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Dept. of Education to Continue Facilities Master Planning Sessions to Guide New Schools Construction

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Modern School Concept

The New Schools Construction Advisory Board, comprised of Virgin Islands Department of Education professionals and other V.I. residents, will continue work on a Facilities Master Plan for a period of six months beginning January 15 at Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School that will guide the construction of new public schools expected to be built in the territory over the next 5-10 years. A similar meeting will take place January 21 on St. Croix, D.O.E. has announced.

The federally mandated Facilities Master Plan will establish the use of building standards and scope of work for all Department of Education facilities that will be constructed. Planning sessions are expected to continue through June, with periodic community workshops as milestones

are reached.

D.O.E. said the planning sessions follow a series of public meetings the Board held last October to update residents on the work it had been doing since January 2019 and to gain the community's input on the building of schools—an opportunity made available through funding from Congress following the 2017 storms.

During his second State of the Territory Address on January 13, Governor Albert Bryan announced the intent to begin demolition of the Charlotte Amalie High School and the original campus of the Arthur A. Richards Jr. High School, both of which were extensively damaged from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Mr. Bryan also said that Evelyn M. Williams Elementary School will be the new site of the Arthur A. Richards K-8 School. This month, the Department of Education, working closely with the GVI's new Office of Disaster Recovery, is drafting Requests for Proposals for the demolition of the schools, and for repairs to Gladys Abraham Elementary School and the Wheatley Skills Center, according to D.O.E.

The New Schools Construction Advisory Board is headed by Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D., Department of Education chief operations officer and Chaneel Callwood-Daniels, architect. The body has more than 60 members on St. Thomas and St. Croix, and is comprised of teachers, school administrators, students, union members and leaders, parents, business owners, elected officials, and community activists.

Public input on the construction of schools in either district may be emailed to newschoolsproject@vide.vi.