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Still Awaiting FEMA Decision, Paul E. Joseph Stadium Project Deemed A 'Travesty'

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Rendering of the Paul E. Joseph Stadium project.

Without a decision on a conditional letter of map revision (CLOMR) that was expected in May from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Paul E. Joseph Stadium project is “just in a holding pattern waiting for FEMA,” Public Works Commissioner Derek Gabriel said on Tuesday, much to the disappointment of senators.

The initial delay of the project due to the CLMOR issue was detailed in [December by the Consortium](#) when the matter was revealed on the Senate floor.

The initial report said: GEC managing partner, John Wessel, explained how the CLOMR request came about. GEC is the firm contracted to build the stadium. "GEC prepared, at the request of

DPNR, a floodplain analysis done by experts in the field that was for FEMA to review. This happened once we had completed the design showing exactly where all the elevations would be for the field for the stadium, the little league field and the Festival Village. As a result a request was made for a CLOMR because the stadium is being built in a floodplain and has the potential to alter the floodplain," said Mr. Wessel.

During the December hearing, James Grum, engineering administrator for capital improvement projects at the Department of Public Works, explained that FEMA controls all of the floodplains in the territory. He also stated, "Given that progress is halted until the CLOMR is accepted and the building permit is re-issued, the balance of the construction will continue in May of 2021."

During a Tuesday hearing, Senator Janelle Sarauw inquired about the status of the CLOMR. "We are in July in a few days and we still don't have any response... what's the conversations?"

Mr. Gabriel said in response, "It is taking longer than we thought. You are correct we did anticipate having an answer by May... we've been trying to impress upon FEMA the importance of getting the CLOMR reviewed."

Ms. Sarauw followed up by asking, "What is FEMA saying, what is the new tentative date?" Mr. Gabriel answered, "Before the end of summer. They don't have a tentative date but it is under review, they are promising us that they are trying to review as quickly as possible."

Following Mr. Gabriel's response, Ms. Sarauw stated, "This is a travesty."

Senator Kurt Vialet pressed for more information on the delay. "The hold up is that FEMA is reviewing it, Senator Vialet. I wish I had more information," said Mr. Gabriel. He added, "We are applying as much pressure as possible."

Mr. Vialet wondered why FEMA approval was needed if the project is being funded with local dollars. "Because it is in a floodplain" and the FEMA process is needed to be able to secure insurance, the Public Works commissioner stated.

Mr. Gabriel's response only elicited curiosity from the senator. "I just don't understand how this local project that already has \$14 million in the ground without this CLOMR permit has now been stopped awaiting this CLOMR permit... it's a travesty that we can't get this done. I just don't understand it. We spent \$18 million and we don't even have a wall, not one wall."

The stadium has seen lengthy delays beginning with the Mapp administration. We documented them [here](#).