

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Will Sign Executive Order To Place Bureau Of Information Technology Under viNGN On Friday

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has revealed that come this Friday, he will sign an executive order to place the Virgin Islands Bureau of Information Technology (BIT) under the control of the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network (viNGN).

The news was made known during viNGN's board meeting this morning, which took place at the Public Finance Authority (PFA) building, located at 5033 Kongens Gade, Government Hill, St. Thomas.

"I'm going to be signing an executive order which I will effectively place the Bureau of Information Technology of the Central Government under the control of viNGN," Mapp

said.

The governor, wanting to create a structure that makes communication between government agencies seamless, said the purpose of the consolidation is to work through "governmental connectivity, and the systems we need in place to begin the process of rolling out public service across the digital divide."

Mapp said one of the first priorities he would like to see viNGN/BIT undertake, is the public safety/first responder interconnectivity, because the "whole first responding community is in complete disarray when it comes to being able to communicate, to use any level or type of technology at work, in their vehicles and 911 system reporting," the governor said. And while he acknowledged that the undertaking will be great, first responder interconnectivity remains a top priority for Mapp, because it directly affects the safety of the territory's communities.

VINGN CEO Dr. Tonjia Coverdale, in response to a question from the governor relating to how viNGN will be able to assist in harmoniously linking the various government agencies and departments, said VINGN could setup dedicated connections at first responder locations throughout the territory, and by also putting those agencies on their own sub-network, so that they can communicate inclusively and without interruption -- a move Coverdale said would aid in seeing the governor's vision of communication coherency throughout government.

The governor's goal is for all government agencies to communicate with each other, providing internet and other communication services to itself through the viNGN fiber optic infrastructure, which Coverdale said would use the same structure as what was previously explained for first responders. Coverdale also pointed out that the Department of Education already has its own sub-network through which the department's communications are being channeled.

Currently, various government agencies are paying private broadband companies for service. However, Mapp said he was not convinced that the government should be paying private sector ISPs for services that could be provided by viNGN, through BIT, especially when those ISPs are using viNGN's own broadband infrastructure to provide service to the government.

"We don't need to use the private sector to come back on our own platform," Mapp said. "Let the private sector do their private sector thing; there are enough clients out there."

There were some disagreements in defining viNGN's role in providing services to the various government agencies, and whether the company would need to be classified as a public utility to perform such tasks. However, Coverdale said as it relates to communication, viNGN would use broad band, which remains unregulated, for Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) communications. She said there would be no need for viNGN to be reclassified because the services would remain internal.

Before the board went into [executive session](#), Coverdale spoke of the plans she has for viNGN, some of which were already made known to VI Consortium in a [recently-conducted](#) Q&A. *Feature Image: Bureau of Information Technology of the Central Government complex, located in Castle Coakley, St. Croix.*

