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VIPA Extends Petite Pump Room Lease Through 2035, Approves Airport Cleaning and Port Contracts

The board approved a five-year lease extension for the longtime St. Thomas terminal restaurant, added a \$18,500 monthly cleaning contract for Cyril E. King Airport and advanced cargo, marine safety and capital project support agreements.

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Janeke Simon **June 18, 2026**

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A portion of Petite Pump Room at the Edward W. Blyden IV Marine Terminal, where the longtime St. Thomas restaurant received a five-year lease extension and new grab-and-go service requirement from VIPA.

The V.I. Port Authority governing board on Wednesday approved a five-year lease extension for Petite Pump Room, a long-running restaurant and bar at the Edward W. Blyden IV Marine

Terminal, while board members also advanced a supplemental cleaning contract for Cyril E. King Airport and several marine-related agreements affecting cargo operations, port maintenance and capital projects.

The Petite Pump Room amendment drew some of the most pointed discussion during the meeting, not because of opposition to the lease, but because of the establishment's decades-long connection to VIPA and its role as one of the authority's legacy tenants.

VIPA staff said Petite Pump Room has been associated with the authority since 1982 and has maintained continuous operations under its current lease framework since 2012. The board approved an amendment extending the lease term through May 31, 2035, with a five-year option that would run from June 1, 2035, to May 31, 2040.

Under the amended lease, VIPA will remove unused premises from the agreement, including a non-exclusive waterfront apron that had been designated for food-cart and beverage operations. The lease will also be updated to include a grab-and-go service requirement, giving Petite Pump Room 12 months from the effective date of the amendment to implement and maintain prepackaged food and beverage offerings to VIPA's satisfaction.

If the tenant fails to provide and maintain regular grab-and-go service, VIPA would reserve the right to permit a third-party operator inside the passenger terminal. Staff said any such operation would be limited to prepackaged food and beverage items and structured so it does not directly compete with Petite Pump Room's primary restaurant operations.

VIPA staff said the amendment also increases the space rental rate by 5 percent, bringing annual rent to approximately \$55,821.92, or \$4,651.83 per month. The revenue percentage fee schedule will also be adjusted, with increases beginning in June 2027, and the lease will include CPI-based rent escalations. Petite Pump Room will also have five reserved parking spaces.

Staff said the tenant remains in good standing and has previously demonstrated commitment through required capital investment and lease-premises expansion. The lease extension, VIPA said, balances the tenant's request for stability with the authority's financial objectives by securing a long-term operator under updated terms.

The discussion prompted board member Celestino White to urge VIPA to formally recognize longtime tenants that have remained open through hurricanes, economic downturns and other challenges.

Mr. White said the authority should "find a ribbon or a plaque" for entities such as Petite Pump Room, which he described as "a mainstay long before a lot of you were even born." He said surviving in business for that long "is no easy feat, considering all that is going on in our community, all that has gone on in the past."

Acknowledging that a rent reduction may not be financially feasible, Mr. White nevertheless said "something to say thank you would be a good gesture."

The board approved the amendment unanimously.

Board members also approved a five-year lease for Priority Rural Services at the Wilfred "Bomba" Alick Port and Transshipment Center on St. Croix, where the company will continue occupying existing land and expand into additional space to meet growing operational demand.

Priority Rural began using approximately 36,000 square feet of land at the container port in June 2021 for staging and storing trailers, containers, cargo and other equipment. VIPA staff said the company's shipments into St. Croix have "drastically increased," and its current space no longer meets its storage and operational needs.

The new lease covers approximately 111,200 square feet in total, including about 75,200 square feet of additional land located south of the container port warehouse building and near the vessel loading dock. Staff said the location should provide a quicker turnover for offloading equipment and better control within the secure area of the container port.

The proposed lease term is five years, with an option for two additional years. Monthly rent was listed at \$9,682.50, or about \$116,000 annually, with rent increases beginning on the third anniversary and every three years thereafter based on CPI or 5 percent, whichever is greater. VIPA staff said Priority Rural is in good standing with the authority.

The board also approved a supplemental janitorial services contract for Cyril E. King Airport, but not before members raised concerns about whether VIPA is getting adequate results from its cleaning operations given the continued complaints about conditions at the St. Thomas airport.

Khadila Joseph, VIPA's procurement and contracting manager, said the authority needs a qualified janitorial contractor to supplement VIPA's custodial staff and maintain a sanitary environment for employees, tenants and passengers moving through the airport daily. She said VIPA issued the invitation for bids on April 23, 2026, and received responses from five companies.

The board approved a contract with Alina Martin, doing business as Double A Cleaning Services, at a monthly cost of \$18,500. The contract also includes emergency janitorial services at \$250 per hour and professional waxing services at \$5,825 per service.

Staff said Double A Cleaning has previously performed emergency cleaning services at Cyril E. King Airport and that VIPA's aviation team found the work satisfactory. The new contractor will provide services from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily and will now have access to secure areas that the previous contractor could not cover, including areas used by federal agencies.

VIPA officials said the contractor will supplement eight full-time custodians assigned to the airport. Those employees have a combined annual salary of roughly \$303,000, not including fringe benefits. With the new contractor added, Mr. White said VIPA is spending more than half a million dollars on cleaning-related services at the airport and should be seeing stronger results.

"We're spending over half a million dollars, half a million dollars in custodial service between a full-time employee and the construction employee," Mr. White said, while noting continued complaints about the airport's cleanliness, including bathrooms and public areas.

Mr. White said someone needed to "check the checkup," arguing that the level of spending requires closer supervision and accountability.

Other board discussion focused on cleaning equipment and supplies being left in public view, including near bathrooms, and the need for better organization and oversight. Board members also asked about the hours worked by VIPA custodial employees, the role of the contractor, and whether the contract pricing was sufficient given the scope of work.

VIPA staff said some areas of the airport have different flooring types, meaning some can be waxed while others cannot. The scope of work for waxing, staff said, includes scrubbing, stripping and re-waxing areas where those services are appropriate.

Despite the concerns, the board unanimously approved the contract.

In marine operations, the board approved contract negotiations with Edgewater Consultants LLC for non-destructive testing, capacity analysis and asset-management documentation for mooring equipment and hardware at VIPA marine facilities across the territory.

The contract is valued at \$451,173.27 and is intended to help VIPA verify installed equipment, identify equipment condition and risk, and develop recurring preventive maintenance and inspection programs to prevent failures that could disrupt cargo and passenger services.

VIPA staff said the work will cover mooring equipment such as bollards, base plates and cleats at marine facilities. Edgewater was selected after an evaluation process that reviewed proposals from two respondents, Edgewater Consultants and Black Dog Divers, Inc. Edgewater received the higher score from the evaluation committee.

The board also approved a five-year master professional services contract with CMTS, LLC to provide project management and staff-augmentation services for VIPA's marine capital improvement projects territorywide.

The contract will support projects across the authority's marine system, including 14 public seaports. Projects identified during the meeting included harbor and turning-basin dredging in St. Thomas, Frederiksted waterfront master planning on St. Croix, and the Enighed Pond Park community development on St. John.

Under the agreement, CMTS will provide full-time job-embedded staff within VIPA's engineering division, along with advisory support for planning, technical assistance and advancement of marine capital improvement projects. Individual task orders will be issued as needed and will depend on available funding.

The board approved all action items during the meeting, which lasted about an hour and included lease, cleaning, maintenance and project-management decisions affecting both the aviation and marine sides of VIPA's operations.