

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CZM Board Approves Reconstruction of CAHS and BCB in St. Thomas Amid Concerns; New Fuel Storage Facility Also Raises Questions

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The Charlotte Amalie High School.

The V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources Coastal Zone Management (CZM) division has given the nod to the redesign and reconstruction of the Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS) and the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School (BCB), alongside approving the placement of a fuel storage facility in Estate Bovoni.

During their meeting on July 28, CZM board members voted in favor of using FEMA funds to entirely rebuild CAHS, with plans for new classrooms, administrative offices,

library, cafeteria, and other essential facilities. The project, which is currently 30 percent of the way through its design phase, anticipates widening the existing access road serving the Schneider Regional Medical Center and the upcoming mosque behind the Wheatley Skill Center.

However, concerns were raised about the lack of detailed plans, the need for safety considerations, and issues around waste management. Chaneel Callwood, the architect overseeing school construction for the V.I. Department of Education, acknowledged these and promised further input from the Historic Preservation Committee and DPNR. The construction project is reportedly six to nine months away from the selection of an architect and a contractor.

CZM director Marlon Hibbert suggested that waste from the demolition could be recycled for road construction, while other debris would be shipped off the island.

The BCB project aims to convert the school into a PreK-8th grade campus. Concerns were raised about the single road access, playground construction, student safety, and HVAC units' insulation. However, a decision was postponed until a site visit can be conducted.

At Friday's meeting, board members also approved a permit for Dry Marina, LLC to build a fuel storage facility near the Bovoni landfill. The facility will include a 20-foot office trailer, a 40'x22' steel frame workshop, and a concrete slab with a spill containment system for ISO fuel tanks, among other installations.

While the proposal raised some eyebrows due to its proximity to residential areas and its location in a combustible zone, environmental planner Anita Nibbs noted that the nearest residence was well over 100 feet away, with no public objections raised during a hearing. Caterinna Baesse, a representative from Petroleum Brokers, also assured that the tanks designed for the facility are double-walled and made to withstand 110% of their fuel, making them some of the safest in the industry.