

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senators Annoyed With Absent Testifiers; Unprepared Chamber of Commerce

Economy / **Published On May 17, 2021 04:30 PM /**

Kyle Murphy **May 17, 2021**



Senators voiced their displeasure of the preparedness of testifiers that attended and the lack of attendance for those that did not that were supposed to give an update on the overall impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on their operations during a Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture on Monday .

Only three of the six organizations invited to testify attended the meeting. St. Croix Chamber of Commerce, Cultural Heritage and Nature Tours and Our Town Frederiksted appeared while the Frederiksted Economic Development Association, Christiansted

Restaurant and Retail Association and St. Croix Foundation for Community Development were invited to the hearing but were not present.

Chairperson of the Committee Kenneth Gittens summarized the thoughts of his colleagues who were concerned with the lack of attendance of the organizations that did not show up after the first round of questions, "I too am a bit disappointed, however not discouraged."

Senator Javan James said on the topic, "I really wish the Fredricksted Economic Development Committee and everyone else that we are supposed to so up, but at the end of the day we will continue to do our part, I really hope and pray moving forward that the town of Frederiksted get what they deserve and the only way for them to do that is when you guys have this senate hearing and you guys come to the senate floor that you all meet before, discuss, have an overall comprehensive plan and come to us hard and ready so we can be like ok you are serious and we can fund it. I am not saying that you're not serious, it just needs to be a more coordinated effort and discussion between all the organizations in the historic town of Frederiksted."

Non-committee member Senator Kurt Violet said he did not plan on attending the hearing but came down from his office after hearing the lack of data that Leon Hughes, Vice-Chair for the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce provided to the senators questions. "I heard the Chamber of Commerce testimony and I wasn't pleased or satisfied, you ask for a status as to what is going on in the Virgin Islands and you get a one page testimony and then I heard my good colleague asking for some other data, number of business closures, number of this or that and again did not get that response. It's like there is a disconnect in terms of the chamber or the chamber really isn't doing their homework."

Mr. Violet proceeded to ask Mr. Hughes about hotel occupancy rates for hotels on St. Croix and how the restaurants are doing. Mr. Hughes did not have the hotel occupancy rate and said "your 100 percent correct in me not personally not having that information."

Then Mr. Violet explained some of the positives he is seeing in the St. Croix economy, the restaurant industry is thriving, the development of the King Christian Hotel and there are new restaurants and coffee shops opening soon.

"One of the issues St. Croix has, we always turn negative, I saw someone put up a picture of an old derelict building, but you know how many buildings have been refurbished, how many buildings look beautiful. We select to go in the area that needs repair and we try to make that a reflection of the entire town, It is not."

He explained his issue with the Chamber of Commerce that could lead to this attitude, “when we have development that is taking place and we acting like we are stagnant, I beg to differ, we are not stagnant, we are moving and the Chamber need to have that information, where they are going to come here and say this is what going on, this is what we need done, these are our recommendations, ” and “Let us stop focusing on the negative all the time and lets focus on how we can make our beautiful St. Croix better and let’s have a Chamber that is going to come here and let us know exactly what the numbers are.”

© Viconsortium 2026