GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Premier Wheatley Brings BVI Government to St. Thomas For First Inter Virgin Islands Council Meeting Since 2020

Governor Bryan offers access to USVI's fiber-optic network to assist British Virgin Islands in setting up free wife hotspots for residents of the neighboring territory

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — After Governor Albert Bryan Jr. introduced him, the Honorable British Virgin Islands Premier Dr. Natalio Wheatley set a cooperative tone for the Ninth Annual Inter Virgin Islands Council, which was the first meeting between the two governments since 2020.

Premier Wheatley went off-script with a brief anecdote about going to school on St. Thomas, living in Estate Thomas as a child and how his brothers bagged groceries at Grand Union before ending his opening remarks with a call for unity between the two island territories.



Premier Natalio Wheatley addresses Governor Bryan during Thursday's meeting.

“It’s just an example that you are us, and we are you. We are one Virgin Islands people,” the Premier said. “The task before us is to be able to maximize the areas of mutual benefit and really honestly and truly confront those few areas where we have areas of conflict. I believe we can do it.”



Governor Bryan and Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach chat with BVI Deputy Premier Kye Rymer.

During the meeting Thursday morning at Government House on St. Thomas, Premier Wheatley and Deputy Premier Kye Rymer and members of their Cabinet met with Governor Bryan, Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach and members of their Cabinet to discuss a number of topics, including ways to use the USVI fiber-optic network to assist the BVI in setting up free wifi hotspots for residents.

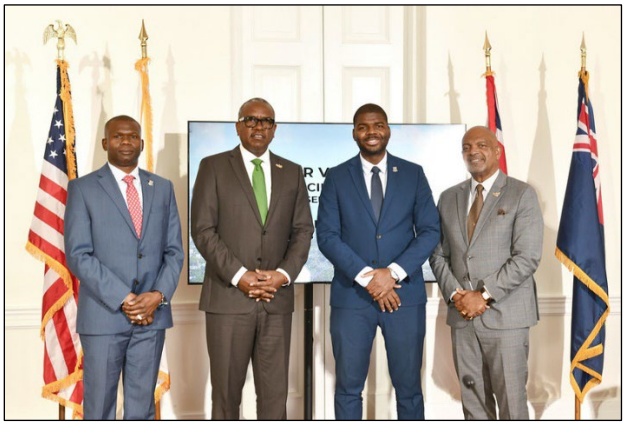
Also on the agenda were discussions about developing:

- Passes to bypass customs procedures for USVI residents to attend festivals in the BVI.
- Pre-clearance of U.S. Customs for visitors landing on St. Thomas on the way to the BVI.
- A reciprocal agreement to streamline business license requirements for day charters and water taxis to operate between territories.
- Reciprocal agreements regarding commercial and recreational fishing licensing and requirements.
- Cooperative efforts by both territories to streamline the overnight charter market.



Governor Bryan also said he had given the BVI delegation a letter naming Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Richard Evangelista as the Consul General to the BVI on behalf of the USVI.

In his closing remarks, Governor Bryan expressed his hope that by working together, the USVI and BVI could maximize the benefits of their combined tourism assets and in so doing, enhance the experiences of thousands of tourists who visit both territories every season.



From left: BVI Deputy Premier Kye Rymer, Governor Albert Bryan Jr.; BVI Premier Dr. Natalio Wheatley and Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach.

"A lot of things can be done. It all starts with communication and I think the communication that was started here today in terms of maximizing the total benefit of our tourism product is key," Governor Bryan said. "There are a lot of things coming up in the British Virgin Islands that Virgin Islanders want to go to, and we want to make sure we expand what that means for them. People from all over the world are interested in the food festivals and music festivals and all the other things that go on in the British Virgin Islands.

"Here in the U.S. Virgin Islands, we, too, want to expand our season from not only November to May, but year-long. That's something we can work on together, extending benefits of not only the U.S. Virgin Islands, but also in the British Virgin Islands," the Governor said. "I think a key topic of this meeting today was digitizing and the internet. Technology will allow us to do things that we've never been able to do before. Ease access in terms of business. Ease access in terms of recreation. And ease access in terms of our people meeting and greeting and having a great time in the Greater Virgin Islands."



The BVI and USVI Inter Virgin Islands Council delegations pose in front of Government House on St. Thomas.

Also attending the meeting on behalf of the U.S. Virgin Islands was Customs and Border Protection Port Director for the Virgin Islands Todd Bellew; U.S. Coast Guard Lt. Commander Jan League; and Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association Executive Director Oriel Blake.

The Inter Virgin Islands Council was started by Governor Charles W. Turnbull, and the first meeting of the IVIC took place on St. Croix in 2004.

Governor Bryan adjourned the meeting with a motion to hold the next IVIC meeting in the BVI, with a date to be determined.

To hear remarks by Governor Bryan and Premier Wheatley, go to facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov.

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