



Bulletin

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Saba Day 2019



People turned up in large numbers to celebrate Saba Day in The Bottom on Friday, December 6. The 44th Saba Day ceremony featured messages by Island Governor Jonathan Johnson, Commissioners Rolando Wilson and Bruce Zagers, and several performances. The official part of the program started with the blessing of Father

Zibi and Pastor Alexander, followed by the hoisting of the Saba Flag by Island Governor Johnson and students of the Saba Comprehensive School (SCS), and the singing of both the Saba Anthem and the Saba Flag Song. The speakers dwelled on this year's theme of Saba Day, "Building the Roads to the Future," in their speeches. "We have come a long way. It is imperative that we don't become complacent. The Caribbean islands will face the effects and are facing the effects of climate change. It is our duty to build the road to the future which takes development and conservation both into account," said Jonathan Johnson. Commissioner Wilson said it was important to safeguard, treasure and respect the road to the future. If not, the great changes will leave us wondering who we are and where we are going as a people. He said the road that Saba and its people have been journeying on has not always been easy, but that despite the many hardships, good things were also achieved in areas like education, social domain, health care, housing, agriculture and nature. Commissioner Wilson referred to the four colors of the national flag, red, blue, white and yellow, and what they stand for. "The red symbolizes our great strength and resilience as a people. Our forefathers paved the path that we are traveling on today. They taught us to work hard and make an honest day's pay. We must preserve their legacy." The color blue shows people's faithfulness to Saba and their families. "We will continue to protect and take care of what we have for the future generations to come." White stands for purity and the aim to keep Saba clean. "Don't litter and take care of what we have. The yellow star I see as the Almighty that provides, guides and protects us through everything," said Wilson. "Saba Day should be about being proud of our land.

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Proud of our heritage and taking pride in not only acknowledging, but also upholding our traditions, our culture and the hardworking mentality that has been passed on to us from our forefathers,” said Commissioner Zagers. “We always have been a proud and resilient people, with a ‘do first’ mentality. Let us not allow this way of life to



fade away as this characteristic is part of what makes us Saba. We must make this ‘do first’ mentality more of a daily way of life rather than making it a catch phrase.” He called on everyone to bring something positive to their surroundings. Zagers said it was also important to be mindful of how to treat visitors and those who have made Saba their home. “These people should not be seen as threats to our culture, our jobs or the cohesiveness of our society. As an island and as a people we will become far more resilient when we unite together as one.” According to Zagers, the government and the community share a responsibility. “It is our responsibility to uphold the values that have been passed down to us so that we can preserve and nurture the solid foundation that was built by our forefathers. We must ensure that we protect our land,



our culture, our traditions, our nature and the pride that makes us Saba.” He called on everyone to be proud of Saba every day, not only on Saba Day. Five Sabans, two St. Maarteners and an Anguillian were honored during Saba Day. The award for construction went to John Roderick “Roddy” Hassell, the award for animal husbandry went to Harold Andrew “Andy” Hassell, the award for business to Rudolph Michael “Rudy” Zagers, the award for fishing and public service to Hubert Hendrik Hassell, the award for sea transportation to Samuel “Blues” Conner and Mutty’s Pride and the award for architecture and carpentry to Manuel de Jesus Benitez Morales. Brunilda Illidge and Antonio Pantophlet of the St. Maarten Medical Center (SMMC) for their services to nursing education on Saba for many years.



Energy saving survey

The Public Entity Saba and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations have asked Milieu Centraal to carry out a survey on energy use in households. Residents are asked to fill in a questionnaire. <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf-DesYuQAs3H-CTnpwyrYnSyAM-8QcH-49tnJC68C1LjQLPA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1> To get more information and to develop a program that will directly benefit households, this questionnaire was drafted by Milieu Centraal and the Pub-

lic Entity Saba with questions about, for example, the number and type of appliances in one's home and the use of these appliances. Saba Electric Company was consulted to get insights in what factors determine the height of the electricity bill. Based on the collected information, the Public Entity Saba and Milieu Centraal aim to develop a communication campaign with practical tips to assist people in reducing their electricity bill, making a small step in reducing the high cost of living.

