

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Turtle Bay Beach Resort, Formerly Hibiscus, Becoming Gay And Lesbian Wedding Destination Hotel In November

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ST. CROIX -- On the heels of Governor Kenneth Mapp's announcement that he's to issue an executive order mandating government agencies to come into compliance with the U.S. Supreme Court's [sames-sex marriage ruling](#), the owners of the Turtle Bay Beach Resort, formerly Hibiscus Beach Resort, have agreed to sell the facility to a Boston-based firm that will market the hotel as a gay and lesbian wedding destination, VI Consortium can confirm.

Blake Plumley, one of the current owners, told *The Consortium* the agreement, an LLI, was recently inked and while he could not go into details because of confidentiality agreements, people with direct involvement in the agreement told *The Consortium* that the Boston Firm will commence marketing of the facility as a gay and lesbian wedding



An inside look of a Hibiscus Beach Resort

room. The facility has since been purchased, now called Turtle Beach Resort, and is undergoing construction.

"We have accepted an LLI, however confidentiality agreements in the LLI prevents me from saying anything else," Plumley said. Plumley added that the hotel's interior still needed to be completed and that the extra work remains the reason why the new owners are waiting until November to reopen.

While Turtle Bay will not be the first hotel catering to gay and lesbians in the territory, the new owners' decision to market the facility as an exclusive destination for those living the aforementioned lifestyles to get married, sets a new precedent for the Virgin Islands in wake of the Supreme Court's June 26 ruling.

It's also a decision that many contend makes way for new dollars coming into the territory as same-sex couples descend upon the region to exchange vows.

The hotel's Sands Beach and Bar Restaurant has become a hit among locals, and it too has been sold as part of the agreement with the Boston owners.

But Turtle Bay hasn't been without its troubles. The facility has been sold multiple times as it struggled to remain solvent under various owners. Before Plumley and his partners, the then-Hibiscus Beach Resort shuttered under pressure, unable to pay WAPA bills (the facility ran on generators for about a year) and employees, some of whom are still owed money by the former owners.

According to a former employee, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, the situation was so dire that guests, wanting to take a shower but unable to do so because there was no power, would protest outside the hotel. Some wanted their money back, others, disgusted with the situation, left the resort and moved to the neighboring The Palms at Pelican Cove.

The Boston firm is hoping to turnaround the beleaguered facility's fortunes by attracting same-sex couples, a move sources believe will set apart Turtle Bay from the other local offerings and secure a steady flow of revenues.

Same-Sex Marriage In The Virgin Islands

Upon Governor Mapp's signing of the executive order, the territory will be clear of any remaining hurdles that hinder same-sex couples from marrying here.

"The Government of the Virgin Islands as a civil society can no longer discriminate on marriage," Mapp said [at a recent press conference](#). "The nation has arrived, pursuant to the Supreme Court's ruling, at full marriage equality — when two consenting adults appear for a marriage license and apply for that license, civil society is required to respond. And so persons of the same-sex can be married in the U.S. Virgin Islands."

He added: "The Supreme Court has made a decision that affects the entire nation. It is not for me to express what my personal feelings are. It is for me to do the business of governance and the business of governance, given the Supreme Court's ruling, says that if an individual in the Virgin Islands is married to a person of the same-sex in any state of the nation, that the Virgin Islands government must recognize that marriage as lawful.

"So the benefits to marriage, the rights and privileges to marriage, must be extended to that individual. Whether it's health insurance, whether it's beneficiary, whether it's filing tax returns, and the executive order that I am writing is to alert the agencies and to direct them how they are to perform given the ruling as issued by the United States Supreme Court."