A. Blyden, **Vice-Chairman - Present**
The Honorable Samuel Carrion - Present
The Honorable Alma Francis-Heyliger - Present
The Honorable Novelle E. Francis Jr. - Present
The Honorable Franklin D. Johnson - Present
The Honorable Milton E. Potter - Absent

Non-Committee Members in Attendance:

The Honorable Donna Frett-Gregory

The Honorable Diane T. Capehart

Stenographers:

Vashti O. Gerald-Berry

Security:

Randy Yorke

DeVaughn Dowe

Sergeant of Arms:

Khalisha Clarke

Protocol Officer:

Supervisor of Housekeeping:

Errol Rodgers

Office of Public Affairs:

Barry Leerdam

Diana Cruz

Jamal Potter

Transportation:

Wesley Wilkins

Legal Counsel:

Clerk:

Denisian Hodge

Timekeeper:

Denisian Hodge

Ana Castillo

Advisor to Committee Hearing:

Marcellino Ventura

Staff of Senator Angel Bolques, Jr.

Diane Hazlewood

Denisian Hodge

Ana Castillo
Langley Shazor

The Committee Hearing was called to order by Chairman Angel L. Bolques, Jr. at 10:08 am and convened to receive testimony on the following:

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks has scheduled a hearing for Friday, April 21, 2023, beginning at 10:00 am in the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on the island of St. Thomas to receive testimony and updates regarding the progress and challenges of the Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation concerning their projects and their mission to provide high-quality, accessible programs, services, and facilities that enhance the quality of life for all ages, cultures, and abilities, as well as an overview and updates from the Department of Tourism regarding the upcoming cultural celebration of the 2023 St. Thomas Carnival.

BLOCK I: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

BLOCK I: 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Updates and overview of the Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation pertinent to their progress and challenges concerning their projects and providing high-quality, accessible programs, services, and facilities that enhance the quality of life for all ages, cultures, and abilities, (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats). Additionally, provide an update on the department's role during the cultural celebration of the 2023 St. Thomas Carnival.

Invited Testifier:

The Honorable Calvert White
Commissioner, Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation

The committee received a comprehensive testimony from Commissioner White that outlined recovery and capital projects, programs and partnerships, as well as a SWOT analysis breakdown. Senators did ask about some of the projects and the Commissioner assured that timelines will be met, and obstacles are being resolved expeditiously. He commended his staff on their ability to support all sports and all activities though there is a clear shortage of facilities and spaces. Senators wanted to encourage the department to increase their marketing and dissemination of information. Department noted that they hired a PIO to assist in this endeavor. Commissioner and his team gave the senate an update on the summer camps, to include number of camps and participants on each island. One of the main topics of conversation was around lifeguards, rapid response and emergency marine vehicles, lack of qualified person (STT specifically), etc. The commissioner is working with cruise lines and exploring other options to bridge the gap. The department also plans to improve their data collection process on facility usage. Staffing continues to be an issue across the department.

BLOCK II: 1:00PM-3:00PM

An overview and updates of AARP Virgin Islands, as well as challenges and progress concerning programs under AARP such as, but not limited to Health and Wellness, Family Caregiving, Seniors Work and Jobs, Community Engagement, and an overall update of the AARP foundation.

Invited Testifiers:

Troy Schuster
State Director, AARP USVI

Senator Bolques spoke to the importance of providing the necessary tools, facilities, programs and initiatives for our aging population which makes up 20% of the USVI population, as stated by Mr. Schuster of AARP. He also mentioned that by 2030, the number of seniors will exceed the number of children in the United States. AARP was a primary advocate for the passage of the Commission on Aging within the Governor's Office. The Director's testimony outlined efforts and advocacy in financial security, affordable access to long-term care, as well as protections and safeguards from fraud and abuse. He also wanted to emphasize that AARP is not an insurance company, but social mission organization with a primary responsibility to advocate for the demographic they serve. Director Shuster talked about the partnership with Play by Design to create outdoor fitness parks and playgrounds. He also mentioned that a person can join at the age of 18. AARP is also feeling the effects of “The Great Resignation”, where finding people to work post pandemic has been extremely difficult.

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks was adjourned at 4:35pm.