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VIPA Approves \$41.9 Million Charlotte Amalie Harbor Dredging Contract

VIPA's board on Wednesday approved a 365-day contract with Orion Marine Construction to dredge Charlotte Amalie Harbor and its turning basin, advancing a long-planned project to improve navigation for larger vessels and support St. Thomas marine activity.

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Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. THOMAS — The V.I. Port Authority Board of Governors on Wednesday approved a \$41.9 million construction contract with Orion Marine Construction to provide marine dredging services for Charlotte Amalie Harbor and its turning basin on St. Thomas, moving forward a project VIPA officials said has been in process since 2000.

According to the board meeting presentation, the project calls for dredging the entrance channels, turning basin and berth pocket to facilitate more efficient navigation for large marine vessels. The work also includes a bid additive for additional dredging tied to the expansion of Yacht Haven Grande Marina. That portion, VIPA said, will be funded separately by Yacht Haven Grande.

VIPA said it sought an experienced licensed contractor to furnish all labor, supplies and equipment necessary to complete the dredging services. The invitation for bid was formally solicited for 76 days, ending January 23, 2026, through the authority's secure e-procurement platform.

An evaluation committee made up of VIPA personnel, Yacht Haven Grande, the West Indian Company, and Moffatt & Nichol, VIPA's independent architectural, engineering and marine consulting adviser, reviewed responses from five firms: Dutch Dredging, Noble Construction LLC, The Dutra Group, Orion Marine Construction Inc., and Cashman Dredging and Marine Contracting.

During the evaluation, VIPA said Dutch Dredging did not provide the required contractor eligibility documents or contractor qualification statement, while Cashman Dredging and Marine Contracting failed to provide its contractor qualification statement as required by the bid package. Both bids were therefore deemed non-responsive.

The committee then reviewed the remaining bids from Noble Construction LLC, which submitted a base bid of \$30,970,027; The Dutra Group, at \$38,089,594; and Orion Marine Construction, at \$41,927,000.

VIPA said although Orion's price exceeded the engineer's estimate, the committee concluded that the cost was reasonable and consistent with 2026 construction conditions, citing the unique challenges of the project and broader global economic volatility.

The bid package required contractors to show experience in marine navigation projects involving mechanical dredging and dredged material placement of 150,000 cubic yards or more, land-side preparation and earthwork for stockpiling operations on at least one acre, work in active port or terminal facilities, and safety performance standards including a total reportable incident rate below 2.5 or an equivalent measure for firms outside the United States.

VIPA said funding for the dredging work will come from several sources, including \$17 million from Act 8787, \$6 million from Act 9068, and \$18,927,000 in VIPA marine bonds once issued and collected. Yacht Haven Grande, VIPA said, will assume full fiscal responsibility for the dredging work tied to bid additives 6.1 through 6.3 under a separate agreement with the contractor.

During the discussion, VIPA officials also noted that because the project will affect both YHG and the WICO, representatives from those entities were invited to observe the evaluation process as non-voting participants to ensure transparency and allow them to understand how the bids were reviewed.

Before the vote, VIPA Engineering Director Preston Beyer told board members the dredging effort has been a long-term undertaking driven by the importance of the cruise industry to the territory and by the need to expand Charlotte Amalie Harbor to accommodate larger vessels serving the West Indian Company facility. He said the project had involved years of coordination with federal resource agencies, funding efforts, and attempts to bring the work to execution.

The board then voted in favor of authorizing VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe to enter into the agreement with Orion Marine Construction. The motion passed with five affirmative votes and one absence.

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