

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Says Paul E. Joseph Stadium Not Delayed; But He Struggles To Give Restart Timeline

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ST. CROIX -- The Paul E. Joseph Stadium project seems dead. There is no work being performed, even after Governor Kenneth Mapp announced that [work would commence](#) in earnest mid-October 2015. The governor had [halted](#) the project in February 2015, and said in his October press release that 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 [Public Finance Authority] director of Finance and Administration," Mr. Mapp said in October 2015. "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."

Since then, however, the stadium area has been desolate, with little to no comments from the governor, and far from being "back on track."

But at his press conference on Tuesday, where Mr. Mapp revealed to the territory [the results of his China trade mission trip](#), The Consortium sought an answer on the delayed project from the governor, asking why construction had not yet started.

"Let me dispense with the myth that the Paul E. Joseph Stadium is delayed, it's not delayed," Mr. Mapp said. The governor said he received a briefing on the project's status while in Miami last week, and reverted to his original argument for halting the original contract, stating that the first deal, negotiated by former Governor John P. de Jongh, was grossly deficient.

"What we keep saying to the good folks of the territory is that in the winding days of the last administration, a contract for \$20 million was signed with nothing. Nothing was developed, nothing was put together -- the company was supposed to go out and figure it all out. We intervened, we halted that process, we negotiated the contract to an as-built, fixed-priced facility. That was all resolved, there was some give-back of some of the monies that were already deposited by the government to the contractor," Mr. Mapp said.

But the governor's Tuesday argument was made in the past -- before he announced that work would restart -- and still, after announcing that "arduous" negotiations had led to a deal that would allow work to finally commence, 8 months later, he has nothing to show for it.

Further explaining the situation, the governor said the old contract was without important architectural planning. He said while 65 percent of the construction documents, including stadium design, are complete, "they have to be completed a hundred percent to be submitted for permitting purposes."

Mr. Mapp said his administration is asking for additional funds within his [capital budget](#) to acquire extra land and to implement a flood mitigation program in La Grange. "Because if we build that facility on the current footprint, in the first major rain, the new facility will have the same experience the Paul E. Joseph Stadium had with all the water going into the dugout and clogging all the bathrooms and everything.

Relying on studies conducted, the governor said the footprint must be raised by at least six to eight feet. "And so we're going to do the flood mitigation planning, we're going to acquire additional property, we're completing and doing the construction drawings, and when they're complete the permitting process will take place, and GEC will begin construction.

Asked if, like Public Works Commissioner Gustav James said, work would begin in 2017, the governor said he could not say for sure.

"We're in June. I cannot tell you if the construction drawings are going to be finished in August or September. I'm saying that since we've been in office in eighteen months, we now know what needs to be built, we've cost what needs to be built, and we're now doing the design drawings for the construction contract."

Feature Image: Kenneth Mapp detailing the expansion of the Paul E. Joseph Stadium using charts at the Palms at Pelican Cove.

Image Credit: VIC.

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