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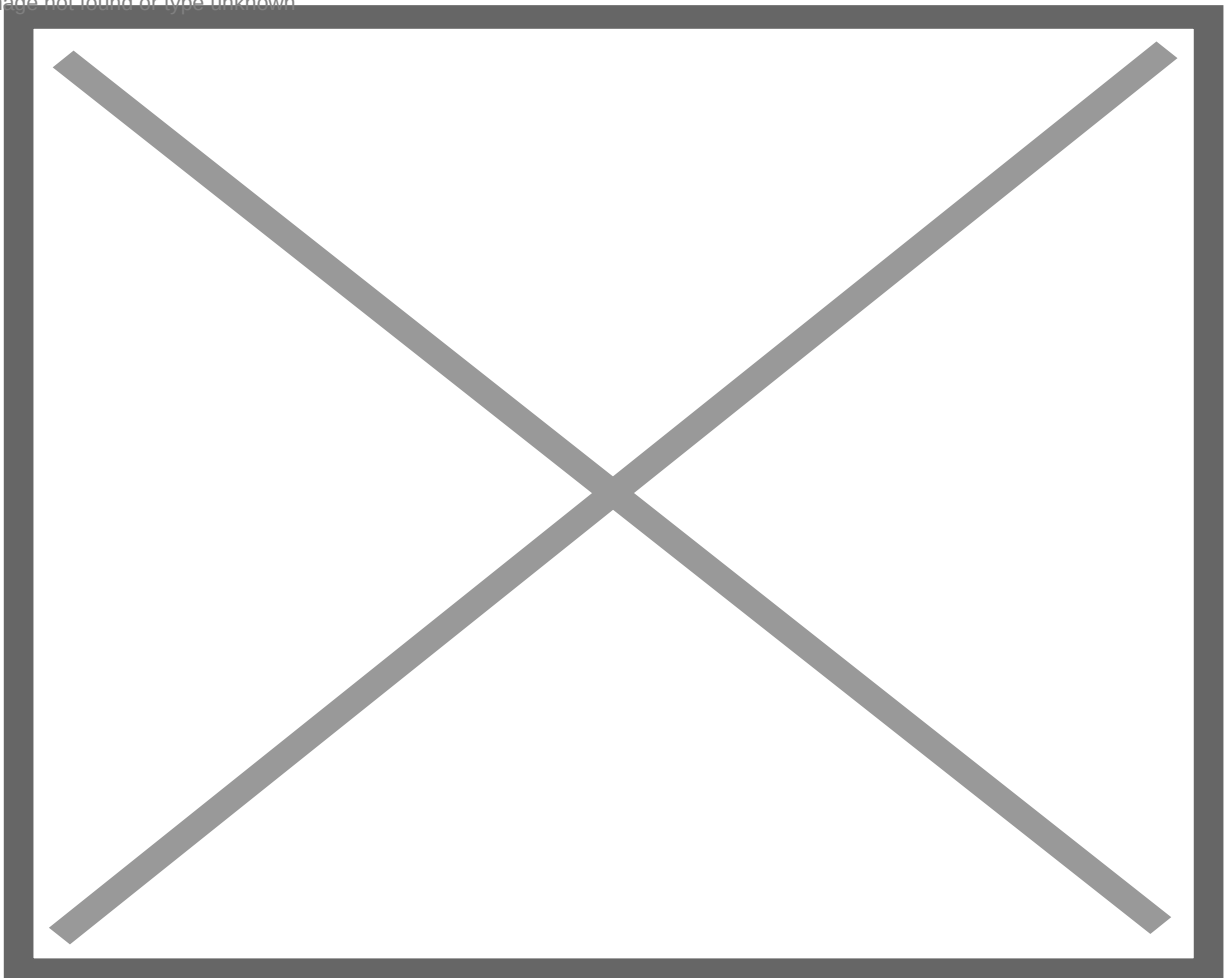
Port Authority Advances P3 Airport Project and Marine Upgrades, But Abramson Pier Delays Extend Timeline by 500+ Days

With the Ann E. Abramson Facility delayed by 508 days and extra costs added, VIPA also extended Frasca's P3 airport contract to late 2025 and approved marine structural designs, as Frederiksted's redevelopment proposal raised stakeholder concerns.

