

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp And Potter May Get Their New Limousines After All

Politics / **Published On March 23, 2016 11:49 AM /**

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp and Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter could receive their new limousines, worth \$350,000 in total, after a Kurt Vialet amendment changed language in a bill intended to purchase emergency vehicles for first responder and law enforcement agencies of the government. The bill sailed through the Committee on Finance on Monday at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall with no opposition from committee members, and will soon face the full Senate.

Bill No. 31-0224 was [originally proposed](#) by Sen. Neville James on the request of the governor, and was twice held in committee because of what Mr. Vialet said were "concerns with the way the language was structured in reference to establishing a

revolving credit facility."

The measure changes the language that says "ceremonial vehicles", and replaces it with "vehicles for the Government of the Virgin Islands". It also removes language that says "Office of the Governor and Office of the Lieutenant Governor", and replaces it with "Government of the Virgin Islands". In the original request, Government House said the monies would be used to purchase three limousines: one on each island for the governor, and one for the lieutenant governor, although it was not clear on which island Mr. Potter's limousine would be stationed.

"After inquisition by legal counsel and speaking to Government House, and speaking also with the P.F.A. (Public Finance Authority), I'm offering an amendment that is going to establish a revolving credit facility that will take care of all of our emergency vehicles, and the credit facility will not exceed an initial term of 5 years with a renewal period of three years, and will raise the amount from \$8 million to \$10 million," Mr. Violet said.

The measure essential gives the Mapp administration and Public Finance Authority a \$10 million line of credit to buy vehicles for the first responder and law enforcement agencies. It also includes funds for road-paving equipment to be utilized by the Department of Public Works, and for 50 additional employees at said department to maintain the territory's roads, which will be bolstered by federal funding. The \$10 million will also include funds for new video surveillance equipment at the Bureau of Corrections, as well as new equipment for the Virgin Islands Fire Service.

In making his case for the new limousines, Governor Mapp said in August 2015 that the current fleet had aged, and maintenance cost had gone up significantly.

"The Governor's official vehicles were purchased back in 2005; they are in constant need of repair and are an embarrassment to the territory," Mr. Mapp said. "During my inauguration on January 5, my official vehicle collapsed at Emancipation Garden and I had to be transported to the next inaugural event via police transport. I suppose this was symbolic of the state of the government I was inheriting. Currently the Lieutenant Governor travels via police vehicles because he has no functioning official vehicle."

But later that same August month, Senate President Neville James said the [government was not in a position](#) to expend \$350,000 for vehicles for the executive branch.

"I deeply appreciate that you have addressed the critical shortages of vehicles for the essential emergency sectors of our government. It is crucial that we provide the management and staff of these agencies all the support they need so they can do their jobs to the best of their ability and keep the community safe. However, in regards to the \$350,000 which would be appropriated for the purchase of ceremonial/official vehicles, I would kindly ask that you consider removing this particular request until the Legislature can responsibly appropriate the funds to support this measure," Mr. James said.

He added: "Based on testimony given to the Committee on Finance on July 8, 2015 during the Office of the Governor Budget Hearing, Nellie C. Varlack, Director of Business and Administration stated on record, that your office has allocated S 120,000 for the purchase for limousines/ceremonial vehicles for each district under the Capital Outlay section of the budget report. This allocation, if the budget is approved, should prove

sufficient until the Legislature can identify monies to properly finance the request in question, unless there has been an event or occurrence between July 8, 2015 and August 14, 2015.”

All members [of the Finance Committee](#) voted in the affirmative for the amendment, bar Senators Tregenza Roach and Sammuel Sanes, who were absent.

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