

## **COMMITTEE UPDATED ON THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS POST-HURRICANE IRMA AND HURRICANE MARIA**

**Date :** November 2, 2017

St. Thomas – The Committee of Housing, Public Works, Waste Management and Planning chaired by Sen. Marvin Blyden, held a meeting at the Capitol Building on Thursday, to receive testimony from the Department of Public Works (DPW) on the status post-Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria. Lawmakers also considered and voted on a bill and CZM Permits.

Post-hurricane restoration efforts of DPW included removal of 130,000 cubic yards of debris on St. Croix while partnering with the Army Corps of Engineers for the debris removal of 50,000 cubic yards in the St. Thomas-St. John District. Thus far, Rumina Construction removed 5,000 cubic yards of debris on Water Island; according to Nelson Petty, Commissioner Nominee of DPW.

On the St. Thomas-St. John District, the Army Corps of Engineers are responsible for guts maintenance, and roadside cleaning and DPW is working on that on St. Croix. The update on traffic lights includes the need to re-install a traffic light system that meets storm requirements. Despite the damage to traffic lights system at major intersections, some traffic lights are operational.

In addition to the DPW update, policymakers also considered Bill. No. 32-0008- as it relates to mooring and anchoring fees to provide for fee reductions for senior citizens and persons with a disability and veterans.

“This bill calls for a 50% reduction of fees for veterans and senior citizens who are boat owners.,” said Sen. Dwayne DeGraff. “This should not have a major financial impact on the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR).” However, the reduction of mooring fees will reduce the department’s ability to hire and manage daily operations stated Jean Pierre Oriol, Director of DPNR for the Division of Coastal Zone Management.

“How many years has it been since mooring fees implemented?” asked Sen. Blyden. In response

Director Oriol, said, "It has been twenty-five years since the fees increased. It was imperative that the new fee schedule is implemented to begin collecting revenues to assist the Division of Environmental Enforcement in meeting its mandates." Sen. Blyden inquired if DPNR has data on the number of seniors who own boats. Director Oriol stated that DPNR does not collect information on individuals, but the fees are based on the class and size of the vessels.

Ultimately, senators voted to hold the bill in committee. Lawmakers stated that although they support seniors, the fee reduction needs to be examined holistically to make a decision that will have a positive outlook for all parties affected by the measure.

Separately, committee members voted and approved the following CZM Permits: CZT-2-16 (L&W)-allows for the continued use and occupancy of the existing reverse osmosis plant, CZX-1-17W- authorizes the maintenance dredging of the Krause Lagoon and Cross Channels to return to an operating depth of -36 ft. and, CZX-36-16 (L&W)-brings Gallows Bay Marine Terminal into compliance with the CZM Act and authorizes the demolition and reconstruction of the 3.020 square foot arrival building.

All approved items will be forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration. Committee Members present are senators Marvin Blyden, Janette Millin Young, Jean Forde, and Brian Smith. Non-Committee senators present are Dwayne DeGraff and Positive Nelson.

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