



THE DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS, PARKS & *Recreation*

COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, YOUTH,
AGING, SPORTS, AND PARKS

September 18, 2026

Vincent L. Roberts
Commissioner

Good morning Honorable Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr., Chairman of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks, committee members, Senators of the 36th Legislature, guests, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Vincent L. Roberts, Commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation (DSPR). Thank you for the opportunity to provide a comprehensive assessment of DSPR's current programs, services, recreational facilities, capital projects, staffing and administrative capacity, and initiatives serving residents throughout the Territory. I would like first to introduce my staff: Ms. Renee Hansen, Assistant Commissioner – St. Croix, Ms. Carol Peters, Director of Business and Financial Management, Mrs. Rellina Moulon, Human Resources Manager, Mr. Elroy Hill, Deputy Director – St. John. Ms. Jamilah Henry, District Administrator of Sports and Recreation – St. Croix, and Mr. Richard Clendinen, Acting District Administrator of Sports and Recreation – St. Thomas. Unfortunately, Deputy Commissioner Kitwana Rhymer - St. Thomas-St. John District, is unable to join us due to medical reasons.

What began as a committee established to carry out the mandates of Act 9053, which renamed Peter Carl Limpricht Park as the “Ten Sleepless Knights Park,” or TSK Park, has evolved into DSPR’s Legacy Sign Committee. Recognizing the challenge of securing dedicated funding for this initiative, the committee agreed to maximize available resources by utilizing existing funding sources. As a result, the first twelve playgrounds that received enhancements through the Economic Development Grant will comprise Phase One of the signage project. Within the upcoming weeks, the territory will begin to see new signage welcoming visitors to these facilities. The committee has also assessed and prioritized the remaining DSPR facilities to establish a phased plan for future signage improvements as funding becomes available.

In 2021, with the assistance of the Department of Property and Procurement (DPP), DSPR executed separate contracts with McCourt Construction, Inc. for improvements in each district. While the contractor successfully fulfilled its contractual obligations in the St. Thomas–St. John District, its performance in the St. Croix District did not meet the requirements of the contract, resulting in significant delays and preventing the Department from completing the planned improvements. DSPR is taking decisive steps to address this matter by working in coordination with DPP and the

Department of Public Works (DPW) to advance the Government of the Virgin Islands' claim against the contractor's performance bond. This action is intended to protect the Government's financial interests, hold the contractor accountable for its contractual obligations, and establish a clear path to completion.

The Pedro Cruz Basketball Court is one of the facilities that benefited from DSPR's resurfacing project in 2022. Since that time, however, the court surface has experienced cracking, uneven areas, and general deterioration that have affected the condition and usability of the facility. We are pleased that the Pedro Cruz facility is now positioned for renewed investment through a strong public-private partnership with the Eddie Ortiz Annual Three Kings Tradition, Inc. The organization has demonstrated its longstanding commitment to the facility through its efforts in the installation of the covering over the Pedro Cruz Basketball Court through grant funding appropriated under Act 8734. Building on that commitment, and with DSPR's support, the Eddie Ortiz Annual Three Kings Tradition, Inc. successfully applied for and received an AARP Community Challenge Grant to develop an Age-Friendly Community Recreation and Wellness Area at the Pedro Cruz facility. While the project is still in its early stages, DSPR is excited about the opportunities this partnership presents and is committed to supporting the organization and working collaboratively to transform the Pedro Cruz facility.

Another successful example of DSPR leveraging public-private partnerships to improve our recreational facilities is the renovation of the spectator bleachers at the Doris Hodge Tennis Facility on St. Thomas. Through this partnership, Ortalis Industries, LLC, together with its partners Ndless Construction, LLC and Rendco, LLC, has voluntarily committed to providing the labor, materials, equipment, and services necessary to complete the reconstruction at no cost to the Department or the Government of the Virgin Islands. DSPR is providing site access, assisting with the permitting process, and overseeing the project to ensure the work is completed in accordance with the terms of the agreement and applicable standards.

After years of deterioration, this partnership provides a clear path to restoring this important component of the Doris Hodge Tennis Facility. More importantly, this project

demonstrates what can be accomplished when the public and private sectors work together toward a shared goal.

Through grant funding provided by the Economic Development Administration, DSPR procured and installed new playground equipment at twelve (12) playgrounds across the Territory. On St. Croix, seven (7) playgrounds received upgrades: Pedro Cruz Park, D.C. Canegata Ballpark, Cramer's Park, D. Hamilton Jackson Park, Estate LaValle Park, Estate Glynn Playground, and Rudy Krieger Playground. On St. Thomas, new equipment was installed at the Alvin McBean Recreational Facility, Winston Raymo Recreational Center, Smith Bay Tot Lot, and Estate Dorothea Playground. St. John also benefited from improvements at the Orville Brown Playground.

