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Sheldon Marsh Sues for \$44.48M Over Alleged False Land Claim That Blocked St. John Solar Project

The lawsuit accuses attorney David A. Bornn, developer Christian Loranger, VIElectron, and Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C., of fabricating an April 2023 purchase agreement to justify filing a lis pendens, forcing the developer to abandon its solar lease.

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Sheldon Marsh, part of St. John's Marsh Family currently engaged in a difficult [lease dispute](#) with developer [Summer's End Group](#), has filed a federal lawsuit in the District of Connecticut accusing Virgin Islands attorney David A. Bornn and St. John developer Christian Loranger of orchestrating a false claim to Marsh family land on St. John—an action Marsh says clouded title, derailed a planned solar project, and cost millions.

The complaint, lodged on September 10, names Mr. Bornn, Mr. Loranger, VIElectron LLC, and Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C. as defendants and demands a jury trial.

According to the filing, Mr. Bornn—then serving as Senior Counsel at Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C.—and Mr. Loranger advanced a narrative that an oral purchase agreement for a portion of the Marsh family’s property existed as of April 2023, and that a \$4,800 payment made on April 3, 2023 constituted purchase consideration. Marsh counters that the payment was for historical survey materials only, and that subsequent communications show no purchase terms or price were ever agreed. He alleges the defendants nonetheless used that narrative to obtain a lis pendens on the property, which chilled transactions and ultimately led [Core Development Group](#) to cancel its solar lease option for St. John.

A lis pendens is a notice filed in the land records that a lawsuit could affect a property’s title or ownership. It warns buyers and lenders that the case may impact the property, often “clouding” title until the dispute is resolved.

The complaint details a timeline: on April 1, 2023, Mr. Loranger asked Mr. Marsh for the price of an archaeology/historical report and agreed to pay \$4,800 for “full rights to use it,” followed by delivery of surveys after the April 3 wire. On September 20, 2023—months after the alleged April agreement—Mr. Loranger emailed that if Core’s option ended, “we can come to some agreement.” Two weeks later, on October 4, 2023, Mr. Bornn asserted by email that an April oral purchase agreement already existed and that the \$4,800 was purchase consideration; the next day he wrote that only finalizing terms remained. On October 16, 2023, VIElectron sued in Virgin Islands Superior Court for specific performance and recorded a lis pendens against the parcel.

Core Development Group declined to renew its option on January 25, 2024, citing “the lien,” which the complaint says cut off a project intended to bring solar power to St. John. Exhibits attached to the lawsuit include the April text and email exchanges referencing survey materials, wire confirmation and survey deliveries, the September and October emails, the Superior Court complaint and lis pendens, and Core’s January 25, 2024 email referencing the lien.

Mr. Marsh says the disputed filing “has not only stalled the possibility of clean power for St. John, it has blocked investment and construction jobs and delayed a project meant to celebrate and honor Virgin Islands history.” He adds: “All it takes is someone of courage, a piece of leather, and a small stone to make the powerful stumble and remind them they can fall.”

The complaint brings nine causes of action: fraud (against Mr. Loranger and VIElectron); aiding and abetting fraud (against Mr. Bornn and Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C.); civil conspiracy (against all defendants); slander of title (against Mr. Loranger and VIElectron); injurious falsehood (against all defendants); tortious interference with contract and with prospective business relations (against Mr. Loranger and VIElectron); violation of the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA) (against Mr. Loranger and VIElectron); and abuse of process (against Mr. Loranger and VIElectron).

As pleaded, jurisdiction rests on diversity (28 U.S.C. § 1332), with Mr. Marsh a Connecticut resident and the defendants Virgin Islands residents/entities; the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000. Venue is asserted under 28 U.S.C. § 1391 based on communications and alleged harms in Connecticut, including an in-person meeting in Norwich related to the transactions.

Damages claimed include \$22,240,376.12 in compensatory losses—spanning alleged lost lease revenue from Core Development Group, diminished marketability, attorney fees and costs to address the Virgin Islands action and lis pendens, property tax impacts, and effects tied to an IRS

estate-tax application—plus punitive damages in an equal amount under CUTPA (bringing the requested total to approximately \$44,480,752.24), along with interest, fees, and other relief.

The complaint also identifies Mr. Bornn's role "within the scope of his employment" at Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C., and seeks to hold the firm jointly and severally liable for alleged aiding and abetting, conspiracy, and injurious falsehood. VIElectron's October 2023 Superior Court complaint seeks to compel a conveyance, while the federal filing says contemporaneous April communications show the \$4,800 was for surveys—not land—and that negotiations regarding any sale continued through the summer and into late September.

"Their filing," Mr. Marsh said, "has not only stalled the possibility of clean power for St. John, it has blocked investment and construction jobs and delayed a project meant to celebrate and honor Virgin Islands history." The case now proceeds in the District of Connecticut, where Mr. Marsh seeks compensatory and punitive damages and removal of the cloud on title alleged to have been caused by the *lis pendens*.