

VIHA Executive Director Says Authority Can Be Off “Troubled” List Before End of Year

VIHA Executive Director Dwayne Alexander shares optimism about improving the agency's status, with plans to secure HUD's Choice Neighborhoods funding in the future.

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During Wednesday's meeting, members of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority board heard VIHA Executive Director Dwayne Alexander's optimistic assessment that the agency could be off the “troubled list” as soon as later this year.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Public and Indian Housing designates public housing authorities as “troubled” when they score below a certain point on at least one of two assessment documents. “We lost 19 points,” said Mr. Alexander. “We're only two points from being off the troubled status, so if we could get half of those points [we lost], we'll be

right.”

Mr. Alexander, however, said that his goal was not just getting off the list, but increasing the agency's assessment score to such a level that it would be difficult to slip back into the “troubled” category based on a bad year or two moving forward. He vowed to use the results from a pending on-site review to ensure the agency's efforts are being aligned with the desire to remove itself from the list of troubled public housing entities in the United States.

Once that is done, Mr. Alexander says he would then turn his attention to the possibility of VIHA securing access to the HUD's “Choice Neighborhoods” pool of grant funds. The program, according to HUD, “leverages significant public and private dollars to support locally driven strategies that address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation.”

Board member Noreen Michael noted that before he left, the previous VIHA Executive Director had been considering that very issue for some time prior to his departure. She urged Mr. Alexander to familiarize himself with the progress made by the agency thus far, so as to avoid duplicating efforts.