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Vice Chair: Committee Government Operations,
Veterans Affairs & Consumer Protection

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Committee on Budget Appropriations and Finance

Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public
Safety

Committee on Education and Workforce Development



Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands

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The Honorable Senator
JAVAN E. JAMES
★ ★ ★ ★ 35TH LEGISLATURE

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

FROM: Senator Javan E. James, Sr. _____
Chairman, Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture

SUBJECT: Committee Report for Wednesday, September 13, 2023

DATE: October 5, 2023

Following the Rules of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, please find enclosed the report for the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture hearing held on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on the island of St. Thomas.

The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture chaired by Senator Javan E. James Sr., convened a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on the island of St. Thomas. The purpose of the hearing was to receive updates from the following agencies: USVI Office of Cannabis Regulations; and the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture.

Chairman James Sr. requested roll call and the reading of the agenda. Chairman James thanked the Honorable Senators, both committee as well as non-committee members for attending the meeting.

Legislative Attendance:

Committee Members in Attendance:

The Honorable Javan E. James Sr.	-	Chairperson
The Honorable Angel L. Bolques, Jr	-	Vice Chairman
The Honorable Marvin A. Blyden		
The Honorable Diane T. Capehart		
The Honorable Dwayne M. DeGraff		
The Honorable Alma Francis Heyliger		
The Honorable Donna A. Frett-Gregory		

Non-Committee Members in Attendance:

The Honorable Senate President Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
The Honorable Franklin D. Johnson

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Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture
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Office of Public Affairs

Diana Cruz – Media
Africah Harrigan - Media
Barry Leerdam – Media
Kashief Hamilton - Media
Jamal Potter – Media
Omari Hicks – Media
Chaunte Herbert - Media
Dequan Milliner - Media

Legal Counsel

Attorney Augustin Ayala

Sergeant-at-Arms

Shani Smith

Legislative Reporter

Nataya A. M. Munoz

Clerk

Jonathan E. James, Jr.

Staff of Senator Javan E. James, Sr.

Andrea Z. Mshila
Kyani Porter

BLOCK I - 10:00 a.m.

Invited Testifiers:

The Committee received an update on the overall status of the USVI Office of Cannabis Regulations that included the implementation of Act 8680 as well as licensing procedures for the cannabis industry. The invited testifiers below read their testimonies into the record as in the order below. Thereafter, Senator James Sr. extended five minutes to each senator for their line of questioning.

Ms. Hannah Carty

Executive Director
Virgin Islands Cannabis Advisory Board

Dr. Catherine Kean

Chairwoman of the Cannabis Advisory Board
Virgin Islands Cannabis Advisory Board

Ms. Nathalie Hodge

Commissioner Nominee
Virgin Islands Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs

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Some of the items included in the discussion were:

- Released a draft of the Rules and Regulations on September 9, 2023.
- Annotated and studied the Cannabis Use Act of 2023.
- Finalized the contract for the Cannabis Registry System with Tyler Technologies, which will host the registration and card processing for Sacramental Users, Medicinal Patients, Agent Identification Cards, Practitioners, and Sacramental Organizations.
- Concerns of limited operational budgets and the use to employ additional staff and assistance with office space.

The committee recessed at 12:40 p.m.

BLOCK II – 1:30 p.m.

The Committee commenced at 1:30 p.m. to receive an update on the overall status of the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture.

INVITED TESTIFIER:

Dr. Louis Petersen

Commissioner Nominee
Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture

Commissioner Nominee Dr. Louis Petersen delivered his testimony into the record which included an update on the overall status of the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture. Chairman James gave seven minutes to each Senator for their line of questioning.

Some of the items included in the discussion were:

- Vacant positions which cover a wide range of critical needs of the agency across all divisions.
- To attract trained, skilled applicants and improve staff morale.
- Leases both expired and the renewal.
- The abattoir facility on St. Croix and St. Thomas.

There being no other business the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Cc: All Senators
Media
Journal