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WTJX Seeks Budget Increase to Meet Employee Obligations; Broadcast Sees Growth in Contributions as Membership Holds Steady

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Linda Straker **June 29, 2022**

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WTJX, led by CEO Tanya-Marie Singh unveiled its new mobile production unit and a new garage at its Richmond headquarters on St. Croix on Wed. Feb. 16, 2022 By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY/VICONSORTIUM

V.I. Broadcasting System (WTJX) CEO Tanya-Marie Singh on Tuesday told members of the Committee on Finance that the broadcast is requesting an increase in its budgetary allocation to meet employee obligations.

"I just want to meet my employee's obligation and make sure we have the budget to maintain our Corporation of Public Broadcasting (CPB) funding," she said while facing questions during

Tuesday's budget hearing. "As you see we were up 3 percent in our CPB funding and that is in part thanks to the Legislature for local funding because that is the formula: every time our non-federal funding is raised, they also raise their contribution."

Ms. Singh explained that the philanthropic funds are used mostly to buffer overtime as well as for marketing and local programming purposes.

In terms of monetary commitments through signed contracts, committed donations and grant funding, Ms. Singh told the committee WTJX recorded an increase. "We are up 30 percent over the same period last year; our membership is holding steady," she said in prepared remarks.

"We raised \$270,507 since I've last come before you and we implemented the television station's first PBS pledge drive. We've held three so far which requires minimal effort on our part," said Ms. Singh, who has been CEO of WTJX since 2015.

Facing questions aimed at clarifying its funding allocations, Nedra Thomas, WTJX chief financial officer explained that the two major funding sources are budgetary allocation from the V.I. government and the CPB through a grant. Previously in fiscal year 2022, about eight employees were paid from the grant but recently there were changes that now sees all employees being paid from the GVI allocation, Ms. Thomas made known.

In the area of disaster recovery, WTJX currently has 17 active project worksheets through FEMA Public Assistance, thirteen on St. Thomas and four on St. Croix. Sixteen of those projects are obligated, meaning funding is already in place. The sole unobligated project is the rebuilding of WTJX's main facility at Haypiece Hill in St. Thomas.

Ms. Singh said that of the 16 obligated projects, six are completed and ten are in progress at varying levels of completion. The obligated projects total \$3.7 million to date and WTJX has received \$631,361.10 in reimbursements.

The CEO also informed the committee that the system's union-related wage reopener was negotiated last year through September 30, 2023. "Thanks to this body and the administration, we made the 8 percent salary repayments and I am working closely with the union and the Office of Collective Bargaining to close the complaint filed against [WTJX] in the Superior Court," she said.

The proposed budgetary allocation of the Virgin Islands Public Broadcasting System for fiscal year 2023 is \$4,401,902. This is an increase of \$86,000 when compared to 2022. WTJX commenced transmitting in 1972 and will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on August 29th, 2022.