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## Neighbor Sues to Halt Development at Secret Harbor Estates Over Alleged Environmental Violations

**John Klein, who owns property neighboring Secret Harbor Estates, has filed suit seeking to halt further development on a CZM-protected parcel, alleging that the resort failed to replant trees and complete required environmental restoration ordered by DPNR**

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**Secret Harbour, St. Thomas, USVI.**

ST. THOMAS — A neighbor of Secret Harbor Estates has filed a lawsuit seeking to block any further development on a Coastal Zone Management (CZM)-protected parcel owned by the resort company, alleging that environmental violations remain unaddressed despite official orders for corrective action.

According to the lawsuit, the dispute stems from a series of infractions identified last year by staff from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR). Inspectors allegedly found that protected trees had been removed from one of Secret Harbor Estates' parcels, other arboreal work had been completed improperly, and excessive brush clearing had taken place—actions that violated the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Act.

As a result, DPNR issued a notice of violation and placed restrictions on the property, effectively halting further development. The order also required the company to take corrective measures, which included replanting *lignum vitae* trees and other approved coastal species, and imposed a monetary penalty for breaching the conditions of its CZM permit.

The lawsuit, filed by John Klein, who owns the neighboring property through a trust, claims that Secret Harbor Estates has failed to carry out the required environmental restoration. According to the complaint, none of the mandated *lignum vitae* trees have been replanted, and the seagrape trees that were introduced have since died.

Mr. Klein further alleges that additional brush clearing has been conducted on the site despite DPNR's earlier order halting all work. He argues that the property's subsequent listing for sale may be an attempt by Secret Harbor Estates to "avoid complying with the NOVA," or notice of violation.

In his lawsuit, Klein is asking the court to declare Secret Harbor Estates in violation of DPNR's directive and to issue an injunction preventing any further development on the parcel until the company fulfills all environmental obligations. He is also seeking a court order prohibiting the sale of the property until the violations have been fully resolved.

As of press time, Secret Harbor Estates had not yet filed a response to Mr. Klein's complaint.