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Sunset Jazz Returning to Frederiksted in Two Months With 'World Class Act,' Says Governor Bryan

Entertainment / **Published On January 28, 2023 05:38 AM /**

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A band performing at the Frederiksted Pier (Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility). By. GOTOSTCROIX.COM

Sunset Jazz is coming back to Frederiksted.

The return of the popular open air activity is just one item on Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s expansive list of economic development initiatives meant to fuel growth in the USVI for years to come.

The event, which ran for two decades, will return "probably in February, more like March," the governor said during a Thursday evening interview with Consortium publisher Ernice Gilbert. It will now be held on the fourth Friday of the month rather than the third as it was previously, and

Mr. Bryan teased "world class entertainment" for at least the first two or three months.

The activity will attract not only VI residents, Governor Bryan hopes, but also cruise passengers on ships that may now be persuaded to dock overnight. It's part of a wider strategy to develop the island's tourism product, capitalizing on the recent increase in the number of cruise passengers arriving in the territory during each ship's time in port.

"They've been having good experiences" on island, said the governor, "but we need more excursions, we need more things for them to do." To that end, Mr. Bryan hinted at the upcoming rollout of programs to support Virgin Islanders who want to develop businesses that offer entertainment and activities to that market.

Starting and registering a business, whether tourism-based or otherwise, will also become easier, Governor Bryan said. The territory will consider legislation to reduce or eliminate regulatory hurdles in that regard, he promised, comparing his desired model to how things work in states like Delaware. Mr. Bryan noted that the regulations exist as a means of compelling business owners to stay current on their obligations, including taxes, and thus warned that when these requirements are lifted, compliance will be enforced more forcefully.

The governor ascribed some of the current friction in the business licensing and permitting process to the increased volume of work needing to be handled by agencies such as the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

"Remember, we had \$508 million worth of projects come through DPNR," Mr. Bryan explained, which resulted in over two thousand applications to the agency. All this has to be processed by the same number of government staffers as there were in 2007, and the governor invited the Senate to contemplate legislative solutions to the issue.

The territory's leader argued that it is these types of changes to the ecosystem of the Virgin Islands' business environment that are needed to unlock the growth potential of the territory, which he sees as positive despite the looming global recession.

The pandemic has left people with a lot of pent up cash and a desire to travel and expand their horizons with new experiences, Mr. Bryan opined. The USVI has to continue positioning itself to take full advantage of the increased tourist arrival numbers that are expected to continue.