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Janeka Simon **June 29, 2025**

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The Frederiksted Pier. By. GETTY IMAGES.

The Governing Board of the V.I. Port Authority approved several new contracts and extensions during Thursday's meeting in an effort to facilitate progress on the authority's various projects across the territory.

A professional services contract for Frasca & Associates was the first to be discussed. The firm and its subcontractors are providing support during the transition period of the P3 airport project. “There have been several unforeseen issues that have required the P3 partner to undertake much greater investigation, requiring more than expected time,” said VIPA Senior Staff Attorney Vincent Frazer. The changeover in the leadership of the federal government earlier this year has also led to “governmental review and approval delays,” Mr. Frazer said. The contract extension would run from April through December 2025, and would bring the total compensation to \$2,885,250.

Another change order was approved for the contract with 11 Construction LLC for repairs to the tender landing at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility. Delays and extra unforeseen work required the extension, which will cost VIPA an additional \$95,690.00. The extension also added 508 days to the project completion timeline.

Next up was a proposal for a six-month cooperative service agreement between VIPA and Michael Baker International to provide quality control management for the agency's Aviation Division. Normally, this function would be performed by the airport operations manager. However, according to VIPA Territorial Airport Manager, Jerome Sheridan, “recent recruitment for an individual to fill this position has proven to be difficult with the current P3 venture in which VIPA is currently engaged.” Therefore, the agency sought assistance from aviation consultant firms to identify suitable candidates, and received two proposals. The preferred submission was from Michael Baker, which would cost VIPA \$163,751.74.

A contract for design and services for structural repairs to waterfront infrastructure in St. Thomas & St. John was awarded to Moffit & Nichols. A May 2024 above and below water inspection of VIPA's marine facilities yielded recommendations for structural repairs for five marine facilities, said Director of Engineering Preston Byer. Moffit & Nichols, VIPA's on-call architectural engineering consultant, proposed a comprehensive package of services for the design and development phase of the repairs to the Austin Bay Monsanto Marine Terminal, the Crown Bay Cargo Port, the Charles F Blair Seaplane Terminal, the Edward Wilmoth Blyden IV Marine Terminal, and the Victor William Sewer Marine Facility. This part of the project is expected to take three months to complete, and the cost is anticipated to be \$410,255.00.

Moffit & Nichols was also up for a contract to provide master planning services for the revitalization of the portion of the Frederiksted waterfront surrounding the Frederiksted pier. “It's prudent for VIPA to engage in this planning study to identify opportunities to advance the economic and cultural viability of the Virgin Islands tourism industry,” said Mr. Byer. This contract would be funded from monies allocated by the V.I. Legislature through Act 8985, and would be capped at \$118,218.00. VIPA officials noted that similar projects have been undertaken on St. Thomas and St. John, and the Frederiksted revitalization would be conducted in much the same way, with public input sought and co-ordination with other government agencies incorporated into the work plan.

V.I. Department of Public Works Commissioner Derek Gabriel expressed some reservations about the proposal. “You're taking the lead on planning activities for property owned by the central government – not saying that you aren't capable, not saying that it's not necessary. I just find that this is something that has been misplaced by the Legislature,” he said. “We as the Port Authority aren't majority stakeholders in this area, in the project limits.”

However, Executive Director Carlton Dowe noted that VIPA's activity in this regard is subject to the wishes of the board. Should board members believe that the funding is wrongly placed in

VIPA's hands, “all it takes is a simple amendment for them to decide” to send it elsewhere, Mr. Dowe pointed out. Ultimately, the board agreed to hold off on a decision pending further discussion.

Board members also agreed to a contract with North River Boat to construct two pilot boats at a maximum cost of \$1.7 million. One of the boats will serve the St. Thomas/St. John district, while the other will be placed into service in St. Croix.

Finally, board members also approved the establishment of a Legal and Programs Management Officer for the agency. The role is meant to lend support to VIPA's attorneys in litigation and other legal matters, and will attract remuneration of \$82,440.47.