

## **CZM BILL APPROVED AND SENT TO RULES AND JUDICIARY**

**Date :** November 7, 2019

ST. CROIX--The Committee on Government Operations, Consumer Affairs, Energy, Environment, and Planning chaired by Senator Alicia V. Barnes continued to meet Wednesday afternoon, in the UVI Great Hall of the Albert A. Sheen Campus, St. Croix, to consider Bill No. 33-0105.

According to the Chairwoman, the Bill is An Act seeking to amend the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management (CZM) by (1) updating the chapter to reflect the current name of the department, (2) increasing the term and per diem of members of the Coastal Zone Management Commission, (3) modifying some of the standards for the issuance of coastal zone permits, (4) modifying some of the requirements for the issuance of permits for the development or occupancy of trust lands or other Board of Land Use Appeals and decreasing the time-period within which the Board of Land Use Appeals must hold a public hearing on an appeal.

Bill No. 33-0105 was sponsored by Senators Alicia V. Barnes, Marvin A. Blyden, Kurt A. Vialet, Janelle K. Sarauw, Steven D. Payne, Sr., and Javan E. James, Sr.

Alex Golubitsk, General Counsel for Cowgirl Bebop, LLP and William O. Perkins said that they believe that the changes to the CZM procedures in this Bill will be beneficial to both the tourism industry and to the CZM. He added that Section 3 of the Bill as amended, includes the changes to the definition of "Act" which would clear that the "Act" required is that either a permit application is accepted or rejected.

John Woods, on the behalf of the St. Thomas/St. John Chamber of

Commerce said they are in favor of Bill No. 33-0105 as amended. He added that there are two items that they still advocate for changing. They recommended that the Development Permit has a time frame of 5 years in lieu of the proposed 3-year limit.

He indicated that there are many projects that require CZM permits and also requires financing that must have other CZM entitlements and these can take more than two years to acquire. He said a longer timeframe for development permits will dramatically reduce the need for the proliferation of extension requests that presently plague CZM.

Jean-Pierre Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning & Natural Resources told Committee members that his department is in full support of the increase in the dollar value in the determination of an application being a minor permit. This dollar value, he noted, had not been increased since the inception of the Act in 1978, and is something long overdue.

Senator Barnes amended the Bill in several forms and the Committee voted in favor and sent it to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration.

Committee members at Wednesday's meeting were: Chairwoman Alicia V. Barnes, Senators Marvin Blyden, Allison DeGazon, Kenneth Gittens, Athneil "Bobby" Thomas and Javan James, Sr. Non-Committee members present were: Senators Kurt Vialet, Novelle Francis, Jr., and Donna Frett-Gregory.

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