Visit of Princess Beatrix



Saba is most honoured to receive Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands on December 12. In the morning hours, Princess Beatrix opens the Mary's Point hiking trail located in the new Mount Scenery National Park. The trail goes to the abandoned settlement of Palmetto Point, founded in the early seventeenth century, and later called Mary's Point. The more than two hundred log steps were built out of old electricity poles by staff and volunteers of the Saba Conservation Foundation (SCF). The Princess meets a number of local fishermen in the harbour. The fishermen have agreements on maintaining a healthy and sustainable fish stock, such as the 2017 arrangement setting out how fish stocks are to be managed, e.g. by introducing a fishing season for certain species of fish. In the afternoon, the Princess visits the Saba Lace Ladies to see them demonstrate their lace-making skills. Princess Beatrix then visits the botanical garden, a project that is carried out by the SCF and funded by the Public Entity Saba. At the entrance to the garden, she will unveil a new information panel. When completed, the botanical garden will provide an opportunity for visitors and residents for whom the hiking trails are too strenuous to still enjoy nature's splendour. The

Civil servants take part in workshops

The Human Resources Department of the Public Entity Saba hosted several workshops and trainings for its employees in November to further strengthen and improve the government apparatus. On November 26 and 27, eight civil servants, four from Saba and four from St. Eustatius, took part in a workshop about the technical implementation of the civil servant regulations ("arbeidsvoorwaarden ambtenaren"). The workshop was provided by labor regulations specialist Alexander van Engelen from the Netherlands. Supervisors and team leaders of the Public Entity Saba took part in a two-day workshop on November 19 and 20 to further develop their leadership skills. Island Secretary Tim Muller explained that the training was in line with the vision of government to develop and strengthen the administration to provide high-level service to the community. Supervisors and team leaders play an essential role in executing the government vision and to coach the teams in the right direction. This training was facilitated by David McGregor of Charisma TDC. Early November, 15 Department heads of the Public Entity Saba participated in a training to enhance their skills in performance development meetings ("functioneringsgesprekken"). The objective of the training was to receive guidelines to hold meaningful and productive job evaluation talk. Next year, the department heads will also participate in a training on how to carry out effective performance assessment meetings. The workshop was facilitated by Willem Jan Stokhof of Smart Solutions. In October, the Management Development Program (PEP) was closed off. In 2020 a new PEP program will start for those managers that did not have the opportunity to take part in the 2019 program. The workshops and trainings will continue next year, said HR Manager Miguela Gumbs. In January 2020, the Landfill workers will be able to do a training in how to effectively use the fire extinguisher in case of a fire. Also, in January civil servants of various departments will have the opportunity to be trained as an Inhouse Emergency Response Officer. In January as well, there will be a workshop for the government managers about leadership and integrity.

Budget reluctantly approved



The Island Council on November 13 adopted the 2020-2023 budget of the Public Entity Saba, but not without the members sharing their great concerns about the lack of structural funding from the Dutch Government and after hearing the urgent message of Finance Commissioner Bruce Zagers. Zagers explained in his presentation at the start of the meeting, which was a continuation of the adjourned November 7 meeting when the Island Council staged a walk-out in protest of the lack of structural funding, that the multi-annual draft budget was barely balanced. The 2020 budget stands at US \$12,379,257, a mere US \$218,000 higher than the 2019 budget, whereas the responsibilities of government, the general operating costs and the cost of maintenance have increased. “The budget can only meet the legal financial obligations of the day-to-day running of government. It barely allows for government to function.” Zagers said that government always made it a priority to continue improving financial management,

but given the current circumstances it was imminent that it would no longer be able to honor its legal responsibilities and that deficits could be expected. “Ultimately, government’s financial health will not only be tested but will be at great risk of regress.” The free allowance of the Dutch Government of US \$9,770,710, which basically has remained the same since 2012, is too low and the part of the budget that depends on incidental funding is too big. “The overall discussion should not be about what is in the budget, but what is not in it. We have budget meetings to basically approve a document which can barely be balanced or meet our financial obligations. The free allowance is based on the bare minimum to execute the tasks and does not reflect what it takes for government to properly execute its mandated responsibilities. Government and its services have grown, yet it is expected that it is to be maintained with the same amount of money,” said Zagers. Island Council Member Esmeralda Johnson: “I hope that we can resolve this and continue to produce a balanced budget that provides the needed investments to deliver the services that our government and our people deserve. No more paying lip service. We need support.” Hemmie van Xanten said he had “mixed feelings” about the budget, but acknowledged that not approving it would slow down the government operations. Vito Charles said that historically, Saba always made do with what it had at its disposal. “But sometimes it is not enough. We need to be rewarded for doing good,” said Charles. “We have all repeatedly heard the statement of the now minister ‘more for more,’ yet the reality is that we have to do more with the same,” said Carl Buncamper.

