

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Construction of Paul E. Joseph Stadium, Still Under Federal Review, Among Topics Discussed by Bryan and New FEMA Administrator During Recent Meeting

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FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell was sworn into her new position on April 26, 2021 after being confirmed by Congress. By. GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Governor Albert Bryan and Deanne Criswell, FEMA administrator, met at Government House on Friday, the Bryan administration has made known. The meeting follows Ms. Criswell's April 22 approval by Congress following her nomination to the position by President Joe Biden.

Mr. Bryan is said to have congratulated Ms. Criswell on her new position and said he was looking forward to working with the Biden administration on the USVI's continued recovery from the 2017 hurricanes.

According to Gov't House, during the Friday morning meeting, the governor and Ms. Criswell discussed the status of the reconstruction of the Paul E. Joseph Stadium.

The Paul E. Joseph Stadium has been undergoing federal review since last year as work was halted pending approval for a conditional letter of map revision (CLOMR) from FEMA, a request that was made by the Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR). In simple terms, "the stadium is being built on a floodplain and has the potential to alter the floodplain," said GEC managing partner, John Wessel during a Senate hearing in December 2020. GEC was awarded the contract to build the stadium in November of 2014 under the de Jongh administration, and the contract was postponed for about a year under the Mapp administration. News of the delay incensed lawmakers and residents of the territory alike, as the local government [had already spent \\$18 million on the project](#), only to hit a snag that some contend should have been evaluated from the outset.



Governor Albert Bryan during Friday's meeting with Deanne Criswell, FEMA administrator for the U.S. Virgin Islands.
(Credit: Gov't House)

According to Gov't House, Ms. Criswell is said to have expressed her awareness of the importance of the project "and the critical role the stadium plays in the future economy of St. Croix."

Mr. Bryan also thanked the administrator for releasing [more than \\$400 million in STEP program funds](#) to the local government to pay vendors and contractors for recovery work performed.

Other topics discussed include the local government's request for a waiver of the territory's 10 percent match for federal funds; the various concerns regarding the territory's hospitals; the status of school reconstruction; and upgrading and the wastewater and drinking water systems in the territory, Gov't House said.

Mr. Bryan and Ms. Criswell also discussed the territory's preparedness efforts for the 2021 hurricane season and strategic plans for operating shelters in the Covid environment, according to the administration.

Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien, VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion and FEMA Acting Recovery Director for the Virgin Islands John Covell also attended Friday's meeting, stated the release.

Ms. Criswell is a former commissioner of the New York City Emergency Management department who was confirmed by Congress to head FEMA as the 12th administrator on April 22. She was sworn-in April 26.