

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Carnival Committee No Longer Charging Village Entrance Fee; V.I.P.D. Says Its Ready For Festive Season

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CARNIVAL VILLAGE, ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Carnival Committee will no longer charge an entrance fee for this year's Carnival Village activities, the V.I.P.D. confirmed at press event held in the Village. The committee did not respond to requests for comment, but an officer involved in the safety of carnival told this reporter that the withdrawal involved the Virgin Islands Fire Service, whose officials apparently did not approve the Carnival Committee's proposed changes.

In March, Carnival Committee Executive Director Halvor Hart told this publication that for the first time in V.I. Carnival history, there would be a fee (\$5 nightly; children 13 and were to enter free of charge), to enter the Village. Mr. Hart had said that funds collected from the fee would be used to bolster security, and had pointed to past violence that shutdown Village activities, as justification for the committee's decision.

"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 in March. 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.](#)

Village activities were set to begin tonight with the traditional ribbon-cutting, which is attended by local dignitaries. Governor Kenneth Mapp was expected to give remarks at the event.

Meanwhile, V.I.P.D. officers said at today's press briefing at the Village that the force was prepared to cover carnival activities.

"We just want to make sure that everybody have a good time, and everybody -- visitors and Virgin Islands residents -- attend the functions and they are safe," said Captain Roselyn Jarvis, liaison between the Carnival Committee and the V.I.P.D. She said the V.I.P.D. had "just about enough" officers who are assigned to the Village to ensure safety. She also called on residents to share any suspicious activity, and said that peace officers from other government agencies will be assisting with safety efforts.

And in another effort to ensure a safe season, booth owners were given a directive from the Department and Licensing and Consumer Affairs not to sell alcohol to minors, according to Captain Jarvis.

Police said parking is allowed on the apron and several different areas, as well as on sidewalks. However, people are not allowed to park their vehicles on two sides of the streets, or at bus stops or corners. Violators will be towed at their own expense.

J'ouvert Morning activities will move away from tradition, with troupes and band revelers beginning near the Banco Popular close to the bridge on Veterans Drive from 4:00 a.m., and making their way down the waterfront. In past years, the j'ouvert troupes started on the east side of the island near WICO, while the bands started on the west. Both groups would then meet near the Windward Passage Hotel, where all revelers would then follow the bands back to the Fire Station near the Earl B. Ottley Legislature.