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Dubbed 'Dowe Now', Port Authority Exec. Director Unveils Maintenance Building Named After Robert O'Connor, Jr.

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Ernice Gilbert **March 01, 2020**

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Officials participate in Ribbon-Cutting of the Port Authority's Robert O'Connor Maintenance Building. Mr. O'Connor is seen center holding the scissors. To his left, his wife, and right, Governor Albert Bryan. By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — In November, the Virgin Islands Port Authority held a ribbon-cutting ceremony [for the Gallows Bay Marine Facility](#), which V.I.P.A. officials hope will soon become the new home of small, luxurious cruise ships in the territory.

On Thursday in St. Thomas, another ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for yet another completed Port Authority facility — named in honor of Robert O'Connor, a former Port Authority board

member and senator — this time a maintenance building that has become the new home of V.I.P.A.'s maintenance employees.

Many, including Governor Albert Bryan, say the rapid pace of development at V.I.P.A. is a testament to the executive director, Carlton Dowe, who has been dubbed "Dowe Now", a moniker Mr. Bryan used at the Thursday ceremony in Bournefield, St. Thomas.

The event included a dizzying array of politicians both past and present — from former Governor Charles Turnbull to Mr. Bryan, Senators Donna Frett-Gregory and Senate President Novelle Francis, along with a host of officials from various government arms, and even past senators.

"Any of you all remember my campaign slogan? Everybody always talking about the change course but nobody talks about the now. Dowe know's about now," Mr. Bryan said, speaking of Mr. Dowe's reputation of moving projects forward. "We have to grasp, hold and embrace the opportunity of now. We have to start to be brave and trust, and do things like these public-private partnerships that allowed us to see the fruits of this maintenance building."



(From left to right: Robert O'Connor, Carlton Dowe, and Governor Albert Bryan. Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

Shaun Miller of Standard Aviation LLC, a firm that has long operated in St. Thomas and which built the new maintenance facility for V.I.P.A., spoke of his experience working with the authority's executive director. "Mr. Dowe I have come to realize is a real doer who understands the importance of commerce and economic development to the territory," he said.

The partnership between Standard Aviation and V.I.P.A. saw the private firm building the maintenance facility in exchange for using V.I.P.A. property to build a world-class, 26,000 square-foot hangar and aviation facility that's set to open soon and will serve to enhance the Cyril E. King Airport both in terms of capacity and revenue.

Mr. Dowe, upon taking the mic, highlighted his employees, among them young Virgin Islanders hired to top positions. Mr. Dowe has often said that Virgin Islands talent needs to be paid the equivalent or close to what would be received on the U.S. mainland. To that end, with the approval of the V.I.P.A. board, Mr. Dowe has been able to amass a strong league of young engineers working on multiple V.I.P.A. efforts.

Before he closed, the executive director made mention of a number of V.I.P.A. projects territory-wide either already online or soon to break ground.

The man whose honor the building was named after, Mr. O'Connor, was lauded by every speaker during the Thursday event. Act 8202 (Bill No. 33-0082), sponsored by Ms. Frett- Gregory, commends Mr. O'Connor for his lifelong commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands through his service as a senator, his membership on the V.I.P.A. board for over 20 years, and his notable work as a community leader.

Under his leadership as chairman of the V.I.P.A. board, Mr. O'Connor spearheaded a myriad of projects that have come into fruition today, according to information provided by the authority. His leadership has helped to improve the travel infrastructure of the territory and enhance the travel and tourism experience for residents and visitors to the U.S. Virgin Islands. Mr. O'Connor is also the owner of several successful businesses on St. John and a stellar example of commitment to hard work and excellence, according to V.I.P.A.

V.I.P.A. said its old maintenance building was part of the U.S. Navy's properties built in the 1940's at Bourne Field (currently the Cyril E. King Airport). V.I.P.A.'s maintenance employees moved out of the building in 2016 and have worked out of temporary locations until moving into their new building on February 20.