

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix's deChabert Housing Community Demolition Contract Approved

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Cynthia Graham **December 18, 2014**



A \$4.6 million contract for the demolition of the dilapidated Ralph deChabert Housing Community on St. Croix was approved Wednesday by V.I. Housing Authority board members. The contract has been awarded to RG Engineering, based in Virginia Beach, Va., and will provide for the demolition of 45 residential units, a community center, a water tower, and all other buildings on the site.

The Christiansted site, which has been abandoned since 2003, had long been approved for demolition since June 2013, and earlier this summer, Housing Authority Executive Director Robert Graham announced that federal funding had been received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the amount of \$4.2 million in

emergency capital grant funds for the demolition. The additional \$366,255 will be taken from a fiscal year 2014 capital fund grant award, officials say.



HUD's funding is required to be disbursed within a year and completely exhausted within two years, something Graham said the authority would have no problem doing.

The first of the two resolutions Graham brought to the board for approval, including one for architectural and engineering services that would help prepare the site for demolition, and a second for the actual demolition, was approved by the board at Wednesday's meeting.

Seven bids for the project were received with prices ranging from \$4.4 million to nearly \$8 million, according to officials.

The Housing Authority chose to demolish the site, as repairing the housing community to meet federal standards would have come with a hefty price tag of more than \$64 million.

Graham issued a report to the board this week, stating that the buildings on the site have continued to deteriorate, and the location has increasingly become a hot bed for illegal dumping, drug- and gang-related activity, and as a playground for neighborhood children, factors that pose an even greater liability for the authority.

No word has been given on when the demolition would begin or whether the site would be rebuilt as a new housing community or other entity.