

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Administration Defends Its Record On VIPD Improvements, Says Negotiations Continue With Police Benevolent Association

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ST. CROIX -- Scheduling conflicts have delayed contract negotiations with the Police Benevolent Association (P.B.A.), but the government has worked to accommodate the union, the territory's Chief Negotiator Natalie Nelson Tang How said Wednesday, according to a Government House release.

Mrs. Tang How said her last meeting with the PBA, a union representing officers, was four weeks ago on September 28.

“My office is very successfully working with the territory’s collective bargaining units, but the PBA’s counsel/chief negotiator was unavailable for most of October and then tried to confirm a date at the last minute, which was no longer available following her absence out of the country for almost a month,” Mrs. Tang How said. “It’s unfortunate that the PBA, despite our ongoing communications and good faith negotiations with them, elected to take this route. It was wholly unnecessary - especially in light of the fact that our next scheduled meeting has been set for November 5. Based on what has transpired with the St. Croix PBA, one must question the politics in play.”

The response from Government House follows a vote of no confidence in the Mapp administration issued by P.B.A. on Tuesday. The resolution [sharply criticized](#) the administration for a myriad of grievances, most pointedly was what P.B.A. said were failed attempts at negotiations to raise salaries of senior law enforcement officers through step increases.

According to Government House, most in the law enforcement community agree that the Mapp-Potter administration has been highly supportive of the V.I.P.D. and that morale is on the rise. The administration’s efforts on behalf of local law enforcement include:

- An increase in base pay from \$30,715 to \$40,953 effective May 21, 2018 – police officers were the very first group of Government employees to see a raise in base salaries.
- More training opportunities to include officers attending the NYPD Academy and specialized courses for senior officers in forensics, investigation and other areas at the nation’s top institutions.
- Money appropriated for new equipment, vehicles, training, and technology to aid officers in conducting their daily duties.
- Increases to both the hire rate and the number of Territorial Police Academy classes.
- Helped create a new Police Foundation to support the VIPD and build better community relationships.

Governor Kenneth Mapp, who began his career in public service as a police officer, has made providing law enforcement with better training and tools among his highest priorities since taking office, Government House said. The release said crime is down overall due in part to increased support for local law enforcement. Police officers were the first government employees to see a significant raise to their base salaries.

“Senior officers will continue to have the opportunity to negotiate for increases just like the teachers and nurses did,” Mrs. Tang How said. “But it’s a process and we need the unions to cooperate in good faith at the table in order to complete the process.”