

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp, Displeased With Condition Of VI Roads, Shakes Up Public Works

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GOVERNMENT HOUSE, ST. CROIX -- At a press conference here on Monday, Governor Kenneth Mapp, expressing dissatisfaction with the condition of the territory's roads, announced major changes at the Department of Public Works, firing some people that he had hired at the onset of his administration, while hiring others and admonishing Public Works Commissioner Gustav James, along with his new assistants, to work feverishly at repairing the roads.

"As I drive around the territory, I'm not happy," Mr. Mapp said. "The bushes are overgrowing in the roads, around the garbage bins there's plastic bags rolled up in the trees, the lights -- and I'm paying for streetlights; WAPA can attest, I believe it's over \$14

million this fiscal year -- are off. The roads are not striped, the towns are filthy coming from the airport, and I'm just not pleased." The governor said he had been texting Mr. James asking about the conditions of the roads and what was holding up progress.

"I have more than \$150 million sitting in the banks and I don't understand why we're not paving roads and building roads in the territory for the citizens. I don't want to hold any money on any campaign year; this administration has a lot that it's going to be doing, so we don't need to hold no project. We don't need to hold a single project trying to get reelected," Mr. Mapp said.

He expressed confidence in Mr. James and announced "a good shakeup," had taken place at D.P.W. in an effort to get projects moving.

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The shakeup sees Lisa Melchior being hired as assistant D.P.W. commissioner of administration, replacing Pamela Richards. Roan Creque was hired as assistant commissioner of operations in the St. Thomas/St. John District. Mr. Roan has over 30 years of experience in D.P.W. and has agreed to return to help to move the department forward.

Mustafa Abu Saoud was hired as assistant commissioner of engineering; Vincent Kelly was hired as deputy commissioner for St. Croix operations; and Dennis Brow, who has been assistant commissioner for the St. Croix district for almost 5 years, will continue as assistant commissioner of operations.

The governor also announced the employment of 20 little associates, ten for each district, whose job is to more effectively improve roads and keep the islands clean. And he chastised residents who litter, stating that litter laws should be revisited to strengthen punishment. "Start off when you convict somebody for litter, that they go out and work for 20 days with a road crew with a t-shirt that says 'I'm a little bug', and they cleanup the island," the governor offered.

Among other work, the newly formed road crews will be tasked with removing litter and abandoned vehicles, clearing brush, repainting, striping and reporting on areas where serious repairs are required and where streetlights are inoperable.

Litter and solid waste management have been a priority of the governor. Earlier this year he sent [three legislative proposals](#) aimed at keeping the islands clean and preserving the life of the territory's landfills, to include a restriction on plastic bags and a bill to establish a redemption value on all beverage containers. Last month members of the 31st Legislature unanimously supported the bag bill and the other measures remain under consideration.

Mr. Mapp also updated the public on his weekend meetings with families of patients formerly residing at the Sea View Nursing Home. He and Lt. Governor Osbert Potter met personally with family members over the weekend to outline plans moving forward and to apologize for the manner in which the individuals were removed from Sea View.

"There was much room for improvement," Mr. Mapp conceded. He emphasized that Sea View is a wholly private facility, and that patients could not remain under its care if the

nursing home had lost federal certification and was not meeting operating standards. Mr. Mapp pledged to explore other options for the possible reopening of the facility, but said in the meantime services had been expanded at the Queen Louise Home for the Aged with 13 new employees to be hired to assist with patient care. The governor also said that families were free to pursue any other viable options for the care of their loved ones.

*Feature Image: Governor Kenneth, center right, admonishes new D.P.W. employees to work feverishly at repairing the territory's roads at Government House in St. Croix.
(Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)*

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