

CZM Clears SCEC Renovations and Full Rebuilds of Claude O. Markoe, Alexander Henderson

St. Croix CZM approved three major school reconstruction projects but attached scrutiny to each: SCEC's track remains unfunded, Markoe demolition will be restricted around students, and Henderson's stored lumber must be relocated before work begins there.

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Lumber stored on the grounds of Alexander Henderson PreK-8 School, where CZM commissioners questioned whether the material will be removed before demolition begins next July. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — The St. Croix Coastal Zone Management Committee has granted federal consistency determination for three major public school projects, clearing extensive renovations at

the St. Croix Educational Complex and full demolition and reconstruction plans for Claude O. Markoe PreK-8 School and Alexander Henderson PreK-8 School.

Commissioners approved all three projects this week, but raised separate concerns about an unfunded athletic track at SCEC, construction safety while students remain near the Markoe site, and lumber stored at Alexander Henderson that must be moved before demolition begins.

SCEC Project Includes Roofs, Expansion and 600-Person Safe Room

Work at the St. Croix Educational Complex will include full roof replacements on two buildings, flooring replacement and interior and exterior repainting.

Plans also call for expanding the footprint of several existing structures and constructing a new safe room capable of accommodating up to 600 people.

Brian Price, the Springline Architects representative managing the Complex renovations, told commissioners that rehabilitation of the school's athletic track is not included in the current project budget.

VIDE representatives said the track could be reconsidered if contingency money remains after the primary construction work is completed.

That did not satisfy CZM commissioners.

"We cannot be afraid to advocate for our youth," declared chair Kai Nielsen.

Nielsen suggested that the developers and contractors involved in the multimillion-dollar project consider absorbing the approximately \$120,000 cost of resurfacing the track as part of their commitment to the island.

"You're having conversations with multi-million dollar entities that have corporate social responsibility models that they should be able to leverage to do projects like this," Mr. Nielsen told VIDE architect Chaneel Callwood. "We're giving them massive contracts to do renovation projects...that simply feels like they're being pulled off the shelf. I think that one of these entities can step forward and resurface our track."

Claude O Markoe Demolition Restricted Around Students

At Claude O. Markoe PreK-8 School, the project calls for demolition and reconstruction of the campus in multiple phases.

The rebuilt school is expected to include modern classrooms, administrative offices, a library, cafeteria, kitchen and other supporting infrastructure.

Because demolition and construction will occur while classes continue in adjacent buildings and nearby Head Start facilities, commissioners questioned how the project team intends to manage dust, air-quality concerns, heavy-equipment noise and other construction impacts.

The committee ultimately imposed a restriction requiring all hazardous-material abatement and heavy demolition to occur only during school breaks or at times when students and staff are not on campus.

Stored Lumber Raises Questions at Alexander Henderson

The Alexander Henderson PreK-8 reconstruction project is expected to begin demolition next July.

Commissioners focused part of their review on large quantities of lumber currently stored on the property. The material had originally been intended for use as a disaster-recovery resource.

“I don’t know the process that’s happening with the lumber,” said Ms. Callwood.

A representative from the Office of Disaster Recovery told commissioners that the agency intends to have the lumber removed before construction begins.

“The plans are in process to just being finalized,” said Medina Colbert.

Colbert, however, could not assure commissioners that the ongoing prosecution of contractors David and Sasha Charlemagne in connection with the management and storage of the lumber would not interfere with or delay its removal.

Nielsen expressed concern that a delay could drive project costs higher and ultimately force VIDE to return to the federal government for additional funding.

“I would hate to see this project run into that hurdle, given the fact that it’s quite clear that’s very much an issue,” he observed.

Colbert said the lumber has already been moved to different areas of the property to permit preliminary testing and other work without creating legal problems.

She reiterated that “there is a plan in place to relocate the lumber to a different location.”

Despite the questions surrounding the three projects, the St. Croix CZM Committee ultimately granted approval for each to proceed.