

logo not found or type unknown

DSPR Loses Money Hosting Horse Race at Recently Opened Facility as Search for Promoter Continues

White reveals the financial strain of hosting races, highlighting a \$25,000 deficit from the first race since reopening, while lawmakers urge DSPR to expedite the search for a qualified promoter to ensure sustainable operations

Sports / **Published On July 03, 2024 07:14 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **July 03, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



There is still no promoter for horse races at the recently reopened Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack on St. Thomas, leaving the task to the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation until further notice.

Though the department currently collects all revenue generated at the racetrack, Commissioner Calvin White quickly informed lawmakers that it is not a profitable arrangement. The first race,

held during the St Thomas Carnival season, generated \$125,000 in revenue, but DSPR was “in the red from our bills for that race.” According to Mr. White, it cost nearly \$150,000 to host that race. Figures for races held on June 30th were unavailable as of press time.?

The discussion took place on Monday as the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation defended its FY2025 budget before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance. Committee Chair Senator Donna Frett-Gregory inquired about the efforts to secure a permanent promoter, asking, “What is happening now to get a permanent promoter?” In response, Mr. Calvert White revealed that discussions were still ongoing and key decisions had yet to be finalized. While DPSR had previously issued requests for proposals, Mr. White suggested that a call for “qualified people to run the facility” was now necessary.

“I am in communication with the evaluation supervisor to get a detailed RFQ out to the public so that we can see potential people that are interested in being a promoter,” explained the commissioner. DPSR is currently working with the Department of Property and Procurement to finalize specifics, he said.

With DPSR currently absorbing all operational costs of the Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack, Ms. Frett-Gregory reminded that “it was never the intent - when we did the work that we did - that the responsibility of running the Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack would be that of the government.” She admonished DSPR officials to be cautious in their calculations. “As you seek out a promoter, you have to figure out how to fall within your numbers,” she warned, raising the point that the department is currently incurring debt by hosting races.

“We have to do everything in our power to ensure that when we get a promoter, and in the interim, we figure out how to stay within the lines of the revenues that you're generating,” she told Mr. White. Ms. Frett-Gregory was concerned with the public’s perception of the status quo. “The last thing anybody wants to hear is that this responsibility is going to be borne by the government.”?

Though the department continues to foot the bill for promoting horse races despite the initial plan to identify an external promoter, Senate President Novelle Francis has lauded their recent accomplishments. There have been two horse racing events since the facility was reopened after a [seven-year closure](#). “There are a number of growing pains as you take on that responsibility, so I want to really say congratulations,” said the Senate president.