Our work at these facilities is not finished, in the coming weeks, D.C. Canegata Playground, Smith Bay Tot Lot, and Estate Dorothea Playground will receive additional improvements as we continue to build upon the investments already made. My team and I have also identified enhancements that will further improve the functionality, comfort, and overall appearance of these recreational spaces. These improvements will include picnic tables, benches and additional seating, shade sails at select locations, and welcome signage. Our goal is not simply to install new playground equipment, but to create complete, welcoming recreational spaces where children can play safely and families can comfortably gather and enjoy their communities.

Also utilizing EDA funding, the Midre Cummings Fence Project is moving steadily toward completion and is expected to be finished before the end of this week. The project will feature a durable and attractive aluminum fence designed to improve the safety and security of the playground. Because the facility is located within a historic district, particular attention was given to selecting a design that is both functional and aesthetically appropriate, while respecting the architectural integrity of the area. This project reflects DSPR's broader approach to facility improvements—investing not only in functionality and safety, but also in creating recreational spaces that communities can take pride in.

With the reassignment of \$5 million previously allocated to VIGL for the Randall "Doc" James Racetrack project, DSPR has been able to advance several critical

components necessary to move the project forward. The Department has procured the specialized equine mix required for the racing surface, received the completed construction documents and engineer's estimate for Phase One, and transmitted the bid package to the Department of Property and Procurement for release to prospective contractors. Phase One will include extensive preparation and rehabilitation of the track surface, establishing the foundation necessary for the safe and successful return of racing activity.

Another project currently underway is DSPR's Territory-wide court lighting initiative. Five recreational facilities will receive new Musco LED sports lighting, significantly improving visibility, safety, and opportunities for evening recreational and sports activities. The improvements will benefit the Emile Henderson Tennis and Basketball Courts in Frederiksted, as well as the Estate Campo Rico, Estate Williams Delight, and Estate Castle Burke Basketball Courts on St. Croix, and the Cruz Bay Tennis Courts on St. John. The project is advancing, with customized lighting designs already completed for each location. Manufacturing of the lighting systems is near completion, moving us another step closer to installation.

While the number of DSPR projects remaining under FEMA's Public Assistance program continues to decline, important recovery work remains underway across the Territory. The Department continues to experience measurable progress while actively addressing funding gaps and other challenges that have emerged along the way.

At the Estate Profit Community Center, work is ongoing and progressing well; however, the Department has identified a funding shortfall of just over \$1.5 million for necessary work that falls outside of the FEMA Project Worksheet, including the required local match. At the Emile Griffith Ballpark, soil-boring analysis is underway as we prepare for the installation of new Musco LED sports lighting designed to meet NCAA requirements. The D.C. Canegata Phase II contract has been executed, and the project is now advancing through the permitting process. Similarly, the contract for the Lionel "Smutt" Richards Ballpark has been signed, with construction expected to begin in the coming weeks. We have also reached an important milestone at Cramer's Park with the receipt of the long-awaited drawings for the concession facility. Based on the engineer's estimate, however, we anticipate a funding shortfall of approximately \$1 million.

Additional progress continues in the St. Thomas-St. John District. The reconstruction of Winston Wells Ballpark Concession and Bleacher area and the construction of a new concession and restroom facility at Ezra Fredericks Park have recently received favorable Coastal Zone Management Federal Consistency Determinations, clearing an important step in the development process. At the Cruz Bay Recreational Center, DSPR continues to work closely with the project architect and Hazard Mitigation team to advance the project and address the remaining requirements. As DSPR approaches the final stages of its FEMA recovery portfolio, our focus remains on moving each project from planning and design into construction and, ultimately, completion.

At Ezra Fredericks Park, several major improvements are now moving forward simultaneously. Installation of the new LED sports lighting has begun, and DSPR has executed a contract to construct the foundation that will support the new FIFA-committed soccer mini-pitch. These improvements, together with the FEMA-funded construction of new restrooms, concession facilities, and parking, represent a significant transformation of Ezra Fredericks Park. Once completed, these investments will complement the facility's existing playground, basketball court, and skate park, creating a comprehensive multi-use recreational complex capable of supporting a variety of sports, recreational activities, and community events.

Our disaster recovery team, in partnership with the Virgin Islands Soccer Federation, has begun preliminary work to repair the foundation of the FIFA mini-pitch at the St. Croix Educational Complex High School on St. Croix. This collaboration is another example of the value of strong public-private and community partnerships in advancing recreational improvements throughout the Territory. By combining resources, expertise, and a shared commitment to our young athletes, we can address facility needs more efficiently and return valuable recreational assets to the community.

