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Joseph Stands Alone in Opposition as Lawmakers Greenlight \$29 Million Red Hook Marina Project

Sen. Joseph's objections to underground fuel storage — common at most gas stations in the USVI — did not sway colleagues, who approved the \$29 million Latitude 18 Marina project, citing job opportunities and economic growth for the territory

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Latitude 18 Marina design. By. JAREDIAN DESIGN GROUP

Senator Carla Joseph was the only lawmaker who voted against a [\\$29 million marina redevelopment](#) project for the Red Hook area in St. Thomas during the final meeting for the 35th Legislature.

Lawmakers first heard the details of Bill 35-0424, which would permit Jack Rock B-A C, LLC to undertake the development of the damaged Latitude 18 Marina, during Tuesday's Committee of the Whole meeting. Though no votes were taken then, lawmakers generally seemed to favor the project, citing the economic benefits to the territory. However, on Wednesday, Ms. Joseph declared that she could not support the measure.

"The issue isn't even the beach access," the St. Thomas senator clarified. Instead, she was wary of potential environmental impacts and crowding in Red Hook Bay. "That channel is very small," she bemoaned. "The developer is proposing...to build a dock that would accommodate some of the 150-foot yachts... My concern [is] whether it has sufficient space to traverse because the ferries have to be able to turn around," she explained. Ms. Joseph said she feared that "we're going to have an issue with us as residents traversing from St. Thomas to St. John."

Her second expressed concern was over the underground fuel tanks that the developers intend to install some distance away from the dock. "They plan to build not one, but four fuel tanks with a 20,000-gallon volume capacity, and they want to build it underground. I have issues with it being built underground," stated Ms. Joseph. She suggested that the developers could model above ground storage tanks as at least one gas station has done.

Most fuel storage tanks at gas stations in the U.S. Virgin Islands are installed underground.

The senator expressed further concern that the geographic positioning of the Virgin Islands could create structural challenges for the underground tanks as tremors and earthquakes persist. "I can't put the environment at risk," said the lawmaker, vowing to "speak up for that." She suggested that the bill "needs additional work."

Like Ms. Joseph, condominium owner Timothy Moos who resides next to the Latitude 18 property has also objected to the location of the fuel tanks. In [correspondence with the Legislature](#), he complained about their planned proximity to his home – reportedly only 35 feet away.

It was clear, however, that Ms. Joseph's colleagues did not feel the same. All other lawmakers present at roll call – 12 in total – voted in favor of the bill. Senator Milton Potter said he was comforted that the project had been "substantially scaled back." Fellow St. Thomas representative Senator Marvin Blyden remarked that "the importance of maximizing our economic potential and creating meaningful jobs has never been more crucial." To that end, he lauded the project's "potential to create opportunities for our young people and bring more dollars into our community."

Senator Novelle Francis, too, echoed similar sentiments to what he had shared during Tuesday's Committee of the Whole meeting. He complained about other challenges that have persisted in Red Hook Bay for years, including "the raw sewage that has been flowing in the bay." However, "the minute that there is some development occurring, then we start to get an upheaval and a lot of complaints," the Senate president lamented. He agreed that "the opposition has a right to be voiced" but reminded the public that the developers have already downsized the project on multiple occasions.

Bill 35-0424 was the only permitting request to face pushback by a Legislature. The others, all [vetted in the Committee of the Whole](#) on Tuesday, received unanimous support from the territory's lawmakers.

In a similar vein, lawmakers also [supported Bill 35-0431](#), adopting the 2024 Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan submitted by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources to the 35th Legislature as the Official Virgin Islands Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan, and

establishing legislative oversight on the plan's policy, direction and goals. The plan is expected to guide areas including rezonings, permits, and land use across the Virgin Islands.

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