

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Neville James To Create St. John Property Task Force In Light Of Real Property Tax Dispute

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ST. CROIX -- The Senate President of the 31st Legislature, Sen. Neville James, along with Sen. Myron Jackson on Tuesday announced that they are in the final stages of creating a council of senators, government officials and representatives from the National Park Service to discuss and analyze property tax valuations in St. John, and make recommendations to the Lt. Governor's office for future valuation of properties on the smallest of the three islands.

The announcement from James follows Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter's [announcement of a town hall meeting](#) for real property owners on St. John, which will be held at the Legislature Chambers on Wednesday, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. There,

topics such as tax credits and exemptions, tax rates, the appeals process and value of property will be discussed.

Dubbed "The St. John Land, Heritage and Property Tax Task Force", James said he plans to appoint people to the group whose duty will be to provide recommendations and a framework for assessment and valuations for real property valuations on St. John. The appointees will be announced by the end of the week.

The senator cited court documents in which St. John residents disputed their December 2013 property tax bill in the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands, demanding that a temporary restraining order be issued against the local government to stop it from collecting 2013 property taxes, because they felt they were being charged exuberant fees based on expensive vacation villas that surround their homes.

James said he tends to agree with that position.

"Our objective is to get everybody back on the same page as it relates to comfortably paying property taxes. We have a situation on St. John where the December 2013 property tax bill is still in dispute. 505 property owners on St. John filed for an informal appeal on their valuation at the end of last year, and so in an effort to resolve this, property tax bills that were scheduled to go out at the end of 2014 had to be pushed back to early 2015," James said.

James added that the government is "losing time and money every time we send an individual out to reassess these properties and the people of St. John are losing their patience."

The senate president also sought to clarify the task force's role in relation to that of the Board of Tax Review, insisting that he does not intend to create confusion, but the "people of St. John believe the current methodology used to create the valuation models are flawed."

James said his hope is that "this task force will develop a fair and accurate model that everybody can live with."

*Image: Cruz Bay, St. John*

*Image Credit: Uncommon Caribbean*