At Emile Griffith Ballpark, two key partnerships are helping DSPR position the facility for its next chapter. With grant funding from the Department of Tourism, the USVI Boxing Association will proceed to procure and install the long-awaited statue honoring Virgin Islands boxing legend Emile Griffith. This addition will not only pay tribute to his

extraordinary legacy but also strengthen the identity and significance of the facility that bears his name.

At the same time, DSPR is collaborating with the USVI Softball Federation in preparation for a prospective NCAA softball tournament in 2028. The Department is committed to ensuring that Emile Griffith Ballpark is prepared to meet the standards necessary to successfully host top-ranked Division I colleges. Our vision extends well beyond a single tournament. We intend for this opportunity to serve as a catalyst for attracting future collegiate and regional sporting events to the Territory and demonstrating that the Virgin Islands has the facilities, partnerships, and organizational capacity to compete as a credible sports tourism destination through strategic investment and strong partnerships.

As part of that effort, at the end of October, my Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Director and I will travel to Birmingham, Alabama, alongside representatives from the Department of Tourism to attend the TEAMS Conference. This opportunity will allow us to engage directly with sports-event organizers, rights holders, and industry professionals while gaining greater insight into what is required to successfully attract and host sporting events in the Territory. Our participation is intentional. We are working to position the Virgin Islands in the rooms where sports tourism opportunities are discussed and decisions are made. Through strategic investment, strong interagency and private-sector partnerships, and targeted relationship-building, we intend to expand the Territory's sports tourism footprint and create opportunities that bring athletes and visitors to our shores while generating broader economic activity for the Virgin Islands.

DSPR's Sports and Recreation Team has been hard at work developing new programs while continuing to strengthen the annual favorites our communities have come to know and enjoy. From youth athletics and afterschool activities to senior programming and community events, our goal is to provide something for residents of all ages. The following is a list of what we have planned between now and December 2026:

St. Croix District

- Weekly Game Nights
- Bush League Basketball
- Double Goal Softball & Baseball
- You Can't Guard Me
- Tennis Clinics
- Afterschool Cheer
- KS41 Basketball Clinic
- Kickin' for a Cure
- Haunted House & Harvest Glow Ball
- Senior Bingo
- Preschool Turkey Race
- Kids Obstacle Course
- First Steps Le Leche
- Bingo in Deh Rec
- Christmas Town
- Pitching in Overdrive
- Alternative PE, where DSPR staff provide physical education instruction

St. Thomas-St. John District

- Co-Ed Modified Pitch League
- Triple Threat Softball
- Rugrats Tee Ball
- 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament

- Flag Football
- Learn to Swim
- Trevor Joseph 9–12 Baseball
- Painting with Pals, a recreational painting program for seniors
- Retiree Rumble
- A Christmas Festival and Tree Lighting, collaboration with We From Upstreet
- I believe I can fly boxing program

Territorial Programs

- RBI fall league
- 2nd Annual HBCU Thanksgiving Baseball Showcase
- Junior Golf Program partnership with VI Golf federation

In 2027, our Sports and Recreation Team will continue to develop programming that keeps our residents active, engaged, and connected while expanding recreational opportunities throughout the Territory.

DSPR remains committed to strengthening partnerships and identifying practical, cost-effective ways to expand sports and recreational opportunities throughout the Virgin Islands. These collaborations allow us to introduce new programs, strengthen existing ones, and create opportunities for our athletes and sports professionals to develop and compete at higher levels. Our partnership with the USVI Boxing Association will bring regional competition to the St. Croix Educational Complex, with a boxing event featuring athletes from throughout the Caribbean. Importantly, the event will also serve as certification matches for our own Virgin Islands judges and referees, helping to build local officiating capacity and strengthen the Territory's boxing program from the athletes in the ring to the officials overseeing the competition.

The Virgin Islands Sports Commission has been officially reactivated and is actively working to fulfill its statutory responsibilities. New members have been installed to reflect changes in leadership and representation within the Government of

the Virgin Islands and the various sports federations, and elections have been completed to establish the Commission's new officers. The Commission now meets every other Tuesday and has begun the important work of reviewing and addressing the responsibilities established by its enabling legislation. A major focus has been the development of language necessary to implement the forty-nine (49) mandates outlined in the Act. A draft addressing those mandates is expected to be completed and presented for consideration at the Commission's next meeting on September 29, 2026.

The reactivation of the Sports Commission represents an important step toward creating a more coordinated and strategic approach to sports development in the Virgin Islands. By bringing government and the Territory's sports federations together at one table, we are strengthening communication, establishing greater accountability, and creating a framework to advance the needs of our athletes and sports organizations throughout the Territory.

This November, DSPR will welcome Minority Baseball Prospects to the Territory while also hosting our annual HBCU Showcase, providing local student-athletes with valuable exposure and opportunities to connect with collegiate programs. We are also preparing to launch a new Junior Golf Program in collaboration with the USVI Golf Federation and to resume the Junior Dragsters Program in partnership with the Caribbean Drag Racing Association.

