

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Lease Agreements, Zoning Requests Front and Center During Senate Committee of the Whole

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ST. CROIX — The Senate Committee of the Whole heard testimony Wednesday on a host of zoning Requests, lease agreements and Coastal Zone Management Permits. The meeting was chaired by Senate President Novelle Francis.

Lawmakers — meeting at the Great Hall, University of the Virgin Islands — heard from Deputy Commissioner LaVerne Bailey of the Department of Property and Procurement, who represented the government's interests on the following zoning requests and lease agreements, and others.

Matters being considered included:

ZAC-20-2, A petition requesting that Plot Nos. 102 and 103 Estate Peter's Rest, Queen Quarter, St. Croix be rezoned from R-2 (Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to B-3 (Business Scattered) to allow for business uses.

Lease Agreement between the Government of the Virgin Islands and Alliance Data Services, LLC for the premises described as, Building No. 1, Section B, Plot No. 6 Estate Recovery Hill, Company Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands to install and operate equipment for internet services.; and

Lease Agreement between the Government of the Virgin Islands and Marco St. Croix, Inc. for the premises described as Plot No. 182 Estate Anna's Hope, Company Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands to operate a recycling center and automobile detailing center.

Leia LaPlace-Matthew, DPNR Territorial Planner, reviewed the Department's findings on the projects. She indicated that a resident objected to the plans proposed in zoning request ZAC-20-2, because the area was already congested with traffic, too many businesses already exist in the area, and any businesses would be too close to other existed housings and buildings.

Senator Donna Frett-Gregory pointed out that rezoning land for business purposes depletes the stock available to build much needed homes, which poses a problem in her estimation.

Michael Carty of Alliance Data Services, LLC, is seeking a lease agreement for Plot. No. 6 Recovery Hill. He spoke of the need for government to support local black-owned businesses in the communication business. According to Carty, by granting the lease, it will give local small businesses options to venture into new technology that will be a vital and needed entity in the Virgin Islands. Kirwin Augustin represented Marco St. Croix, Inc, and spoke about their plans to establish a recycling, automobile retailing, and full-service wash facility. Senators commended the plans to restart aluminum recycling at the facility.

The Legislature also considered requests to rezone Plot No. 94-F Estate Diamond, Queen Quarter, St. Croix R-2 (Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to B-3 (Business Scattered) or for business development in residential districts. The owners, Angela and McGarvey Henry are proposing a small (2-story) mixed-use building with a medical office or offices on the ground floor and four one-bedroom apartments on the upper floor. The ideal tenant for these apartments is medical professionals seeking the convenience of being able to walk to the hospital and other basic conveniences in and around the Sunny Isle shopping center. Letters of opposition regarding this project were read into the record.

Senators received an impassioned presentation from Michael Boyce regarding his zoning request for Parcel No. 2 (Consolidated) Estate Coakley Bay, East End Quarter "B", St. Croix be rezoned from R-2 (Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to R-3 (Residential-Medium Density) to allow for condominium development and accessory business uses.

In his testimony, Mr. Boyce, owner of the property, stated that he and his wife's request for rezoning was denied, on what he believes are cultural or racial discrimination grounds.

According to LaPlace-Matthew, the property comprises 8 acres. It is underdeveloped. A mixed-use development consisting of residential units from mainly homeownership, but some would be rentals and accessory business uses such as restaurant, retail, laundry, and offices.

Some of the problems DPNR found with the request as submitted by the owners included no environmental assessment report was provided in which to judge potential negative impacts on the surrounding area; proposed project's entrance, water truck, and retail traffic would add to already congested traffic from Coakley Bay Condominiums, Carden Beach Condominiums, Carden Beach's utility access, and single-family residents in the area.

DPNR said the proposal should be revisited and so they recommend denial of the petition to be rezoned.

Major Coastal Zone Management Permit No. CZX-11-17(W)- Kings Alley Management, Inc. was also discussed. The subject permit allows the permittee to replace the wooden decking on the 99-foot long by 10-foot wide approach bridge which has a 10-foot long by 24-foot wide "T" at the end. The dock will occupy 3, 850 square feet of submerged land.

The above-mentioned activity will take place offshore of Plot No. 57-A Kings Street, Company Quarter, Christiansted, St. Croix.

Other testifiers were Keith Richards, Anita Nibbs, Environmental Planning, CZM, Nathan Simmonds, Director of Finance and Administration V.I. Public Finance Authority, Marlon Hibbert, Director, and Martial Webster, Esq.

Committee members present during Wednesday's hearing were: Chairman Novelle Francis Jr., Myron Jackson, Alicia Barnes, Oakland Benta, Marvin Blyden, Allison DeGazon, Dwayne DeGraff, Donna Frett-Gregory, Kenneth Gittens, Stedmann Hodge, Jr., Javon James Sr., Athneil "Bobby" Thomas, Steven Payne Sr., and Kurt Violet.