

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Construction On Paul E. Joseph Stadium To Commence On Monday

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp said he was pleased to announce that the suspended Paul E. Joseph Stadium and Sports Complex Project in Frederiksted is ready to restart on Monday, October 19, a press release Government House issued late Saturday says.

According to the release, after months of arduous negotiations, an agreement was reached on a workable change order, resulting in a notice to proceed for the project's contractor, GEC, LLC.

"This is the beginning of a vision for the revitalization of Frederiksted that was developed through the design charrette process in 2005 while I was PFA director of Finance and Administration," Mr. Mapp said. "I want to thank the administration's team of attorneys along with Commissioners Gustav James, Pedro Cruz and Randolph Bennett and the PFA's consultant, Coastal Systems-USVI, for working with the representatives of GEC, LLC to get this significant project back on track."

GEC was first issued a verbal [suspension or halt of work order on February 11](#), 2015, followed by a written order on March 18, 2015. Then came the vetting process, which resulted in a mutually agreed upon change order and the notice to proceed executed by Department of Public Works Commissioner Mr. James, Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation Commissioner Mr. Cruz, and Department of Property & Procurement Commissioner Mr. Bennett, the release further stated.

This now allows for GEC to commence finishing the already initiated demolition of the old stadium on Monday. According to the change order, both demolition and 60% of the design are to be completed within 120 days from this date. The contract value awarded to GEC remains unchanged; not to exceed \$20 million with finalized budgets and schedules at each design phase, according to the release.

Mr. Mapp halted the project in February contending that the contract was hastily put together and that the company had not a single design concept to show.

"What is so troubling about that project is that the government has entered into a contract for a \$20 million project for which there is not a single concept or design," Mr. Mapp [said](#). "The contract allows the vendor to design a stadium and surrounding areas, bill the government at the cost of 10 percent, put it together, and they give us a \$10 million project, the contract says the contractor and the government will split the savings, so the contractor will end up with a \$5 million bonus. We could have a stadium worth \$10 million, and you, the people of the Virgin Islands, would be out \$20 million."

Even so, the project will continue with GEC at the helm, with company official John Wessel giving details on the various phases.

"We anticipate three major phases, the Paul E. Joseph Stadium with triple A baseball dimensions, the Terrence Martin regulation Softball Park/Little League field and the Crucian Christmas Festival Village," Mr. Wessel said. "A possible fourth phase would be overall site improvements including the development of a canal for flood control. First comes demolition simultaneously with design, then elevating the property 5 to 8 feet in accordance with future flood projections, followed by construction of each facility and associated site improvements."

He added: "GEC will be utilizing Virgin Islands workers and professionals and subcontracting portions of the work in compliance with our company motto "Building the Virgin Islands with Virgin Islanders."

Commissioner James said, "At the peak of construction we anticipate approximately 200 jobs. Also, this change order revising the existing contract that was awarded to GEC in 2014, still includes the services of world famous athletic facilities architectural firm, Populous."

The stadium opens the door for major sports and concert events such as Major League Baseball exhibition games like the one played by the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox on March 31, 1967, according to the release.

Mr. Cruz said once the project sees its end, St. Croix "will be capable of attracting both professional and college teams for practices, games and tournaments. This will be the realization of the sports tourism concept that has only been talked about before."

The release concluded by stating that it is the goal of Mr. Mapp to make the stadium project the beginning of the "total revitalization of the entire town of Frederiksted.

Feature Image: Former Governor John P. de Jongh and some of his administration officials, including former Lieutenant Governor Gregory Francis. Also pictured are GEC officials, Senator Sammuel Sanes and former Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen [at a groundbreaking event](#) for the Paul E. Joseph Stadium in Frederiksted in December, 2014.