These initiatives reflect our continued commitment to diversifying the sports available to our young people and to strengthening the Territory's overall sports infrastructure. Not every child will choose basketball, baseball, or softball, and our responsibility is to create as many pathways as possible for them to discover their interests, develop their talents, and find a sport or recreational activity where they can thrive.

Sincere gratitude and appreciation go to the parents and families of our 2026 Nike RBI Softball World Champions. Thank you for trusting us with your children, supporting the program, and giving our coaches and staff the opportunity to teach, mentor, and help develop these young athletes. The long practices, sacrifices, commitment, and hard work paid off on the biggest stage. These young ladies

represented the Virgin Islands with tremendous pride, proved that our athletes can compete—and win—at the highest level, and brought national attention to the US Virgin Islands as millions watched the games on MLB TV. Today, we can proudly say that the 2026 USVI RBI Softball Team is World Champions in their own right! This accomplishment belongs to our players, coaches, parents, families, and everyone who believed in this program. We look forward to celebrating together in real VI style this December. More on those festivities to come.

The improvements we are making to our facilities and the success and growth of our programs would not be possible without the dedicated men and women of DSPR. My Senior Leadership Team and I recognize that our employees are our greatest asset, and we remain committed to investing in their professional development, well-being, and overall employee experience.

In just one week, four members of our team will attend the National Recreation and Park Association Conference in Philadelphia. Through educational sessions, professional discussions, networking opportunities, and industry exhibits, they will gain valuable knowledge and exposure to best practices that can be brought home and adapted to strengthen the work we do here in the Virgin Islands.

Because National Sports, Parks and Recreation Month coincides with one of the Department's busiest periods—our Summer Camp Program—we have chosen to celebrate our team with a dedicated Sports, Parks and Recreation Week this October. Activities will include an Employee Appreciation Brunch, Movie Night, Wellness Wednesday Fair, and team-building exercises in both districts. Our investment in our employees will continue into the new year. In early 2027, we intend to bring the entire Department together for an all-DSPR Fun Day centered around friendly competition, camaraderie, and team building. We ask a great deal of our employees throughout the year, and it is equally important that we create opportunities to recognize their contributions, invest in their growth, and strengthen the relationships that make DSPR one team across two districts.

During a recent visit by Cigna representatives to conduct employee health assessments, we became aware of concerning trends in key wellness indicators among

our team members, including cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels. For a department whose motto is “We Commit to Make You Fit,” we recognize that this commitment must begin within our own walls. We cannot encourage our community to prioritize health and wellness without creating opportunities for our employees to do the same. Rather than simply acknowledging the results, we took action. Three days a week, from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., employees who are able to participate come together to exercise. It is a simple initiative that promotes movement, accountability, camaraderie, and healthier habits among our team. Our goal is to continue building on this effort and to foster a workplace culture where wellness is not simply something we promote to the public—it is something we practice ourselves.

Another initiative we are excited to introduce on St. Croix is our “Small Budget, Big Difference” Challenge, a cross-departmental team-building and facility improvement program designed to encourage creativity, collaboration, and pride in our recreational spaces. Teams comprised of Recreation, Grounds, and Maintenance employees across five DSPR facilities will each identify a small, underused, or neglected area that could benefit from improvement. Each team will submit a proposal, including a “before” photo, and will be given a modest budget along with a surprise Mystery Bonus Item that must be incorporated into their project. Teams will then have one work week to complete their transformation. Completed projects will be evaluated based on creativity, teamwork, resourcefulness, visual impact, and long-term value to the facility and its users. The concept is simple: meaningful improvements do not always require large budgets. Sometimes they require fresh ideas, teamwork, and employees who are empowered to take ownership of the spaces they care for every day.

In closing,

As Commissioner, it is my responsibility to ensure that our employees and the community we serve comply with department policies and procedures. These rules are not intended to hinder operations or programs but to provide clear expectations, strengthen accountability, protect the integrity of the Department, ensure sound decision-making, and ensure the proper use of public funds. This also enables the Department to budget, plan, and prioritize based on the greatest community needs.

Decisions are guided by GVI laws, fiscal responsibility, budget constraints, and public interest—not by individual preferences or personal agendas. When self-interest and personal motives are pursued to the point of creating or promoting false narratives, they damage public confidence and unfairly undermine the reputation and accomplishments of the Department’s many dedicated, hardworking employees. They also strain our limited resources, disrupt plans, and undermine the reliability of public services.

The Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation remains focused on professionalism, transparency, and service to the Virgin Islands community. We are committed to upholding these standards to ensure we continue to serve the people of the Virgin Islands fairly, efficiently, and with the highest level of accountability.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am available to answer any questions you and the committee have.