

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. John CZM Meeting Considers Two Vital Rehabilitation Projects for Public Infrastructure

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Exterior rendering of the temporary modular office for the Department of Agriculture in St. John. By. DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

The St. John Coastal Zone Management Committee convened on Wednesday to discuss details about two forthcoming projects on the island, as shared by representatives from the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Virgin Islands National Park and Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument.

The first project involves the construction of a temporary modular office for the Department of Agriculture (DOA) while their current facilities in Coral Bay undergo

renovation. DPW's Chief Engineer Tawana Nicholas emphasized the necessity of the structure to maintain functional workspace for DOA personnel. The modular office will occupy the same site as the existing facilities to minimize disruption.

Project designer Jermaine Tyson offered a comprehensive overview of the construction plan, outlining how the project would include a 1,000-gallon above-ground septic tank, water, and power connections, all requiring minor excavation work. Tyson also confirmed that the project complies with flooding standards, as the location of the temporary facility is well above sea level and grade.

Despite the urgent need for the project and the comprehensive explanation, some committee members raised questions about the duration of the modular structure's use and the trend towards temporary buildings rather than improving existing structures. Deputy Commissioner of DOA Risa Richards responded, underlining the necessity of the temporary structure due to current work conditions and assured the committee of DOA's commitment to restoring the historical site once approvals are obtained and funds are secured from FEMA.

The second project discussed was the Solomon Bay road, also known as the Honeymoon or Lighthouse road, which is due for vital rehabilitation after damage sustained during the 2017 hurricanes. Deputy Superintendent Scott Simmons of the Virgin Islands National Park and Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument highlighted the road's importance, providing access from Caneel Bay to Honeymoon Beach and the park service residence.

Kim Campo-Allen, Environmental Protection Specialist with the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD), provided a detailed overview of the project design, environmental compliance, and the roles of various entities involved. The project will repair both embankment failure locations, install retaining walls, and restore disturbed areas with native Virgin Islands National Park plantings.

CZM Director Marlon Hibbert informed the committee of an ongoing assessment by visiting coastal engineers, which aims to understand potential coastal dynamic processes impacting the roadway during the design phase.

Following a seven-day comment period, decisions on the projects will be made within the subsequent 30 days, according to Chairman Penn. Despite the inherent complexities and concerns raised, both projects represent critical steps towards the continued development and restoration of St. John's infrastructure.