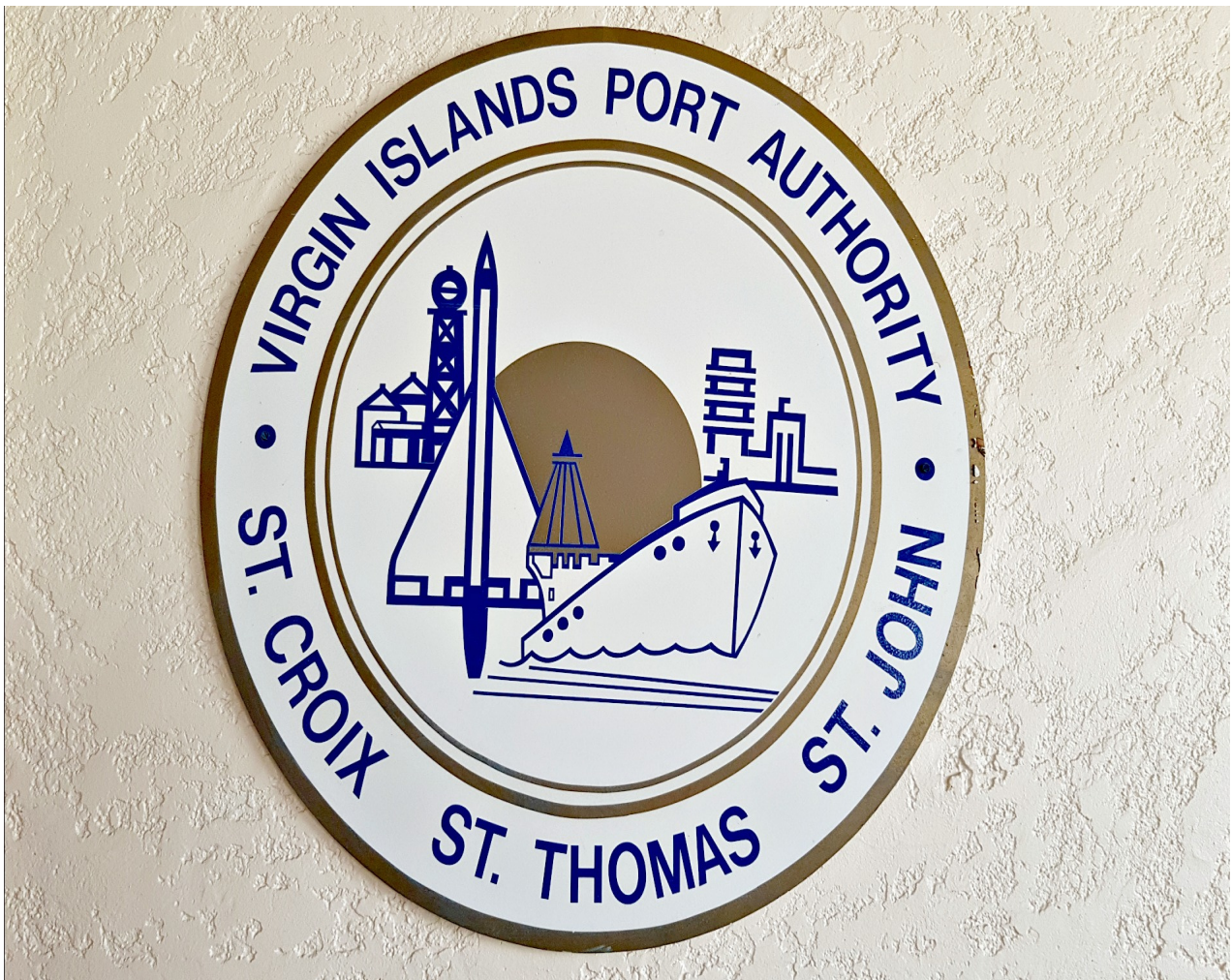


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Red Hook Customs Building Permit Application Forwarded To Senate For Final Local Approval

VIC News / **Published On July 19, 2019 09:56 PM /**

Staff **July 19, 2019**



ST. THOMAS -- The long-awaited U.S. Customs and Border Protection (C.B.P.) building at the Urman V. Fredericks Marine Terminal in Red Hook is a step closer to becoming a reality, according to the Virgin Islands Port Authority.

V.I.P.A. said its permit application to construct the new C.B.P. facility was signed by both Governor Albert Bryan and Department of Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol this week. The document has been forwarded to Senate President Novelle E. Francis Jr. for review and approval by the V.I. Legislature. Legislative approval is required for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to ratify the permit, V.I.P.A. said.

The authority's Major Coastal Zone Permit Application No. CZT-616 (L&W), which was approved by the V.I. Coastal Zone Management Commission, requests authorization to demolish an old pier at the UVF Marine Facility. V.I.P.A. will then build a 2,376-square-foot, two-story CBP building and a 4,040-foot pier. The project also involves dredging 36 yards of material. C.B.P. agents at this new facility will process vessels and passengers arriving from foreign ports on the eastern end of St. Thomas. V.I.P.A. is prepared to put the project out to bid immediately after it receives USACE approval. The project is primarily funded via bond financing attained by V.I.P.A. in 2014.

According to the Port Authority, once this facility comes online, it will eliminate the need for residents and visitors arriving from the British Virgin Islands to stop in St. John to clear Customs before traveling to St. Thomas. The authority believes this will significantly reduce travel time between the USVI and BVI. The UVF Marine Facility is VIPA's busiest ferry port and processes about 290,000 travelers between the USVI and the BVI annually.

Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe thanked Mr. Bryan and Mr. Oriol who both quickly reviewed the permit application and approved the document within a matter of days, according to the release. "VIPA will now work closely with the senators of the 33rd Legislature to prioritize the approval of this essential port project," he said. The executive director also thanked the members of the CZM Commission and all V.I.P.A.'s staff that provided the information for the processing of the permit application.