Visit of US Ambassador



United States Ambassador to the Netherlands Mr. Pete Hoekstra visited Saba on November 14. He met with local authorities, climbed Mt. Scenery and went to the landfill to be informed about the successful recycling project. Mr. Hoekstra was very positive about his first-ever visit, which he called historic because he was the first US Ambassador to climb Mt. Scenery. "It was a hard hike. The nature is gorgeous. Saba is a beautiful island with its white houses and red roofs. I had a thrilling entry, landing

on such a short runway," Mr. Hoekstra said. The Ambassador said the island has a much potential, depending on how much local authorities want it to grow. "I can understand that they want the right kind of growth so Saba can stay Saba, and not lose its authenticity." He was impressed by the project to clean up the landfill, the recycling facility, and the plans to build a new harbor. "These are all major projects that are positive for the community." At the landfill, the Ambassador, his wife Diane Hoekstra and his delegation that included staff from the US Consulate General in Willemstad, received information about the waste management and recycling process from Commissioner Bruce Zagers, landfill manager Arnold Hassell and Head of Public Works Russell Thielman. Andrew Cadwell of Cadwell Inc., the US company that is removing all recyclables, shared information on the project to get metal, aluminum, glass, plastics, tires and other recyclables off the island. The first batch of scrap metal was already shipped to Puerto Rico. A number of containers with recyclables have also left the island.

Process alternative new harbor location continues

There is permission of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (I&W) to continue researching the construction of the new harbour at the alternative location instead of continuing with the old plan at Fort Bay. A small Saba delegation, headed by Commissioner Bruce Zagers, met with representatives of the Ministry of I&W, in The Hague early October to discuss the information that had been gathered so far on the alternative harbor location in the Giles Quarter area, often locally referred to as Black Rocks, and the results of testing under the former plan to expand and renovate the Fort Bay Harbor. An environmental impact study, soil investigations and further wave studies will be carried out. After that the design can be finalized and the process can start to secure the necessary permits from Rijkswaterstaat. Starting the project at the Fort Bay Harbor had been logical because all facilities are located there. Also, the funds provided by the Dutch Government were intended for the reconstruction of the Fort Bay Harbor to a more future and hurricane proof harbor. "We had to start testing at that location. Once the test results showed that Fort Bay might not be the most suitable location, it was decided to start tests at the alternative location," said Zagers. Preparations have started for the design of the connecting road to the proposed location of the new harbor. This public road that will connect the current end of the road at the gas station with the location of the new harbor project in the Black Rocks/Giles Quarter area. As there is currently only a dirt road, stabilization and paving works will be required. Research by government in the public registries did not show entitlement of third parties to the grounds of the proposed new road. If there are persons who hold a claim to this property, they need to email to: bcsaba@sabagov.nl.

Advancing the recycling process



The Public Entity Saba in November discussed the options to advance the recycling program with representatives of Cadwell Inc. The US, Boca Raton firm has been removing recyclables that have been stored at the landfill, transporting them off island since October. With the objective set by Commissioner Bruce Zagers to burn a minimum amount of waste, ways were discussed to make the recycling system more efficient and to further promote and increase the recycling. Andrew and Joan Cadwell presented the Green Diamond Award to Commissioner Zagers for his relentless efforts to improve recycling. Head of Public Works Russell Thielman received the Recognition Award for what Andrew Cadwell said was “going above and beyond, commitment to excellence” in the recycling initiative.

