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Senate Approves Funding for Land to Build New Juan Luis Hospital, Additional Moorings to Accommodate Influx of Yachts, Among Other Measures During Session

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Luxury yachts moored in Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas. By. GETTY IMAGES

A legislative session on Thursday pushed a number of bills forward as senators approved measures covering a variety of topics, including more mooring balls for the territory, allocation of funds to build the new, federally-funded Juan F. Luis Hospital, and [closing a loophole](#) in the Gas Station Moratorium law as well as approving members for six of the territory's boards.

Lawmakers approved CZM Permit No. CZT-44-19W, which allows for the installation of one hundred (helix) anchor moorings at locations across the Virgin Islands.

Joseph Boschulte, commissioner of the Department of Tourism, said that during the Covid-19 pandemic, “We received a big boom to the marine industry and the supporting economy. What was evident is the need for additional places for mariners to dock. Demand exceeds the supply – highlighting the need for more than the established mooring capacity.”

Oriel Blake, executive director of the Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA), said in her testimony, “One of the most significant benefits of vessels using moorings rather than anchoring is in protecting the undersea environment.” She explained that moorings contrast with the use of anchors to secure a vessel in one place. “Anchoring entails a vessel cast a cable-attached metal anchor that digs into the seabed each time the vessel visits whether for one hour or stays overnight.”

Mr. Boschulte said the Department Planning and Natural Resources would provide oversight to the selection of the moorings and the organization of the mooring bays, “which will improve access and recreational enjoyment of the territory’s beaches and bays,” he said.

Senators also favored a minor Coastal Zone Permit CZT-09-18W, which includes the reconstruction and continued occupancy of a 498 sq. ft dock and of submerged land area surrounding the dock. The dock is located at Seaward of Parcel No. 8-A Estate Bellevue, St. Thomas.

Lawmakers approved six board nominations and a measure amending the gas station moratorium law. The board members will take up seats on the VI Board of Land Use Appeals, VI Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyor, VI Coastal Zone Management Commission, VI Taxicab Commission, UVI Board of Trustees and VI Board of General Contractors.

Jeffery Boschulte was nominated for two boards: VI Board of Land Appeals and the VI Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyor. According to his testimony, Mr. Boschulte attended All Saints Cathedral School and his first architect and engineering jobs were in high school. He received his bachelor's degree at the University of Virginia and master's of architecture at Georgia Tech.

Mr. Boschulte opened his own firm in 2002 and became certified by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB). Both of his nominations were forwarded unanimously.

Ryan Wisehart was nominated for the Board of Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyor, and moved to the Virgin Islands in 1999 where worked for Brian Mosely and Associates before purchasing the company in 2012. He is a graduate of Purdue University with a bachelor of science degree in land surveying. He was licensed as a land surveyor in 2002.

Elissa Runyon was nominated for the VI Coastal Zone Management Commission. She has lived in St. John since the late 1970's and is a real estate appraiser. Her priorities listed in her testimony were beach access, hotel reconstruction and extending the coastal zone.

Franklin Brathwaite Sr. was nominated for the VI Taxicab Commission and graduated from Ivanna Eudora Kean school. He has had a part-time taxi cab since the late 80's and became a full-time operator in 2011 after retiring as a P.E. teacher for the Virgin Islands Department of Education after 29 years.

Julio King was nominated for VI Board of General Contractors and has over 35 years in the construction industry, and moved back to the territory in 1984. He started his own firm J.U.B. King & Assoc. Inc. in 1995.

Henry Smock was re-nominated for the UVI Board of Trustees and has a lot of experience with the university. Besides being a member on the board of trustees, he has taught at the university and UVI CELL, and his son also attended UVI. Mr. Smock is the current chair of the UVI Board of Trustees and the chair of the Virgin Islands Academic & Cultural Awards Endowments Board.

Gas Station Moratorium Loophole Patch

Senators supported Bill 34-0010, which amends the original gas station five-year halt bill. The original measure issued a moratorium on the provision of licenses for gas stations. It did not, however, block the issuance of gas station permits, issued through the Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources, and therefore created a loophole that allowed current license holders to move forward with construction.

According to bill sponsor Sen. Janelle Sarauw, there were six pending permits before D.P.N.R. for four new gas stations on St. Thomas and two on St. Croix as of last week. St. Thomas has 32 gas stations in operation, St. Croix 30 and St. John 3 – a total of 65 gas stations in the small U.S. territory.

Through this amendment, the pending six permits, if they are not approved before the measure becomes law, will be rejected, Ms. Sarauw said.

Legislators approved Bill 34-0017 to make funds available for the acquisition of plot number 7 Estate Diamond Ruby for the reconstruction and expansion of the Juan F. Louis Hospital. The measure was sponsored by Senator Kenneth Gittens, who [said in a Facebook post](#) that Governor Albert Bryan has already expressed support for the measure.