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Pressed at Board Meeting on Why Long Bay Project is Needed, Bryan, Boschulte Point to Cruise Industry's Move to Larger Vessels

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Wonder of the Seas, an Oasis Class Ship By. ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Governor Albert Bryan and Dept. of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, who also serves as the chairman of the West Indian Company board, were pressed by a Public Finance Authority board member to make the case for why the Long Bay Landing Project should move forward.

The Long Bay Landing Project would be a new, iconic cruise ship terminal with the capacity to facilitate large cruise ships.

Dorothy Isaacs, a member of the PFA Board of Directors, questioned Mr. Boschulte on the project during a Thursday board meeting. She pointed to the cruise industry, which came to a sudden halt in March during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, a matter Ms. Isaacs said was of concern.

Mr. Boschulte said the Long Bay Project is needed to facilitate larger vessels, which would also keep in line with industry trends to accommodate such ships. "The industry itself is expanding. The size of the ships in the industry are expanding, and if you want to have a presence in that industry you have to adapt," he said.

Ms. Isaacs was not convinced. She said the territory should expand on its lodging offerings, stating, "Those are the people that can sustain us" and the type of visitors who stay in the USVI longer than the 5 hours cruise ship passengers normally stay.

Governor Albert Bryan, who serves as chairman of the PFA board, said he understood Ms. Isaacs's concerns, but said, "As we move forward in tourism, unfortunately we are not the drivers of the industry, we are the responders." The governor pointed to the territory's competitors in the Caribbean that are currently building larger ports, and said, "We are behind our major ports." Mr. Bryan also pointed to data that showed 1.6 million of the 2 million tourists who visited the USVI during the territory's peak were cruise ship passengers.

"I'm not head over heels about another port in the Charlotte Amalie harbor, but I recognize for us to be competitive and not skipped out, we have to do this," Mr. Bryan said.

Ms. Isaac was concerned that the project would be a wasted effort that does not see enough utilization. "I just don't want to end with an albatross in our harbor and these cruise ships decide they aren't going to come here anymore, or they decide that they are not going to come as often. They are out for themselves," she said. "We see what happens; everything came to a screeching halt and there's no guarantee when they are coming back."

Mr. Bryan, in defense of the cruise ship firms, reminded Ms. Isaacs that they responded quickly to aid the USVI following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, carrying goods and medicine to the USVI, while taking [thousands of Virgin Islanders to the mainland following the storms](#), where some sought temporary respite.

The project has long been a desire of WICO. During a board meeting [in 2015 under the Mapp administration](#), the project, whose cost was estimated to be \$70 million at the time, was placed on hold. At the time, board members said there were concerns about the potential adverse impact on the natural composition of the Charlotte Amalie Harbor, as well as the fact that the project was not aligned with the \$150-plus million Charlotte Amalie Revitalization and Veterans Drive Design projects already in place. Former Governor Mapp was against what he said was putting 10 acres of concrete in the Charlotte Amalie harbor, as it would only lead to more congestion.

The project, which as of December 2019 was being undertaken through a partnership with Yacht Haven Grand, [was stymied](#) throughout the Mapp administration.