

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Port Authority Formally Announces Carlton Dowe As Executive Director

VIC News / **Published On June 26, 2019 09:46 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **June 26, 2019**



The Virgin Islands Port Authority on Wednesday formally chose Carlton Dowe as executive director. The decision came during a Board of Directors meeting at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix.

According to V.I.P.A., Mr. Dowe was chosen from among the top three finalists interviewing for the director position. He is scheduled to start on July 8.

The Consortium, citing people with knowledge of the matter, [reported on June 13](#) that Mr. Dowe was headed back to the authority as executive director. We reported that the board was expected to make an announcement sometime this month -- presumably at a board

meeting -- and that V.I.P.A. had held meetings interviewing potential candidates, and had settled on Mr. Dowe.

A day after our story was published, Governor Albert Bryan [told us](#) he would be happy to see Mr. Dowe return to V.I.P.A. as executive director, expressing confidence in Mr. Dowe's ability to successfully lead the sprawling government arm.

"I actually was the chairman of the Port Authority's personnel committee when we hired Senator Dowe the first time. I was always impressed with him," Mr. Bryan said. "You know, people talk but I was on the interview [and] he blew everybody away, at least at that time. I can't imagine that he would be worse this time; everybody knows he was removed for politics, so I would be happy to see him come back."

Mr. Bryan spoke of a number of Port Authority-related projects that he was eager to see move forward, comments made that appeared to suggest the governor believes Mr. Dowe is the man for the job.

"I have a lot of projects at the Port Authority and other things that really keep me up at night. I want to get our airports back to together. Our seaports — we have a lot of projects to do that have not been done," the territory's leader added, mentioning a number of projects that have either started and slowed, or have yet to begin.

"When you come on the plane in Miami and you come off in St. Thomas or St. Croix, it should resemble what you left in Miami," the governor said, referring to enhancements he'd like to see at the territory's airports.

Mr. Dowe was fired from V.I.P.A. in December 2016 without cause. At the time of his firing, Mr. Dowe's contract was two years away from expiring.

He confirmed his departure to this publication the day after his removal in a telephone interview, telling The Consortium that the board's action was without merit.

"The board indicated today that they had no cause," Mr. Dowe said. V.I.P.A. confirmed that its release of Mr. Dowe from his duties was without cause, pursuant to Section 8 (c) in the employment agreement between Mr. Dowe and the authority. Mr. Dowe had to be compensated for the remaining two years of his contract, even if he was no longer employed with the authority. David Mapp, brother of former Governor Kenneth Mapp, was made assistant director and then director of V.I.P.A.

Mr. Dowe wasted no time in his attempts to make sense of his termination, telling The Consortium at the time that his firing was politically motivated. "All of this is political mischief and shenanigans coming down," he said.

Today, he told The Consortium in an interview that he would not look back at the past. "The people in the community know what transpired and the political climate at the time," he said.

Now, Mr. Dowe is focusing on moving the authority forward. He mentioned a number of projects that had slowed, and said he would work to get things back on track. The incoming executive director mentioned the Gallows Bay dredging project that has not moved in years, along with \$10.5 million in funding for the Container Port effort which has

yet see meaningful progress. "We need to find out the status of the \$10.5 million," he said.

Mr. Dowe also lamented the current state of the territory's airports. "None of us in this community should be happy when we pass through the airports. We will be moving forward to modernize them. The world is now a global economy and we need to be able to engage," he said.

Mr. Dowe expressed gratitude to the board for choosing him, and also lauded who he described as the great employees of VIPA. "We have some great employees and I am happy to have the opportunity to work with them," he said. "I believe in putting a good team of people together -- and that's what we will do."

In today's release, V.I.P.A. Board Chairperson Leona Smith said, "As a former executive director of the Port Authority, Mr. Dowe has a keen understanding of the operations of the authority. He also has a proven track record of providing tangible results."

She added, "Dowe brings a wealth of experience and we are pleased to have him return to lead this agency at this most critical juncture. He is just the person we need to address the myriad of issues plaguing the Port -- especially at our airports."

According to V.I.P.A., some of Mr. Dowe's many accomplishments during his previous tenure include:

- Successfully negotiating a 10-year berthing agreement with Royal Caribbean Cruise Line at the Austin "Babe" Monsanto Marine Terminal in Crown Bay.
- Led VIPA's management team in the successful refinancing of its 2003 marine bonds at a savings of approximately \$2.4 million. The bonds financed are funding the refurbishment of the Gallows Bay Marine Terminal; bulkhead dredging of the Schooner Bay Channel to facilitate the berthing of small cruise ships in Christiansted; developing a paid parking facility in Cruz Bay; constructing a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility and a multi-level parking garage at the Red Hook Terminal.
- Under Dowe's leadership, VIPA secured a U.S. Department of Transportation "TIGER" Grant for the first time in the agency's history to be used to complete seaport projects.
- Dowe lobbied for passage of legislation into law that allowed: limits not to exceed \$75,000 in claims against VIPA relating to injury, loss of property, personal injury or death (a tremendous savings to VIPA in liability cash); and allowed VIPA to collect the entire \$1 of the Marine Terminal Tax, which resulted in \$1.1 million in new revenue (VIPA previously only received 30 cents previously).
- VIPA received discretionary funding from the Federal Aviation Administration for the first time in 11 years under his leadership.
- Recommended and implemented with the approval of the Board an increase in ship dues and wharfage for inter-island travel between St. Thomas/St. John and the BVI. This was the first increase of these fees in over 18-20 years, resulting in a 78% increase in ships dues and a 133% increase in wharfage over a four-month period compared to the same period the previous year. The increase generated \$800,000 in additional revenues for VIPA.

- Recommended and implemented with the approval of the Board an increase in docking fees from 60 cents to \$1 per vessel linear foot – an additional \$300,000 annually in revenues.
- Recommended the selection of a new insurance broker, which saved VIPA in brokerage fees and 25% in cash savings of annual insurance premiums.
- Implemented a \$2 per day customer facility charge for rental cards which resulted in an additional \$500,000 in new revenue.
- Obtained permits from the Coastal Zone Management Commission for the dredging of Gallows Bay and Crown Bay Marina.
- For the first time in nine years, VIPA completed its financial statements and single audits on time under his leadership, which was also the first time a Passenger Facility Charges audit was conducted.
- Revamped VIPA's internal policies to improve management, including its financial, procurement, travel and records retention policies.
- Implemented human resources programs for VIPA employees, completed union negotiations and fulfilled outstanding contractual obligations that brought all contracts current, satisfied all retroactivity and resulted in unionized employees being paid on their correct grade and step.

V.I.P.A. said Mr. Dowe's professional life is marked with public service. He has over 25 years of management experience serving as a firefighter who rose through the ranks to become the youngest fire chief in Virgin Islands history, as a deputy U.S. marshal and director of the Virgin Islands Fire Service and five terms as a senator representing the St. Thomas-St. John district during the 24th, 25th, 27th, 28th and 29th Legislatures. V.I.P.A. said Mr. Dowe has an associate of science degree in fire service and technology and an associate of arts degree in fire administration from Miami-Dade Community College; and a bachelor of arts degree in criminal justice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice from the City University of New York.