

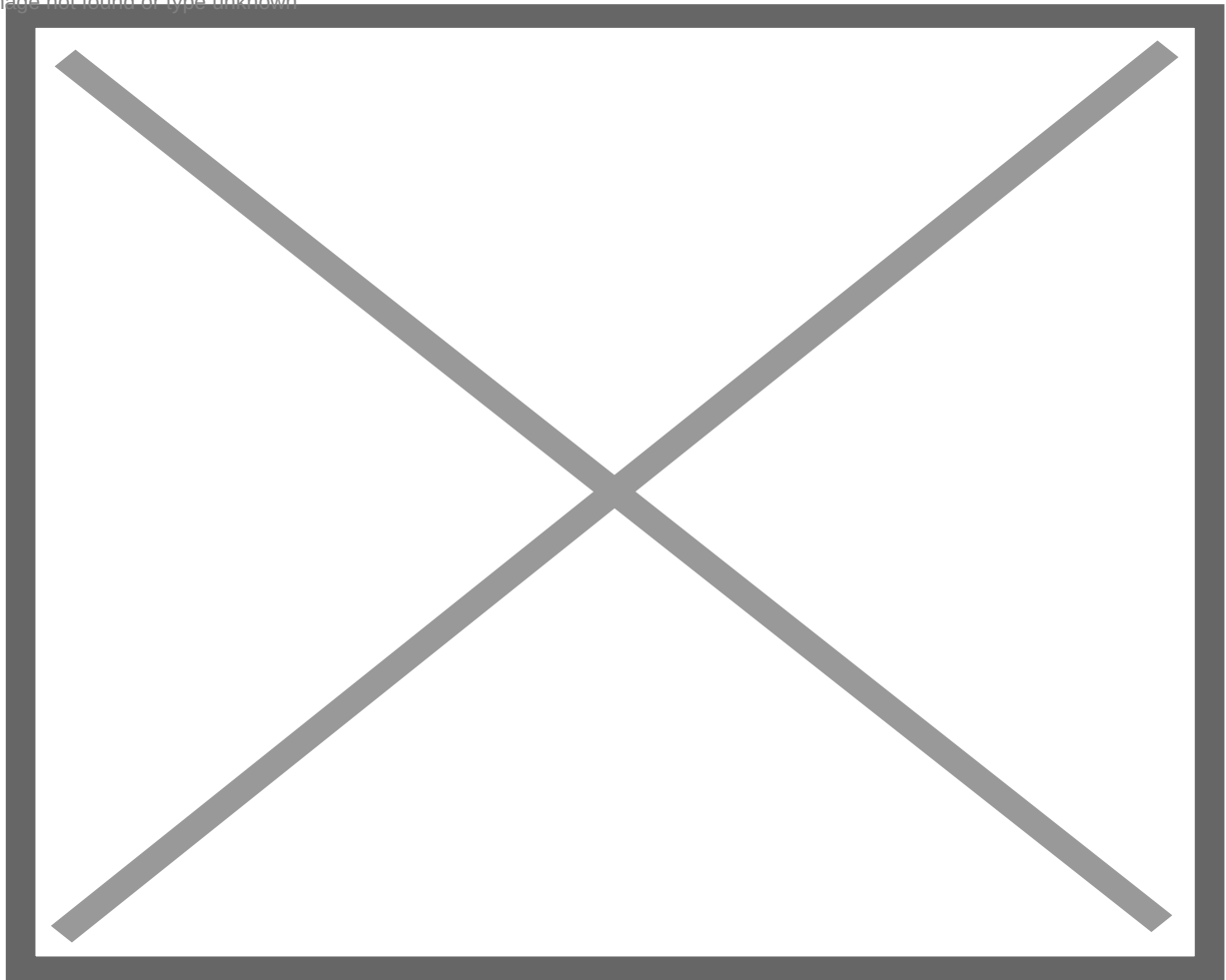
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Preliminary Work Continues at STT, STX Racetracks; VIGL and Southland Still Need CZM Approval of Modification Plans

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Preliminary work activities are progressing on both horse racing tracks in the U.S. Virgin Islands, but both Southland Gaming and VIGL Operations must still receive permission from authorities to make design modifications to their respective construction projects.

Representatives from Southland and VIGL provided updates on their progress thus far to the VI Horse Racing Commission (VIHRC) at a public meeting on Wednesday afternoon.

David Edmonds, Southland's spokesperson, said that preliminary repairs to the roofs at the Clinton E Phipps racetrack on St. Thomas have been completed, as have repairs to cisterns and above-ground water tanks at the facility. A water truck and track maintenance equipment have

since been located on site, and construction fencing has been delivered and is currently being installed. The fencing, meant to separate construction areas from zones where horse operations are taking place, is expected to be completed by the end of the week, said Mr. Edmonds.

The grandstands are currently being manufactured, Mr. Edmonds said, sharing photos of metal structures neatly stacked on top of one another. And crucially, the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) division of the VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) had approved the extension and transfer of current permits, and are awaiting receipt of a modification proposal. Edmonds did not respond to a direct question from the press towards the end of the meeting as to whether the modifications being considered was a smaller footprint for the grandstands — two levels instead of three.

Like Southland, VIGL's representative Jason Williams reported that the extension and transfer of the CZM permit has been approved, and that the agency is awaiting a modification "package" to deliberate over. That package will be ready for submission by April 1st, Williams said. In the interim, preliminary works have begun at the Randall "Doc" James Racetrack on St. Croix. The contractor is currently mobilizing equipment and manpower, and has already begun erecting a privacy fence. The area is undergoing general cleanup, and preparations are underway for the construction of a mile and a quarter chute next to the track. The hope, Mr. Williams says, is that this work will wrap up by the time CZM has deliberated on and approved the proposed modifications, allowing VIGL to transition smoothly to the major construction work ahead of them.

VIHRC Chair Hugo Hodge expressed disappointment that modification packages were yet to be submitted to CZM. Commission member Phillips criticized the lack of visual aides to accompany Mr. Williams's presentation on behalf of VIGL, something Williams promised to rectify by the next update.

Neither the St. Croix or the St. Thomas racing tracks have had any substantial work or assessment done on the racetrack surface, with the idea being that this aspect of operations would be addressed when the preparations for actual racing occurring at the tracks begin in earnest.

In the interim, commission members discussed the issue of temporary racing, and the legal and regulatory requirements that would be needed to allow that to occur. Mr. Hodge disclosed that the commission had been in receipt of correspondence that wanted to explore the possibility of a promoter being allowed to market temporary racing on the island, but commission members noted that legislation that had recently come into force governing racing operations was a hindrance, specifically because the territory has no capacity to enforce the anti-doping requirements that were enacted.

Apart from the unnamed petitioner, Clinton Hedrington from the St. Thomas/St. John Horsemen Association also said that his association was interested in the staging and promotion of temporary racing in their district, promising to come to the commission with a request in that regard once a plan is in place — hopefully before the end of the year.

Mr. Hodge promised to obtain a legal opinion about how to move forward with establishing a legal regime for temporary racing operations in the territory, while Calvert White, commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreations noted that it would take legislative amendments to carve out exceptions to the regulatory requirements for temporary racing. Mr. White also noted that the Government of the Virgin Islands would need to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP), inviting applications from those interested in promoting temporary racing in the

USVI.

VIHRC members and Mr. Hedrington seemed confident that conditions could be in place for sanctioned temporary racing to occur in the territory by the end of the year, or not too much longer beyond that.

Mr. Hodge promised to return to a monthly public meeting schedule for the VIHRC now that work operations at the two racetracks have begun in earnest.

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