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PFA Approves Over \$652 Million in Contracts to Advance Recovery Projects on St. John and St. Croix

Contracts include \$103M for rebuilding St. John’s clinics and school, \$378M for undergrounding utilities in St. Croix, and over \$165M for design, engineering, and legal services—marking a major step forward in the territory’s disaster recovery efforts.

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On Wednesday, the V.I. Public Finance Authority approved a wide-ranging set of contracts tied to the Office of Disaster Recovery’s new and ongoing rebuilding efforts throughout the territory.

In total, more than \$652 million in funding was authorized, covering large-scale construction, infrastructure, design, and engineering projects, as well as professional service contracts.

The meeting began with a project update from ODR Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien, who reminded board members of the long-planned recovery work on St. John. The bundled projects include the reconstruction of the Morris Di Castro Clinic, the Myra Keating Community Health Center, and the Julius E. Sprauve PreK–8 School. A joint venture between Consigli and J. Benton Construction was the only respondent to the request for proposals.

The limited response raised concerns for the project evaluation committee, Ms. Williams-Octalien noted. “Normally, when only one submission is received in response to a solicitation, the request for proposals is re-issued,” she explained. However, based on current industry conditions, rebidding large projects has not resulted in lower costs. “The time factor is of great concern to all the committee members,” she added, emphasizing that all construction must be completed by 2035 to maintain the current cost-sharing waiver approved under the Biden administration.

Williams-Octalien further explained that a nationwide surge in infrastructure work has contributed to a drop in contractor participation. “The overwhelming amount of project work throughout the nation is causing a minimal amount of contractors participating in solicitations everywhere,” she said. No more than three contractors have responded to any of ODR’s solicitations to date. In fact, the Juan F. Luis Hospital project received only one bid on its first solicitation, none on the second, and is now in its third round.

Given the urgency of project timelines and prevailing industry trends, the committee opted to proceed with Consigli/Benton Joint Venture 1, awarding a contract capped at just over \$103 million for the first two phases. Phase one—preconstruction services across the three St. John facilities—will span up to 12 months and cost no more than \$3 million. Phase two involves “early work packages” with a cost cap of \$100 million over an 18-month period.

“The first and second phases will result in the completion of the constructability reviews and value engineering during the preconstruction services,” Williams-Octalien said. All three projects—the two health centers and the school—will move forward simultaneously. “Shovel on the ground” work is expected to begin before the end of 2026, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. added.

A second major award went to Persons Services Corporation, an industrial contractor from Mobile, Alabama, which was selected to complete water, wastewater, and power undergrounding work in northern and central St. Croix. The board approved a two-phase contract totaling \$378,481,860.

Phase one, capped at just over \$116 million, will involve pre-construction services and will last up to 12 months. Phase two, focused on executing the construction work, will last 18 months and is capped at \$262,411,300. “This is the first of an additional three bundles for the replacement of all of these undergrounding services that are needed in order to strengthen our infrastructure,” said Williams-Octalien.

The board also approved seven smaller contracts for additional construction, design, cost estimating, and related services:

- Grant Engineering & Construction – \$37,275,185
- Springline Architects – \$35,608,326

- DLR Group – \$33,735,232
- Jaredian Design Group – \$30,334,100
- Flagg & Associates – \$14,283,500
- Gardiner & Theobald – \$13,574,800
- Form Ram, LLC – \$810,000

Two existing contracts were also extended:

- A one-year extension for Jaca & Sierra for geotechnical engineering services, capped at \$2 million
- A contract extension for Baker, Donelson, Bierman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, which provides legal services for ODR projects

The extensive approvals made during Wednesday's meeting represent a significant step forward in the territory's disaster recovery timeline.