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WTJX's New Headquarters in St. Thomas Clears Major Hurdle with CZM Approval

Plans include state-of-the-art production space, cistern water supply, and robust hurricane resistance for the territory's public broadcaster

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New headquarters for the territory's public broadcaster WTJX is one step closer to reality after the St. Thomas committee of the VI Coastal Zone Management Commission voted to concur with the issuance of federal consistency determination for the project.

At Tuesday's CZM decision meeting, project architects reminded commissioners of the work that was going to be done. First, "we are removing all the existing construction and infrastructure on the site to a raw site," said Jerry Traino of Springline Architects. "Once cleared to build, the new building will now be situated towards the center of the site, with the parking to the north of that."?

CZM commissioners were reminded that with no water and sewer connections on the hill occupied by WTJX, the building would be serviced by a cistern in the first instance, with supplies bolstered by trucked water. A septic tank and onsite wastewater plant would also be installed, with the water treated sufficiently that it could be subsequently used for irrigation. Provisions will be made for utility connections should services from local utility companies be extended to the site in the future, commissioners were told.?

The new facilities will provide the territory's only public broadcaster with more production and studio space, along with spaces for offices, meeting rooms, and other administrative functions.?

Mr. Traino outlined plans for stormwater management and mitigation, saying that features such as a retention pond and vegetative plantings will help capture the stormwater that is not already captured via the collection system that funnels rain from rooftop to cistern.

?Amy Depmseay of Bioimpact reassured commissioners that there were no major environmental concerns when it came to the project. She noted the presence of fuel tanks and underground piping on the site, which she said would be checked for contamination as the project proceeds, with a testing and remediation plan at the ready in case any such contamination is found. "basically, the proposed action that we're looking at does not have negative impacts on wetlands, air quality, floodplains, coastal barriers, or any of the other criteria that would be considered negative environmental impacts," Ms. Dempsey concluded.

Questions from commissioners focused mainly on the details of how construction partners were going to implement various aspects of the build, including the cisterns for water storage, of which they were informed there would be two - one specifically designated for fire protection, meant to remain unused until needed in the event of a conflagration.

Concerns about the new building's ability to withstand future hurricanes were assuaged by Mr. Traino, who noted that "by us combining all of the functions into one single structure that's fairly simple in form, we've designed a building that's going to much better withstand storm events," an assessment that was backed up by WTJX Chief Executive Officer Tanya-Marie Singh.?

Ultimately, the motion for concurrence with federal consistency determination was passed by all commissioners in attendance.