

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas Carnival Committee To Charge Admission Fee For Village; Price Point To Be Determined At Meeting

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ST. THOMAS -- Citing the need for more security, the St. Thomas Carnival Committee (V.I. Carnival Committee) has decided to charge an admission fee to access the Carnival Village, Halvor Hart, the committee's executive director, confirmed to The Consortium on Tuesday.

The move marks the first time in Carnival Village history that an admission fee will be charged for access to Village activities.

Pointing to past events where violence disrupted festivities, Mr. Hart said the committee was determined to prevent such situations from reoccurring, stating that extra security of about 15 to 20 persons was the best way to do so. But with security comes a price, and the committee was forced to identify a funding source because it did not budget for the cost of the added safety measures.

"As you know, St. Thomas usually has incidents that happen, so the idea is to try to close off Village, fence up the Village, and search people as they're coming in to try to minimize the gun violence and the weapons coming in," Mr. Hart said. He pointed to last year's Village closing, which ended abruptly during a performance by Soca artist Destra, [after a shooting incident left three men injured and one dead.](#)

Fully securing the Village, Mr. Hart admitted, will be a difficult task, "but we have to start somewhere, and we have to be able to cover the security cost because that was not a cost that we had budgeted."

Mr. Hart acknowledged the V.I.P.D.'s presence at carnival events, but he said the force is usually strained during the festive season. "We'll definitely need 15 to 20 guys around the Village," he said, which would compliment the V.I.P.D.'s own security efforts.

What exactly will be the cost, Mr. Hart said the committee will meet tonight to finalize the price, adding, "It will not be a big fee." He said there will be a season ticket option for the Village to compliment nightly admission rates. "This is the first year we're doing it and maybe next year, as we move forward, we could expand to so a season pass that would give access to the princess show, and queen show and everything," Mr. Hart said. For now, however, a season ticket will give all-week access to the Village.

"We're just trying to make the place more secure for who coming to enjoy themselves, that they don't have to worry about outside forces. [The Village is] wide open now and a lot of things happen," Mr. Hart said. He said Village attendees have not felt safe near the restroom area because it appears to serve as a breeding ground for unlawful behavior. "The guys congregate and smoke back there, but security will be able to chase them and keep the area clean," he said.

Mr. Hart said the security would stretch all the way to Emancipation Garden, noting that when violent activity occurs, perpetrators usually try to escape through the children's area -- which includes a variety of rides and other fun activities -- and through the historic landmark, in their efforts to elude law enforcement.

He said when security measures are in place that require security checks before people could come through the children's area and other access points, criminal activity will be deterred because of limited options to escape.

The committee will have a final decision on pricing tonight.

St. Thomas Carnival activities start on April 1 with a Calypso tent, and ends on April 29 with the Adults Parade, fireworks at 9:00 p.m., and Last Lap at the Fort Christian parking lot from 10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. See full schedule [here.](#)

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