

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Terminates Tip Top Construction's Main Street Project Contract

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp during a press conference at Government House here on Monday announced that he had terminated Tip Top Construction's contract to complete the Main Street Project, contending that the company was taking too long to do the job.

The governor said he directed Dept. of Property and Procurement Commissioner Lloyd Bough to issue a letter to Tip Top Construction informing the company contract's termination. "As you may know this project was bid, it ended up in court, we came into office, we settled with the parties, we allowed Tip Top to do the contract, they were given a certain number of days to complete the contract which was scheduled to be completed

in June of 2017, and as of this writing of this letter, only about 8 percent of the contract work has been completed to date," Mr. Mapp said.

The chief executive said he sent a team of Government House representatives, his legal counsel and Mr. Bough to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to update the federal agency on the Main Street project and other road work ongoing or pending in the territory. He said FHWA was made aware of the termination, and that his administration and FHWA had agreed to a seven to ten-day period to start accepting bids for the project.

"We don't intend to spend months and months rebidding this project," the governor said. "Once the new specifications are finalized, we will announce a seven to ten-day bid cycle, where this project can be rebid and a new contractor put in place." The governor said any funds that the government owes to Tip Top from the Department of Justice, Dept. of Public Works and Property and Procurement, will be paid to the company.

But the manner in which construction on Main Street has been performed needs to be rethought, Mr. Mapp said, as the last strategy, which saw Tip Top Construction working for about 6 hours nightly, was not sustainable. He plans to meet soon with area merchants to seek agreement on a schedule of work that will include daylight hours, in an effort to minimize the period of business disruption.

The territory's leader said only about \$400,000 of the roughly \$10 million set aside for the project, estimated to cost \$8.5 million, has been expended. "A great deal of the monies for this project still remains available. But at the pace we're going, this project will not be completed," he said.

The governor also announced the appointment of Nelson M. Petty Jr. as deputy commissioner of the Dept. of Public Works, "with specific responsibilities over the engineering division and capital projects," the governor said. Mr. Petty will serve as acting commissioner while Gustav James is on vacation. Mr. James will return on August 4.

The governor said Mr. Petty's primary responsibility will be to ensure that projects that the administration has been working on with the Federal Highway Administration, are actually getting off the ground. To that end, Mr. Mapp said FHWA had approved a road project in Crown Bay, St. Thomas, the Scenic Drive project on St. Croix, and the Scott Free Road in St. Thomas. The Melvin Evans Highway project on St. Croix is getting closer to going out for bidding, Mr. Mapp revealed, as FHWA has advised the administration that one of two sections of the project has been approved.