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# Loan Program Revival in April, Strong GERS Finances, and Havensight Mall Upgrades Announced

**Anticipated loan program aims to benefit retirees with GERS showcasing a stable financial status and progress on the Havensight Mall project**

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**Havensight Mall in St. Thomas, USVI. By. GETTY IMAGES**

Government retirees will have to wait until next month to learn the full details of the highly anticipated loan program due to be restarted by the Government Employees Retirement System.

During a meeting of the GERS Board of Trustees, Administrator Angel Dawson Jr. noted that a press release on the loans would be issued on April 8. He said that even after a years-long hiatus, the system still has hundreds of loans on the books, with a value of just over \$2 million on St.

Croix and \$4.4 million in St. Thomas and St. John.

Those numbers are expected to rise up to a cap of \$10 million in each district, with an 8 percent interest rate to begin.

Mr. Dawson also noted that the Havensight Mall rehabilitation project is ongoing, with recent meetings focusing on “brainstorming of the names and design concepts for the rebranding of the mall which will be tested by ideas within our market.”

The GERS administrator noted that overdue rental payments are still substantial, with total rental arrearage standing at \$101, 568, with overdue electricity payments of \$76,000. “Leading the pack is the Department of Justice,” Mr. Dawson made known, as the government liquidity crisis continues to affect disbursements to various agencies.

Despite the understanding currently being exercised, Mr. Dawson assured trustees that GERS was still being vigilant in making collections. “Of course we keep the pressure on all of our tenants, both public and private tenants because as I have told our operating officer we are not a bank. If anybody needs financing they are to seek it from a bank and not from us. We’re not going to carry receivables for any extensive period of time. “

Notwithstanding that approach, Mr. Dawson acknowledged that both private and public sector entities have been experiencing difficulties in collecting disbursements from central government and other government agencies. “As a result, we are exercising some forbearance. However there’s a limit,” he noted.

Board members also learned that the pension system's finances were currently in a relatively healthy position, with disbursements falling below receipts to leave a cash surplus of over \$63 million. Part of the reason for the healthy balance is below-expected administrative expenses, which are at only 26 percent of the annual budgeted amount as opposed to the expected 42 percent by this time of the fiscal year. Mr. Dawson chalked it up to the retirement system's attempts at imposing “good financial discipline” when it comes to expenditure.

GERS's financial performance when it comes to the Havensight Mall project, Mr. Dawson said, was “solid,” notwithstanding a slight cash deficit as a result of current capital expenditures and a diminishment in receipts due to the Covid era rental abatements, which he said would expire next year.

During the meeting, board members also approved a non-budgeted expenditure on a new vehicle for St. Thomas, partially financed by the sale of four of the agency’s older vehicles.