

The Virgin Islands Consortium

120 Modular Units, 37 Sprung Shelters To Be Ready For 2018-19 School Year; FEMA Approves \$107 Million For School Repairs

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp announced during a Friday morning press conference at Government House here, that 120 modular units and 37 sprung shelters will be installed at schools territory-wide in time for the 2018-19 school year. The governor also made known that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), had approved \$107 million for school repairs, work Mr. Mapp said will be completed before the beginning of school in September.

The seven schools that are set to receive a share of the \$107 million for repairs, according to the governor, are Joseph Gomez Elementary School, the Alfredo Andrews Elementary School, Alexander Henderson Elementary School, the Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School, the Eulalie Rivera Elementary School, and the John H. Woodson Junior High School. The governor also revealed that \$10 million was already approved for the commencement of work. And he said the procurement process was underway for more funds to be released.

Mr. Mapp also revealed that his administration has been in talks with FEMA relative to seven schools the administration has determined will need to be demolished and reconstructed, although when asked if FEMA had already given the clearance for demolition and reconstruction, the governor said there was no such confirmation yet. He was, however, almost certain that the schools assessed to be demolished and reconstructed would clear FEMA's requirement for such action.

The schools slated to be leveled and rebuilt are the Addelita Cancryn Junior High School, Julius E. Sprauve School, E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary School, the St. Thomas Curriculum Center, and the Arthur A. Richards Junior High School, Mr. Mapp said.

AECOM, the firm contracted for [the \\$766 million Emergency Home Repairs VI Project](#), has been chosen by the Mapp administration to perform the school repair work, according to the governor.

While the governor said the modular units and sprung structures would be ready by September -- along with repairs to the seven schools -- he could not give a timeline for the facilities that need to be rebuilt, as they were yet to be approved by FEMA. Mr. Mapp also said that the modular units should be in place for about five years.

On the rebuilding of Sprauve and Cancryn, Mr. Mapp said the administration would rather those facilities be built elsewhere -- Sprauve in Chocoloate Hole, St. John and Cancryn on a property near the University of the Virgin Islands. Mr. Mapp said the Virgin Islands Port Authority could use the current Cancryn property for expansion of port operations.

Even the schools that have been chosen for repairs may also be demolished and reconstructed further down the road, Mr. Mapp said. "The six [schools] that I indicated qualify for reconstruction is not the final list," he said. "Even schools that will get repairs to start the school year, they may also qualify for demolition and reconstruction."

At the beginning of his speech, Mr. Mapp encouraged residents to temper their expectations, reminding that the territory had only in September faced two Category 5 hurricanes, and that the rebuilding process would be a yearslong effort.

"No one, no group of people can be pointed to and say it's your fault that we had two Category 5 Hurricanes back to back," Mr. Mapp said. The governor chided senators for ostensibly playing politics with the matter. "I really wish you would come to the table and help with the recovery," the territory's leader stated, referring to lawmakers. He said while it was easy to criticize, especially during an election year, there was real work to be done -- and senators should join the effort, he said. The governor said he had not received a single suggestion from senators following a Washington DC trip in February, [where local](#)

[officials met with members of the federal government and the Trump administration](#) to lobby for assistance.

The governor, throughout his speech, spoke of the federal government's support for the U.S. Virgin Islands. He spoke of an upcoming trip to the nation's capital where he's set to meet again with federal officials at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Developing (H.U.D.), a meeting the governor said would yield more financial support. (Mr. Mapp said the monies are the territory's share of a \$29 billion disaster fund, adding that the amount would top [the recent \\$243 million the USVI received from H.U.D.](#)).

"These are the dollars to invest in the recovery of the territory; I am reaching out to members of the legislature," Mr. Mapp said. He said while politicians have to keep an eye on the election process, they must also keep an eye on governance. "We do not want to squander the opportunity," he said.

The governor admitted that there were a lot of problems with the education system in the territory, "But there is no question that the opportunities to fix the issues is before us," he said.

And he took up other matters as well, including some bloodletting between himself and Senator Jean Forde, who Mr. Mapp derided as disingenuous in regards to Department of Education officials' [no-show at a Senate hearing that Mr. Forde chaired](#). Mr. Forde returned the favor with a harsh press release this afternoon, whose headline reads, "Forde Rebukes Governor's Irresponsible Remarks; Corrects Record Regarding Education Hearing". Mr. Forde even provided email receipts of his conversation with the governor, a move that was apparently utilized to preempt the governor, who told reporters today that he would make the emails available.

We carried the press conference live on our Facebook platform, so you can hear Mr. Mapp's comments on the matter [here](#), beginning at the 1:08:43 mark. We will, however, have a full story on the confrontation Saturday morning.