Single-use plastics ban

Saba is on its way to implement a single-use plastics ban in 2020. The think tank to ban single-use plastics had its introductory meeting on November 7. Different stakeholders discussed the parts that they find important about the ban on single-use plastics and what it wants to achieve as a think tank. Policy advisor of the Public Entity Saba Sarah van der Horn gave a short presentation. The members of the think tank were positive about implementing the ban. While some businesses were already in the process of banning single-use plastics, it was pointed out that a level-playing field is important. There was a brain storm session to discuss aspects such as what the ban should focus on, the objective and priorities of the ban, and what the conditions are in order for this ban to be successful. During the next meetings, the think tank will discuss a draft plan for the ban and discuss ways to give the implementation a positive spin for businesses. The think tank will meet on a regular basis. The single-use plastic ban, when implemented next year, will prohibit the import of items such as plastic bags, (Styrofoam) food containers, plastic/Styrofoam cups, plastic cutlery and straws. Biodegradable, more environmental alternatives, are available. Pupils of the Sacred Heart school made a poster about this theme. A winning poster was selected from each grade. As grade five stood out in terms of creativity, two posters were selected from that grade. The winners were: Grade 1 - Mason Keck and Collun Clegg, Grade 2 - G'marcus Wilson and D'marion Gomez, Grade 3 - Laryanny Del Carmen and Marisa Lucas, Grade 4 A - Meeka Winston and Chariella Hassell, Grade 4 B - Damian Richardson, Gabriel Ramirez and Bear Clegg, Grade 5 - Michaela Johnson and Kristin Zagers, and Jayquan Charles and Shawn Barnes, Grade 6 - Kendra Gomez and Kerryann Simmons. The posters will be reprinted for display at different locations. A petite committee with Commissioner Rolando Wilson, Island Secretary Tim Muller and Head of the Government Information Services Saskia Matthew selected the winners.

Domestic violence Event Black & Blue



The Domestic Violence Platform Saba and the Public Entity Saba on November 25, hosted a very well-attended event on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls. The “Black & Blue, the Right Way” featured speeches, presentations and performances. Because of its success, part of the program was repeated in a second event on December 9. The highlights of the first event were the story of domestic violence survivor Mary Thielman and the play by a group of talented volunteer actors that entertained the audience with the story that they brought on domestic violence with both dramatic and highly comical elements. One in every three girls in the Caribbean will experience violence, mostly committed by someone they know, said Domestic Violence Coordinator of the Public Entity Saba Marva Simmons. Domestic violence comes in various forms: verbal, physical, financial and sexual. It does not occur in only one type of relation. It has a great impact on the victims, their families, on the entire community, and it happens everywhere. Commissioner of Social Affairs Rolando Wilson said that domestic violence affected women and men of every race, religion, culture and status. “Domestic violence can end if we all play our part and lend a voice to what we see happening. Silence and failure to act will let this violence continue. We need to stand up, speak out and act.” President of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights

Adriana van Dooijeweert said that everywhere domestic violence was underreported and that, as a result, many cases remained unprosecuted. “Domestic violence is inhuman and against every human right.” Domestic violence survivor Mary Thielman, with Marva Simmons at her side to read her story off paper, told the audience in a very personal account how the abuse by the father of her children started. She told the story of the many blows, the verbal abuse, the degrading of her person. Her message to other victims: pay attention to the signs, seek help and get out. The “Black and Blue” play captured the audience. The theme of the play was intense, heavy gripping, yet the actors managed to give it a funny twist. The story centered around “Zinger” (Tedisha Gordon), who was in an abusive relationship with “Wally” (Kemaul Lee), her friends “Pixy” (Monique Wilson) and “Trina” (Alisia Wilson) and, the star of the play, grandmother “Mabel” (Etsel Lake).



