

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Property And Procurement Ordered To Do Homework, Personnel Testifies At Budget Hearing

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ST. THOMAS -- The Committee on Finance continues to receive testimony from various government departments and agencies as part of the fiscal year 2016 budget hearings.

Chaired by Sen. Clifford Graham, committee members heard testimony at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall on Tuesday from the Division of Personnel (DOP), while dismissing the Department of Property and Procurement because it came to the chambers without proper information.

P&P was ordered to better prepare itself for a new hearing scheduled for July.

DOP "serves the public and government agencies by continually improving the quality of its service, effectively and efficiently performing in a manner justifying the highest degree of public confidence in its conduct," according to a blurb on its website. But Milton E. Potter, DOP's commissioner designee, echoed what has been said by other agencies and departments testifying at the Committee on Finance hearings: staff shortages and budget-cutting have hampered the department in effectively carrying out its duties.

Most pronounced, according to Potter, is DOP's staffing shortage, going from 48 in 2011 to 40 in 2015. Because of this, critical components of the division has suffered, including records management, employee training and health insurance -- the latter of which provides health, vision and dental coverage to some 14,574 participants, including 7,655 government employees and almost 7,000 retirees.

When these employees and retirees' dependents are added into the equation, the total amount covered surpasses 30,000 residents, Potter made known. He said the government has paid almost \$88 million in healthcare costs, of which \$57 million is paid by the Virgin Islands Government and \$30 million by the employees and retirees.

Potter said DOP is seeking a total budget allotment of \$3.4 million.

Correction: June 20, 2015

A previous version of this story printed in error that \$40 million of government employees healthcare cost was paid by government employees and retirees. The correct figure is \$30 million. The story has been updated to represent the correct information.

Feature Image: Department of Property and Procurement main building in St. Thomas.

Image Credit: Property and Procurement.