

# Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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The Honorable  
**Angel Bolques, Jr.**  
**Senator-At-Large**  
**35<sup>th</sup> 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

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks have convened a hearing on Wednesday Wednesday, February 22, 2023 in Fritz E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room in St. Croix. In order to receive testimony and updates regarding the progress and challenges associated with our upcoming 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emancipation Celebration. We will receive information from representatives of the 175<sup>th</sup> Emancipation Commemoration Committee, local government agencies, communities and commissions with jurisdiction and roles over the 175<sup>th</sup> Emancipation Celebration and other organizations and stakeholders relevant to this historic event. The meeting was called to order with the blowing of the conch shell by Adeaja Longville and the striking of the gavel at 10:08 AM.

The hearing was well attended, all seven committee members: Blyden, Potter, Carrion, Johnson, Francis, and Heyliger, and non – committee members: J. James, Capehart, M. James, Fonseca, Gittens, and Joseph.

Former senator and chairwoman of 175<sup>th</sup> Emancipation Commemoration Committee gave testimony regarding the upcoming 175<sup>th</sup> Emancipation Celebration. She highlighted a multiphase cooperative with various stakeholders and government agencies to begin capital improvement projects, long term sustainability of the committee, as well as execution of the actual 175<sup>th</sup> Emancipation Celebration.

Director of the Division of Festivals for Department of Tourism, Ian Turnbull provided testimony on behalf of Commissioner Joseph Buschulte. Testimony was also given from CHANT Executive Director, Frandelle Gerard. Also in attendance to provide responses to questions from senators were Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol and Deputy Director of Historic Preservation Sean Krigger from DPNR. Former Senator and 175<sup>th</sup> committee member Myron Jackson offered a power point presentation on the history of the emancipation of the people of the Virgin Islands.

Chairwoman Burke was questioned extensively about the budget from the initial million dollar allotment under the Executive Order 8647, which was not presented with her testimony. Senators also expressed disappointment regarding the lack of inclusion from “torch bearer” organizations that have been preserving and promoting the culture, heritage, and history of the VI from the beginning of the planning phases. Burke stated that she would be reaching out to those entities going forward. The overarching theme was that of excitement from the legislature and pressure for this celebration to be as large as other holidays, but not conflict with St. John Carnival and the July 3<sup>rd</sup> events.

Request made through the chair included the original 1 million dollar budget breakdown, a schedule of events so Senators can plan accordingly, and a breakdown of the request for an additional \$150,000 made by Chairwoman Burke. These requests have been sent to Chairwoman Burke and a response is pending.

The hearing adjourned at 3:05pm.