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Third Dock at Crown Bay, Larger Vessels in Frederiksted: Dowe's Vision Coming to Life as Board Approves Fee Hike for Cruise Passengers

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Royal Caribbean Cruise Ship at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility in Frederiksted, St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Port Authority Board of Governors has given the green light to a Capital Cost Recovery Charge (CCRC) of five dollars (\$5.00) per passenger. This charge aims to finance significant capital improvement projects set to enhance the territory's cruise port facilities.

During its Wednesday meeting, the VIPA Board empowered Executive Director Carlton Dowe to initiate dialogues with the Royal Caribbean Group concerning the CCRC's deployment.

The CCRC will apply to the Royal Caribbean Group and its associated cruise ships that anchor at the Austin “Babe” Monsanto Marine Terminal in Crown Bay, St. Thomas. The expectation is to put this fee into effect starting January 1, 2024. Proceeds from this charge will be allocated to the preliminary tasks required to push forward the Crown Bay District Upland Development Project in St. Thomas. This encompasses the construction of a third cruise ship pier in Crown Bay and essential dredging operations.

Moreover, Mr. Dowe has been granted authority to introduce a similar \$5 per passenger CCRC for the Royal Caribbean Group’s cruise vessels and its partners that dock at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility in Frederiksted, St. Croix. The revenue from this charge will cover preliminary expenses essential for infrastructural enhancements and dredging. These upgrades will facilitate the berthing of the more substantial Freedom-class cruise ships in St. Croix. Presently, the biggest vessel that can dock at the Abramson cruise ship pier is a Voyager-class ship.

In his remarks, Mr. Dowe emphasized the value of their collaboration with the Royal Caribbean Group, stating, “We look forward to continuing our strong partnership with Royal Caribbean Group as we move forward in the development of these exciting projects that will benefit the territory and strengthen this U.S. Virgin Islands’ position as a premier destination. The Caribbean and the rest of the world are not waiting for the USVI to advance. The time for progress is now.”