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Bryan Describes Marine Task Force's First Meeting as Productive

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, center, convened the first meeting of the Governor's Marine Task Force this week. By. GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Governor Albert Bryan on Tuesday convened the first meeting of his Marine Task Force, a public-private partnership between marine-based businesses and the V.I. government, Government House has made known. Government House said the task force was created by the Bryan administration to help revitalize the industry in the territory, boost the local economy and create jobs through workforce development.

According to Government House, the inaugural meeting focused on a wide range of subjects, including:

- Building up marine infrastructure
- Increasing moorings throughout the territory
- Developing marine industry apprenticeship programs to broaden job opportunities for USVI residents
- Maximizing the potential of Benner Bay on St. Thomas
- Expanding the Marine Service industries to encourage additional vessels to stay in the Virgin Island for marine maintenance and annual vessel haul-outs
- Streamlining the U.S. Customs process

“It was a very productive meeting and an excellent start to my Administration’s initiative of greatly enhancing our Marine Industry, increase revenue and stabilize the economy and provide more offerings for visitors,” Mr. Bryan said. “The takeaway was a number of action items to get the Task Force started, and I am encouraged by the knowledge and enthusiasm of the Task Force participants.”

A series of so-called Action Items were up for discussion on Tuesday. Those items included, but were not limited to:

- Identifying derelict properties surrounding Benner Bay Lagoon and Salt River Bay
- Identifying government properties for additional vessel haul-out and marine service facilities
- Facilitating Krum Bay clean up with a \$2 million CZM Marine Debris Removal Grant through the Department of Planning and Natural Resources
- Increasing the number of permanent and day moorings
- Providing funding for existing marine apprenticeship programs
- Increasing participation by Virgin Islands students in vessel charter, marine service provider and shipbuilding employment opportunities

Mr. Bryan said that DPNR vessel registration for 2020-2021 will be available online and that DPNR is currently mapping all registered vessel moorings in the territory on Google Earth. When the mapping project is completed, it will allow DPNR to connect the mooring to the owner quickly in the event of any disaster.

Additionally, the Virgin Islands Port Authority on Tuesday began the installation of new mooring cleats along the St. Thomas Waterfront. The cleats will allow berthing by luxury yachts up to 23 metric tons. Installation should be completed in two weeks, and cleats then will be installed on the Crown Bay excursion dock will be next, followed by Red Hook and Cruz Bay, St. John.

In addition to Governor Bryan, Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte and members of the Governor’s senior policy staff, Task Force participants present at Tuesday’s meeting included:

- Kelvin Bailey Jr., board chairman of the Virgin Islands Game Fishing Club
- Oriel Blake, executive director of the V.I. Professional Charter Association
- Scott Bradley, representing My Brother’s Workshop’s Marine apprenticeship program

- Dare Blankenhorn, owner of Charter Caribe
- Rich Difede, owner of Gold Coast Yachts shipbuilders
- Guilderooy Sprauve, organizer of the USVI Poker Run
- Harald Tapp, representing Offshore Marine service provider

The task force will meet next in February.

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