Children's Rights Week

A number of events were held in November on the occasion of Children's Rights Week, the fourth one held on Saba. There were activities for children and parents, activities at the schools and day care, a talk, walkathon and a festival. The Children's Rights Festival on November 20, the International Day for the Rights of the Child, had a good turn-out, as did many of the other activities. This year marked the 30th anniversary of the universal Convention of the Rights of the Child. Commissioner of Youth Affairs Rolando Wilson in his opening remarks mentioned some of the rights that children have. "We have to make sure that you have access to quality education, health care, an adequate standard of living, a clean and safe environment for you to live and thrive." Wilson also reminded the children and youth in the audience that these rights come with responsibilities too. "You need to make sure that you go to school and pay keen attention so that you learn well and advance yourself." The festival, organized by the Community Development and Public Health Department in cooperation with Youth and Family Caribbean Netherlands



(JGCN), included various fun activities, of which many had an educational aspect. There were games like rope pulling and mind games, but also face painting and picture taking. The Saba Comprehensive School was present with several of its many clubs. The Sacred Heart Primary School had free books for the children. JGCN offered information on domestic violence and child abuse. The Public Health Department was present with a small-size baby clinic where the children could weigh, measure and examine the health of a teddy bear or doll. There was information on contraceptives and the parts of the body.

Human Rights Institute visits

President of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights ("College voor de Rechten van de Mens") Adriana van Dooijeweert visited Saba November 23 to 27 for meetings with local authorities and organizations to discuss human rights related topics. Accompanied by policy advisor Vlada Burmistrova, Van Dooijeweert had meetings with Island Governor Jonathan Johnson and Island Secretary Tim Muller, the Island Council, the Saba Police Force, the Community Development Department of the Public Entity Saba and local organizations. She visited the Home for the Elderly in The Bottom, and attended the "Black and Blue" event of Saba's Domestic Violence Platform on November 25, where she spoke about domestic violence in relation to human rights. The Human Rights Institute will give attention to violence against girls and women in its 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Poverty on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba is an important issue for the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights. "The high cost of living, the fact that a large section of the population can barely make ends meet, the shortage of social housing. This is totally unacceptable from the principle of equal treatment. People on the islands have the same human rights as in the Netherlands," said Van Dooijeweert. The Human Rights Institute wants the equal treatment law applied in the Caribbean Netherlands. This law forbids discrimination on all grounds of religion, race, gender. It strives for equal pay and forbids employers to discriminate a pregnant worker.

Administrative law enforcement course

Police officers of the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force (KPCN), military police workers of the Royal Marechaussee who also work in basic police care on Saba, and civil servants working in the public order and safety domain at the Public Entity Saba took part in the first administrative law enforcement course on Saba in October.



In total 13 persons took part in the workshop and eventually eight persons received their certificate. The workshop was created and provided by the legal advisor of the Public Entity Saba Mr. Gerald Simmons-de Jong. Island Governor Jonathan John-

son handed out certificates to the participants on November 13. The idea for the workshop was a result of agreements made in the local three-party meeting on Saba between the head prosecutor, the police chief and the Island Governor. Government can issue regulations through local ordinances. Enforcing these ordinances using the administrative law however, is different than criminal law enforcement. Cooperation between police enforcers and the public order and safety workers at the Saba government that fall under the Island Governor is imperative in the enforcement of local administrative laws.

Good turn-out prescriptive rights townhall

Many people turned up for the townhall meeting on prescriptive rights at the Eugenius Johnson Community Center on October 11. Legal advisor of the Public Entity Saba Gerald Simmons-De Jong, Notary Marlene Mingo and Nathalie Tackling of the Saba Legal Desk facilitated a presentation to the public about the procedure regarding prescriptive rights claims and answered the many questions that were posed to them. During the townhall presentation, the steps were outlined that persons with a claim need to follow in the procedure for prescriptive rights, including what documents are needed. The Legal Desk will now be handling the front-end of the process and will act as a liaison between its client and the government. The Legal Desk will assist clients with building a dossier and submit the substantiated claim to the Executive Council for decision-taking. Persons can make an appointment by emailing the legal desk at Nathalie@Sabalegaldesk.com. Land ownership is quite a complex matter. The most common real property issues that persons on Saba are faced with relate to property claimed by family, where proper ownership and legal title paperwork is not in place for various reasons. And, without a proper legal title, people are not the legal owner of the land, and cannot sell or encumber this property. They cannot take a mortgage on this piece of land or transfer it to someone else if they are not the actual registered owner with the right paperwork. With this procedure in place and with the cooperation of the notary offices Mingo and the legal desk, the Public Entity Saba is helping the Saban community with their land ownership problems in the coming two years.