

The Virgin Islands Consortium

After Legal Hold, \$31.5 Million Cyril E. King Fire Station Rebuild Moves Forward With \$30.6 Million in FAA Grants

VIPA officials said the previously stalled \$31.49 million J. Benton construction contract has now been awarded, while the board accepted two FAA grants totaling \$30.61 million and approved \$3.52 million for Stantec construction-phase services Monday.

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The Cyril E. King Airport. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. THOMAS — A \$31.49 million project to tear down and rebuild the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting station at Cyril E. King Airport has moved forward after being held last

month for legal review, with V.I. Port Authority officials telling the governing board Monday that the construction contract with J. Benton Construction has now been awarded. During the same special meeting, the board accepted two Federal Aviation Administration grants totaling \$30.61 million and approved up to \$3.52 million for Stantec Consulting Services to provide construction-phase support.

The development follows an August meeting in which VIPA declined to immediately approve J. Benton's \$31,494,055 construction contract after board members raised questions about the company's participation in the separate SkyCity airport public-private partnership. The board directed its legal team to review whether the relationship created a conflict and said the construction matter would subsequently be handled through a poll vote.

That earlier issue briefly resurfaced Monday when a board member asked whether the grant item before the body was the same matter that had required additional clarification from legal counsel. Staff confirmed that it was related but emphasized that Monday's vote concerned the federal grant rather than the construction contract itself. VIPA Director of Engineering Preston Beyer later stated during his presentations that the construction project had been awarded to J. Benton for \$31,494,055. The meeting did not establish when the poll vote approving that contract occurred or detail the legal conclusion that allowed it to proceed.

The federal funding also substantially expands upon an FAA award the Consortium reported earlier this month. On September 6, the Consortium reported that FAA records listed \$15,485,255 for Cyril E. King Airport to construct or expand its Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting building. At the time, the federal announcement did not identify the project's full construction cost or establish that the award would finance the entire rebuild.

The formal Airport Infrastructure Grant offer accepted by VIPA on Monday was \$15,394,836, about \$90,000 less than the amount listed in the earlier FAA announcement. VIPA's official board action identifies the grant as carrying a 90 percent federal and 10 percent local funding structure, with \$1,720,537 listed as VIPA's contribution from operating revenues. The authority did not explain during Monday's meeting why the formal grant amount differed from the figure initially published by the FAA.

More significantly, the board also accepted a second FAA award of \$15,220,064 under the Airport Improvement Program for the same ARFF station project. VIPA described that award as a companion grant covering the balance of federally eligible costs associated with the rebuild. It also carries a 90-10 federal-local funding split, with VIPA listing \$1,691,118 in operating revenues as its local contribution. Together, the two federal grants accepted Monday total \$30,614,900.

VIPA said the project will replace the existing station with a roughly 22,000-square-foot, three-story concrete facility designed to support aircraft rescue and firefighting operations at Cyril E. King Airport. The authority received both federal grant offers on September 10 and faced a September 15 deadline to accept them and obligate the funding.

The board also authorized a \$3,522,500 task order for Stantec Consulting Services, which has worked on the project's conceptual, schematic and final design over the past

two years. Stantec will now provide construction administration, project management and grant support, specialty inspections, review of contractor submittals and change orders, resident engineering and architectural services, and building-system commissioning. VIPA expects those services to extend through approximately 17 months of construction.

The Stantec work will also be funded on a 90-10 basis through FAA and VIPA funds, with the Port Authority's local share listed at \$352,250.

The new approvals fill in several details that were not available when the FAA's first major award for the project was announced earlier this month. At that point, federal records identified the ARFF building and the grant amount but did not provide the complete financing package or construction timetable. Monday's meeting established that the project is backed by two FAA grants, identified the construction contract at nearly \$31.5 million, and placed the anticipated construction period at roughly 17 months.

St. Croix Airport Beacon Replacement Approved

The board separately authorized a \$731,697 contract with Virgin Islands Paving Inc. to replace the aviation beacon at Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix. VIPA said the existing beacon is intermittently operational and can no longer be restored to full functionality, raising concerns because the equipment serves as a visual aid helping pilots locate the airport during nighttime and poor-visibility conditions.

The project calls for removal of the existing beacon, tower and concrete pad and installation of a new beacon on a 45-foot tip-down pole that can be lowered for inspections, repairs and severe weather. VIPA's official action list identifies the \$731,697 project as being funded through the authority's fiscal year 2027 operating budget.

Monday's discussion also revealed that the procurement had been solicited twice and that Virgin Islands Paving's bid came in more than \$150,000 above the engineering estimate. Board members questioned the difference, and VIPA officials said subsequent research showed that the original estimate had understated prevailing market costs. Virgin Islands Paving nevertheless submitted the lower of the two responsive bids, compared with approximately \$894,725 from the other bidder.