

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WICO To Pay \$3,500 Monthly In Rent Of Condo For Bryan On St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS -- The West Indian Company on Friday approved monthly rent payments of \$3,500 for a condominium where Governor Albert Bryan will reside when in St. Thomas. The approval came during a board meeting WICO held at its headquarters in St. Thomas, according to a release the self-governing, government-owned entity issued Friday.

WICO said it approved the rent, which was requested by Mr. Bryan, "because Estate Catherineberg, the traditional residence, is unavailable due to damage from Irma and Maria and environmental deterioration."

Mr. Bryan resides at Government House when on St. Croix.

Mr. Bryan's rent totals to \$42,000 annually, much less than the monthly [\\$12,500 WICO was paying for former Governor Kenneth Mapp](#) for the Estate Nazareth villa he was residing in upon taking office. In total, [WICO spent \\$107,563.56 for the 4.5 months](#) that Mr. Mapp resided at the Estate Nazareth villa.

In other news relayed during the meeting, WICO President and CEO Clifford Graham reported that the Department of Planning and Natural Resources' Coastal Zone Management arm approved a joint permit for the [VI Port Authority-WICO dredging](#) in the harbor, turning basin and WICO berth areas. The Army Corps of Engineers permit, which is pending, is expected to take 45-60 days before being approved, Mr. Graham said, according to the release.

Antigua's Woe May Be Territory's Blessing

The board also discussed competition from Antigua, which Mr. Graham revealed had recently privatized its port by selecting Global Ports Holdings for the development of the island's cruise port, foregoing a rival bid backed by the cruise industry. According to reports, the move has caused a rift between Carnival Cruise Line and the Antiguan government, resulting in Carnival pulling its ships from the Caribbean island.

Carnival as of Saturday had yet to give an official statement on its reason for removing Antigua from its schedule, but it did say it was moving its ships to destinations that are more welcoming, as "[Antiguan] government officials have taken steps which indicate they don't want cruise lines and our guests to visit."

Carnival Cruise Line's decision followed what was deemed a harsh statement from Antigua Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who accused the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association of using its influence to exploit the Caribbean.

"The FCCA is literally exploiting the Caribbean," Mr. Browne asserted. "So you will charge, for example, thousands of dollars for your visitors to the Caribbean -- and I know that the cruise business is capital intensive -- but when you are giving these countries five or six dollars per head this cannot cover the capital costs for the infrastructure," Mr. Browne said.

Mr. Graham said WICO would monitor to see if the cruise lines' shift from Antigua will yield additional calls to the USVI. "WICO certainly recognizes that call priority is important as you will get the benefits from early shoppers with early calls on itineraries," Mr. Graham said, according to the release.