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Dept. of Health Seeks CZM Permit For New WIC Building at Knud Hansen Complex in St. Thomas; Ritz Carlton, Other Resorts Making Changes

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The Knud Hansen Complex in St. Thomas. By. THE V.I. OFFICE OF DISASTER RECOVERY.

The St. Thomas Coastal Zone Management (CZM) held a committee meeting on Tuesday with a number of important projects seeking permits on the agenda, among them a V.I. Dept. of Health proposal for the construction of a new Women, Infant and Children (WIC) building at the Knud Hansen Complex in St. Thomas.

The D.O.H. proposal, which was the last item of the CZM meeting, included the demolition of the existing structure and the construction of the replacement building. Parking area details were also

discussed. Rosalinda Brown representing D.O.H. said that the old mental health building will eventually be demolished to make room for more parking. Parking space adjacent to the main building was for the program, but the additional parking would be shared. The parking lot project was at 60 percent design stage as of Tuesday.

The new parking area is expected to hold just under 100 vehicles, with 5 spaces designated for ADA access to the facility.

For now, priority is on the main WIC building. The proposed project site is located at 1309 Hospital Ground, St. Thomas. During Tuesday's meeting, Brown said \$6.4 million has been awarded for the repairs of the building. She said D.O.H. has hired an architect to produce the required drawings. A representative from Springline Architects presented maps, outlines, and other details concerning the new building. It was revealed that the existing site would be demolished and replaced with a two-story structure.

In terms of the timeframe for the WIC project, Brown said it was expected to be completed in one year, by Sept 30, 2023. She detailed how the building had previously been damaged by a hurricane and later vacated in 2004 due to extensive damages to the roof. Budget issues had hindered the repair work which needed to be done at that time. The building was further damaged in more recent hurricanes and became eligible for funding.

Once completed, D.O.H. intends to move the WIC program into the new building which will be used primarily for the program. As this was a hearing only, no decisions were made.

Persons with comments relating to this project have up to seven days after the hearing (August 30) to submit them to the CZM office.

Other Items on the CZM Agenda

The RC Hotel VI, Inc. request was first on the CZM agenda. The firm sought permission to replace the retractable roof on the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Alloro Dining Room's Porch with a wood beam roof. Other upcoming projects for Ritz Carlton included the replacement of the storage and shed behind the hotel kitchen area with a new storage building and covered storage area. The RC also plans to include ADA parking.

During his presentation, Chris Tavernier, an architect representing the company, said the retractable roofs were being changed because they were not sturdy enough to stand up against rainy and windy weather conditions. The retractable roots will be replaced with solid roofs.

The permit inclusive of the other projects listed on Tuesday by Ritz Carlton was granted. Special conditions were listed including the requirement for Ritz Carlton to notify the CZM at least 48 hours prior to any construction being done. CMZ representatives gave their assurances that site visits would be conducted during the construction process.

Virgin Islands B & R, Inc. was next on the list with a request to install swim buoys and can buoys to create a swim area with a vessel access channel near the beach at the Secret Harbor Beach Resort on St. Thomas.

Amy Dempsey from Bio Impact detailed in her presentation how the line of swim buoys would be installed approximately 415 feet offshore of the beach at Secret Harbor. The main reason for this installation is to protect swimmers and the shallow corals and seagrass beds. The swim line will, according to the committee agenda, "consist of red float buoys on a floating rope 750 feet in

length, with helix anchors placed every 50 feet for a total of 16 anchors. Seven can buoys will be placed at the anchor points warning that it is a swim area."

During her presentation, Dempsey spoke of the way boats always came right up to the shore where swimmers were. She noted how dangerous this practice was. Added to that, there were endangered corals in the area. Dempsey shared photos of some of the coral damage which emphasized the need to protect the species. Some of the damage had been inflicted by boat anchors.

Cory Santana, who also represented the Secret Harbour Beach Resort during the CZM meeting, said this was a big concern not only for tourist but for locals as well who frequent the beach. Though he has worked elsewhere in the world, Santana highlighted that he'd "never seen anything quite like this." As the boat issue has been going on for a long time, the representatives said the resort decided to do something about it.

Once the buoys are installed, there will still be an area for dive boats to come in to pick up guests.

The Secret Harbour Beach project was approved with a list of conditions that included a 48-hour notice prior to construction requirement and the maintenance of erosion and sediment control measures throughout project. Virgin Islands B & R, Inc. was also required to remove marine debris from specific areas and develop a relationship with University of the Virgin Islands' Marine Division.

Next, representatives of the Sugar Bay Club & Resort Corp appeared seeking permission to assign and transfer permits from the Sugar Bay Club & Resort Corp. to DV USVI Investment, LLP.

George Dudley, who represented Sugar Bay Club and Resort said meetings with two major operators were being held to decide which would be holding the franchise for the development. He said the next step would be to meet with architects and engineers.

When asked, Dudley revealed that the only construction currently ongoing at the property was related to maintenance. The roof was being repaired to make it watertight. In terms of modifications, he said the team was waiting to confer with architects and the new franchise operator.

Ahead of any work happening beyond maintenance, Dudley said the focus was on making the premises secure. Thus far, old furnitures have been disposed of and a local company had been engaged to takeover the landscaping. No construction has been done aside from restoring old doors and windows.

As the committee felt the Sugar Bay Club & Resort had "satisfied all the conditions so far," the permit was granted.