

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Contradicts Himself On Reason For Delay Of Paul E. Joseph Stadium Construction

Business / **Published On March 24, 2017 12:22 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **March 24, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp said during his talk at the Chamber of Commerce's Breakfast with the Governor meeting, held at the Palms at Pelican Cove on Thursday morning, that although he had given the Department of Public Works and St. Croix-based contractor GEC, LLC notice to proceed with the Paul E. Joseph Stadium project, he would not move forward with work until the Senate approves additional funding.

The governor's remarks [contradict his own press release](#) issued last month announcing the authorization of construction, where the governor stated that he did not believe the Senate would authorize the additional funding.

"I do not believe that Senate action on my request for additional funds will occur soon. Accordingly, Coastal Systems and GEC should proceed with the project start immediately," the governor said in a Government House press release issued on January 23.

On Thursday, Mr. Mapp said he would ask senators to approve the funding -- after noting in January that they had refused, which prompted him to authorize the notice to proceed.

"I'm gonna ask the members of the Legislature from the Island of St. Croix to assist me with one final thing so that you can actually see construction happen at Paul E. Joseph Stadium. All the plans and designs are complete; they can go start work tomorrow," Mr. Mapp said.

He explained that if the stadium were to be constructed on its current footprint, the dugouts and bathrooms would be lost to mud and flooding during torrential rainfall because the stadium's location "is a flood area."

"When that project actually begins you're going to see tremendous movement of soil because we have to raise the elevation about six feet on which we will put the stadium. If you just do that the way it is now, you're going to send that water into the town of Frederiksted because the water has to go somewhere," Mr. Mapp said.

The governor said he has spoken with several senators about the problem, and was hoping for an amended that would authorize the purchase of six acres of land that's immediately to the east of the stadium. "That land is for sale, it's not expensive and we want to purchase it," Mr. Mapp said. He added that he'd originally asked the Senate for \$6 million in the capital projects budget with the intention of requesting more funds. "But we don't need all that money to begin the actual construction of project because you have the \$20 million pool."

The governor said at least two senators assured him that they would attempt to move an amendment to approve the additional funds. He also said that the additional funding had already been identified.

Were the senators to be unsuccessful, Mr. Mapp said he would be forced to move ahead with construction, an action he said would be a "crazy decision."

"If the senators don't act early April to give us this authorization, then I'm going to be forced to make a very crazy decision. You know, how do we construct the project and avoid sending the water to the south and into the town of Frederiksted, if we don't do the mitigation that's required to be sure that the water coming out of La Grange is going directly to the ocean and not going into residences and businesses in the town of Frederiksted. It would make no sense to build a new edifice in Frederiksted that damages other persons properties and homes, so we're not going to have that happen."

When the project was [originally delayed](#), the governor cited different reasons for halting construction. Mr. Mapp had said that the original contract awarded to St. Croix-based GEC, LLC, was hastily put together, and that it was approved and signed by former Governor John P. de Jongh, even while the contractor did not have a single design to show.

“The Paul E. Joseph project in Frederiksted, which is a \$20 million project, I have directed for that project to be frozen,” the governor said when announcing the halt. “I visited the project on Sunday. As many of you know, that project was put together in haste.”

He added: “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,” 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.” Since then, however, GEC has satisfied the governor’s concerns.

Mr. Mapp revealed his plan to [expand the original vision](#) during the 2016 Chamber of Commerce Meeting, held at The Palms at Pelican Cove. There, Mr. Mapp made known that the expansion would add another \$15 million to the \$20 million original contract to complete the project, and it’s completion date had been pushed back to June, 2018. And in a separate press release in 2015 [announcing commencement of work](#) which [never happened](#), the governor pinned the delay with the goal to expand as the inauguration of Frederiksted’s revitalization.

“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,” the governor 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.”

According to Government House, the stadium will be a modern sports complex that has been designed to latest standards with the capacity to provide state of the art facilities for local athletes and attract sports tourism to the island of St. Croix.