

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dear Editor, as a Lifelong Charter Industry Professional, I Support the Bebop Floating Lounge

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Staff Consortium **March 20, 2021**



Dear Editor,

In regard to The Bebop floating lounge and restaurant's projected plans, I am hoping to share the reasons with the community for why I too believe in this project.

Having had a lifelong career in the charter industry, both day charters and term charters, as well as being a resident for nearly two decades and a mother raising my children in the Virgin Islands, I see a need for businesses like The Bebop.

The benefits to the charter industry are numerous and urgent. Given the year we have had with the BVI essentially closed to tourism, we were given the opportunity to highlight our thriving charter destination in the USVI in many ways. During this time, we focused on ways to improve on the best experiences for our guests. Simply put, we need more options of things to do on the water.

Typically, a term charter averages eight days, two are spent in the USVI at the beginning of the week and two at the end of the week. In fact, we have always provided 50 percent of the term charter experience over the years while the BVI has received all the credit.

Foxys, Soggy Dollar, Willy T and more recently Hendo's Hideout have all been great destinations that locals and visitors have enjoyed. However, while these same guests spent the other half of their week in the USVI, there are less attractions and things to do here.

Yes, our hiking, snorkeling and beaches are lovely, but we need unique and exciting activities to encourage our guests to return time and again. This year charter guests have had more options with Lovango and Zozo's at Caneel. Additionally, Lime Out, Dinghies, and Pizza Pi have returned as dining venues. Visitors are also venturing weekly now to explore the island of St. Croix. There is no doubt that having a new state-of-the-art venue will greatly add to our tourism product and keep us on the forefront of traveler's minds, even if other destinations reopen without restrictions. The Bebop floating restaurant would be a great addition to these fine dining venues.

The Bebop Team has taken care to address all environmental concerns we could think of and those that have been suggested by government officials and residents. I have personally worked on this project with a marine architect in Annapolis to ensure that the lounge's structure is built with the most advanced, environmentally friendly equipment possible. It will be almost completely solar, with a propane backup generator. No liquid fuel will be on board. The structure will be equipped with new electric engines, a dishwasher -- so we are not filling the landfill with disposables -- and we have doubled the initial capacity for all the holding tanks equipped with alarms, so they are pumped out halfway.

We are excited about our proposed menu that will include local, healthy items. We will not offer fried food so there is no need for a grease trap on board. We have consulted heavily with the Coast Guard to discuss all aspects of the buildout and the onboard safety gear, and we plan to have an outdoor saltwater shower for guests to stay cool without venturing into the surrounding water. We plan to haul out for storm threats, and at a minimum, from August 15th to October 15th when potential threats are highest.

Regarding the issue of approvals, government agencies do not issue permits or approvals for theoretical projects, but I believe the point Mr. Golubitsky recently shared with the press is that these agencies have been heavily consulted in the planning process and that we plan to continue to work with them throughout the process should we get the permits to move forward with the buildout. Since we are building The Bebop structure from scratch and to their qualifications, we look forward to the certifications we need to begin our operations thereafter.

We have approached this project with the people and the natural beauty of the Virgin Islands in mind. We plan to offer a water taxi, so The Bebop is available to everyone. It

will also be a fabulous place of employment for many Virgin Islanders. Additionally, the tax revenues for a business of that caliber and the potential funds it adds to the territory's coffers should not go unmentioned. The yachting industry's dollars spread far and wide in our local economy. Revenues circulate from maintenance professionals to the cleaners and crew, pump out facilities, laundry, divers to maintain the moorings, farmers and local vendors for food and beverages and more.

Currently, the location is used by yachts of all types and sizes. We are as concerned as everyone about the safety of employees, guests, family, and friends. Therefore, we will be closed on days with very rough weather, as many water-based businesses do. On behalf of everyone who has worked hard on this project to make it an eco-friendly, safe, fun environment, with great local food and drinks for all to enjoy, we hope our community will give us the opportunity to move forward.

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