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Governor Bryan Condemns Legislature's Vote Against Summer's End Marina Permit Renewal

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. condemned the Legislature's rejection of the Summer's End Marina permit renewal, calling it a setback for jobs and investment, while senators insisted the developers bypassed CZM law, leaving the \$130 million project in doubt.

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Ernice Gilbert **August 29, 2025**

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has sharply criticized the V.I. Legislature for [voting down](#) a renewal of the permit for the Summer's End Marina project in Coral Bay, St. John, calling the decision another lost opportunity for the territory's economy.

“Once again, we have watched a critical economic opportunity for the Virgin Islands slip away because of the actions of the Legislature,” the governor said Friday. He thanked Senators Marvin Blyden, Avery Lewis, and Novelle Francis for supporting the measure but expressed disappointment in the majority. “Unfortunately, the decision of the majority reflects a body that has not come to terms with its responsibility to facilitate, not block, economic development in our Territory.”

The Summer’s End project, envisioned as the first marina on St. John, has been in development [for over a decade](#). Bryan said it has already faced every possible review, legal challenge, and regulatory hurdle. “For over ten years, this project has faced every test, every regulatory step, and every legal challenge imaginable,” he remarked, noting the escalating costs borne by investors and businesses while lawmakers and government workers remain insulated. “For investors, small businesses, and Virgin Islanders who are waiting on jobs and opportunity, these setbacks cause irreparable harm.”

The governor compared the rejection to a pattern of missed opportunities since the 1980s, pointing to abandoned hotel, power plant, and marina proposals. “How many chances do we have to lose before we recognize that government’s role is to facilitate progress, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for Virgin Islanders?” he asked. “There is no benefit to saying no. Every time we reject private investment, it sends a message that the Virgin Islands is closed for business.”

Bryan also responded to remarks by Senate President Milton Potter, who credited the Legislature and the administration with the territory’s first new hotel in more than 30 years. “I heard the Senate President congratulate himself and this administration for building the first hotel in more than 30 years,” Bryan said. “But let us be clear, if that hotel had gone through a legislative process, we would still be on step one today. The truth is, we were able to move forward because the executive branch had the authority and the will to act decisively.”

He vowed that his administration would continue working to foster an environment welcoming to responsible development. “Our people deserve better. We cannot allow politics to block progress,” Bryan said. “The Summer’s End project represented jobs, economic activity, and renewed vitality for St. John. The Legislature’s vote to deny this permit renewal will bring irreparable harm to our community and to our reputation as a place open to investment.”

Contentious Senate Debate Preceded the Vote

On Thursday, lawmakers debated Bill 36-0145, which sought to ratify the governor’s approval of modifications and extensions to the Summer’s End marina permits originally issued in 2020. The discussion stretched for four hours, marked by accusations of slander, threats of litigation, and disputes over whether developers had bypassed required processes.

Testimony from Coastal Zone Management (CZM) officials underscored that the permits had expired years earlier. Andrew Penn, chair of the St. John CZM Committee, explained that because developers failed to begin work within 12 months of approval, the permits became “null and void.” Penn argued that Summer’s End never requested an extension from the CZM Commission, as required by law, and instead sought relief directly from the governor and Legislature.

CZM Commission chair May Adams Cornwall agreed, insisting that only the Commission had the legal authority to reinstate or extend permits. “There is no provision in the CZM law that permits the governor to unilaterally and administratively modify or extend an expired or null and void CZM permit,” she said. Cornwall also testified that modifications to the project had not been reviewed as required and that bypassing CZM deprived the public of its right to comment.

Summer's End attorney Boyd Sprehn countered that the Legislature was the proper body to act on the governor's request. He said the developers were only seeking an extension of the effective date and a reduction in the marina's size. Chaliase Summers, managing member of the Summer's End Group, argued that opponents of the project "want to stop all development, especially from native St. Johnians." She maintained that the group acted on advice that bringing the request through the governor and Legislature was valid.

Lawmakers, however, remained skeptical. Senator Alma Francis Heyliger said the developers appeared to believe "if we could get to the governor, we could skip the process." Senator Kenneth Gittens criticized what he called a "manufactured sense of urgency," reminding Summers that "ignorance of the law is no excuse." Senate President Potter pointed out that every member of the St. John CZM Committee opposed the extension, asking Summers to account for their position.

Ultimately, nine of the eleven senators present — including Potter, Francis Heyliger, Gittens, Clifford Joseph, Carla Joseph, Dwayne DeGraff, Franklin Johnson, Ray Fonseca, and Kurt Vialet — voted against Bill 36-0145. Only Blyden, Lewis, and Francis supported it.

Former U.S. Congressman Garret Graves, invited by Summer's End, urged lawmakers to defer the vote, saying federal permitting delays were the real obstacle. But his call went largely unheeded, with senators reaffirming that "the law is the law."

The rejection leaves Summer's End with the option of returning to the St. John CZM Committee if it wishes to pursue the marina project further.