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Surprised by Findings, Bryan Wants to Conduct Second USVI Census Ahead of Scheduled 2030 Count

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Aerial view of Williams Delight, St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan has announced that due to some of the surprising findings in the Virgin Islands 2020 Census, his administration would most likely look into conducting another census before the scheduled 2030 count.

“Somewhere along the line we are going to find some money to do another Census because we can but we will have to pay for it,” he said in response to a question from Dorothy Isaac during the Public Finance Authority's regular meeting which occurred on Tuesday. Isaac, a PFA board member, was questioning the findings which show that the territory's population has been dramatically reduced.

The discussion about the census came up while discussing a resolution to authorize the Transfer of the 2021 Private Activity Bond Volume Cap allocation to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. The members of the authority approved that resolution.

The territory's allotment of federal funding is adjusted to reflect population growth or decline. When there's a decline, funding is reduced, and when the population grows, funding is adjusted up. It was unclear as to whether the federal government would base its funding decisions on the findings of a census other than the U.S. Census Bureau's.

The U.S. Census Bureau in October [released the 2020 Census](#) population and housing unit counts for the U.S. Virgin Islands. As of April 1, 2020, the U.S. Virgin Islands' population according to the Bureau was 87,146, representing a decrease of 18.1% from the 2010 Census population of 106,405. The housing unit count was 57,257 in 2020, representing an increase of 2.4% from the 2010 Census housing unit count of 55,901.

The population and housing unit count data, as of April 1, are collected once a decade during the decennial census. The 2020 Island Areas Censuses counted people living in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Census Bureau conducts the decennial census in partnership with the Island Areas governments in compliance with Title 13 of the United States Code and to meet the specific data needs of the Island Areas.

Acknowledging that the territory's population reduced during that period because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 that battered the territory, Mr. Bryan said the USVI is the only place in the USA that conducts a 100 percent census.

“We are like the only place in the United States that conducts 100 percent census. Every place else they just sample, they are pretty good at projecting what the numbers should look like, so we don't have to worry,” he said while pointing out that the small size of the territory can allow for various interpretations of the data.

“So, we will have to sponsor a complete census,” he said without indicating a timeline for the realization of such a project. The 2020 Census of the U.S. Virgin Islands collected detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics using a long-form questionnaire.

Along with approving a resolution to authorize the transfer of the 2021 Private Activity Bond Volume Cap allocation to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority, the board also approved a resolution to amend a contract with Springline Architects, LLC, the Public Finance Authority, and the Office of Disaster Recovery to provide development, architectural and engineering, and design services for the execution and management of federally funded disaster-related recovery projects.

The board also unanimously approved a professional service contract with Duane Morris LLP. The resolution was to authorize the PFA's executive director of Finance and Administration to execute a professional services contract with Duane Morris LLP to serve as bond counsel to the Public Finance Authority on the proposed Matching Fund Securitization transaction.