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Shipwreck from the 1800s to be Moved for St. Thomas Harbor Dredging

The relocation project, costing under \$150,000, aims to safeguard historical artifacts while enhancing cruise ship capacity

Development / **Published On February 22, 2024 05:43 AM /**

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Steam-driven windlass and warping barrels from a shipwreck near Prince Frederik's Battery, Hassel Island, St. Thomas USVI Harbor, remnants of an 1801 encounter with the British Navy. By. ERIK MILES

During Wednesday's meeting of the V.I. Port Authority Governing Board, Director of Engineering Preston Beyer asked the board to approve spending just under \$150,000 in order to move a mid-19th century shipwreck from the path of the dredging operation.

"It's been identified as a cultural resource of importance for the Department of Planning and

Natural Resources' State Historic Preservation Office," Mr. Beyer told board members, noting that there have already been "a number of archaeological investigations" performed on the wreck.

He reminded the board that cultural resources that may be impacted by the dredging must be protected in order to get the Army Corps of Engineers on board. After discussions with local and federal agencies, Mr. Beyer said, VIPA decided to relocate the shipwreck to an area right next to where it currently sits, but outside the "area of influence" of the dredging work.

The contract to move the wreck would not exceed \$149,509, said Mr. Beyer. A query about where those funds would come from led VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe to disclose that he had very recently spoken to Governor Albert Bryan Jr. on the very issue. "We are assured that the funding will be available," Mr. Dowe said, noting that there were two potential options to secure the funds for the relocation work. He was reluctant to disclose what those options were in the open portion of the meeting, promising to discuss the matter further once the board had retreated into executive session.

Mr. Dowe wanted to make one thing clear to the board, however. With respect to the dredging, "nothing will happen unless we could do this work. But at the same time it's a tough, time-sensitive and -driven issue."

Last November, lawmakers approved [\\$17 million](#) towards the dredging of the harbor. When complete, it is expected that the Charlotte Amalie harbor would be able to accommodate larger ships, adding carrying capacity to the island's booming cruise industry.