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Former Island Beachcomber Hotel to Be Demolished as VIPA Moves Forward with Development Plans

DCM Corporation wins bid for demolition amid safety concerns; future use of site yet to be determined

Business / **Published On August 22, 2024 06:08 AM /**

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A fierce blaze engulfed the second floor of the Beachcomber Hotel in St. Thomas in February, as flames tore through the structure.

The demolition of the former Island Beachcomber hotel in Lindbergh Bay will move ahead, as the V.I. Port Authority board of governors approved a demolition contract for the property.

The hotel closed in 2018 and has lain dormant ever since. In the intervening period, explained VIPA's Executive Director Carlton Dowe, [several fires](#), the possible presence of squatters, and several instances of police being called to the location, make it too risky for VIPA, in terms of

liability, to keep it standing. He explained that the building needs to be demolished now because it has become a hazard to the public. “We need to take it down right away,” Mr. Dowe told the board.

Bids were invited beginning June 18 and VIPA received ten, ranging in cost from \$357,850 to almost \$1.6 million. Questioned about the wide disparity in bids, VIPA Director of Engineering Preston Beyer could not explain the spread. “We provided all of the same documentation, provided all the same access to the site, and we did follow up with the lowest responsive bidder to ensure that they've confirmed their ability to complete the project at the bid price,” Mr. Beyer told the board.

As a result, the director of engineering recommended that the lowest bid, which came from DCM Corporation, be accepted. The company, which has not worked with VIPA in the past, has nevertheless completed a demolition project for the Government Employees Retirement System, Mr. Beyer disclosed. “There was correspondence and communication with GERS to confirm that that project was completed in a satisfactory manner,” he told board members. He confirmed that with abatement having been done on site previously, there would be no issues with encountering hazardous materials, which if found would necessitate costly removal procedures.

According to VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe, “the Port Authority benefits from having so many people, so many companies wanting to participate in this kind of demolition project.” The extremely competitive bid, tens of thousands lower than the next highest offer, was a result of “supply and demand,” Mr. Dowe opined.

Responding to inquiries about what the land would be used for once the old hotel’s ten buildings were demolished and the debris removed, Mr. Dowe said that there were currently vague plans to continue using the site for hospitality facilities, whether it is a hotel or similar enterprise. “We definitely would not be leaving it stagnant, we expect to develop that area,” he assured. However, the scope and nature of that development is something that needs to be discussed and presented to the board for approval. Last year, the board [mulled over a proposal](#) for a 60-suite eco resort with accompanying restaurant, bar, and other amenities but ultimately decided to restart the procurement process.

The board unanimously approved awarding the demolition contract to DCM Corporation.

Wednesday’s board meeting also resulted in the approval of a \$170,500 contract to ORB Landscaping and Trucking for landscaping and roadside cleaning services on St. Thomas. A \$202,550 task order to Stantec Consulting Services to begin work on designing a new Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Station at the Cyril. E. King Airport on St. Thomas was also approved by the board, along with an additional \$27,055 to Rodriguez and Garland for ongoing work on the bathrooms at the St. John ferry terminal.