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Dowe Rubbishes Rumors Of VIPA Stonewalling Charlotte Amalie Dredging: '\$17 Million Can Give You 36 Feet'

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The WICO Dock in St. Thomas. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

“Let me make it abundantly clear, the Port Authority in no way shape or form wants to stop, wants to slow down, wants to hinder.” Those were the words of V.I. Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe at the beginning of VIPA’s board meeting on Wednesday.

Mr. Dowe was referencing a query sent by a local journalist about whether VIPA was trying to keep the West Indian Company (WICO) from being able to accommodate the largest class of cruise ship at the Havensight berth by limiting the depth of a pending dredging project in the Charlotte Amalie harbor.

Noting that a project application was submitted in 2018, subsequently withdrawn and resubmitted this January, Mr. Dowe read from the public notice published by the Army Corps of Engineers in reference to the resubmitted application. VIPA had asked the USACE to remove 260 cubic yards of material from the harbor's entrance channel, turning basin and the WICO berth. The entrance channel was requested to be dug to a "controlling depth" of 40 ft. However, according to Mr. Dowe, the \$17 million that has been set aside for the project by the administration can only pay for dredging down to 36 feet.

"The reason we went to meet with WICO is so we can discuss now, beyond the \$17 million, beyond 36 feet, what that cost is and how that is to be paid for," the VIPA executive director declared.

He went on to inform board members that according to the Army Corps of Engineers, Oasis-class vessels require a channel depth of 36 feet, which is what is covered under the allocated funding. "We can apply for any amount of dredging," noted Mr. Dowe, but if the plan is to go deeper than 36 feet, "we must figure out how that is going to be paid for."

Another query about the oft-talked about merger between VIPA and WICO was also dismissed. "Like I've said time and time again, that's not a decision Carlton Dowe would make. If that is going to happen at some point, it wouldn't be a decision that I...would be making," declared Mr. Dowe.

In his executive report, Mr. Dowe also spoke to the progress that was being made with the Cyril E. King parking garage and transportation center project, noting that concrete had been poured in the north part of the garage. He reminded the board of an upcoming public meeting to discuss the new proposed fee hikes for parking. The meeting, scheduled for August 23 at 6 p.m. in the VIPA Administrative Building on St. Thomas, and the VIPA Conference room at the Henry E. Rohlsen airport terminal on St. Croix, will also cover a fee increase for rental of aircraft passenger lifts.

A query from board member Celestino White about the final decision made in the last meeting about the disposition of parking spaces [on the ground floor](#) was met with reassurances by Mr. Dowe. "The main entrance to the parking garage is not going to be the traditional way you go into the airport now," he explained. Instead, travelers would drive onto the second level of the parking garage from the street, not the ground floor, which was decided would be reserved for rental vehicles and taxis. However, among the more than 170 spaces on that level, nobody objects to VIPA's request to "carve out" some spots for accessible parking, Mr. Dowe said.