



VITEMA VIRGIN ISLANDS TERRITORIAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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December 14, 2022

Subject: ZAC-22-12: Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency requesting that Plot Nos. 102-A Remainder, 102-B, and 102-C Estate Hermon Hill, Company Quarter, St. Croix be rezoned from R-3 (Residential-Medium Density) to P (Public)

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you to provide background information and answers to several questions raised during the rezoning public hearing hosted by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) on October 17, 2022 or submitted by letter format to DPNR during the period of open comments which ended October 31, 2022.

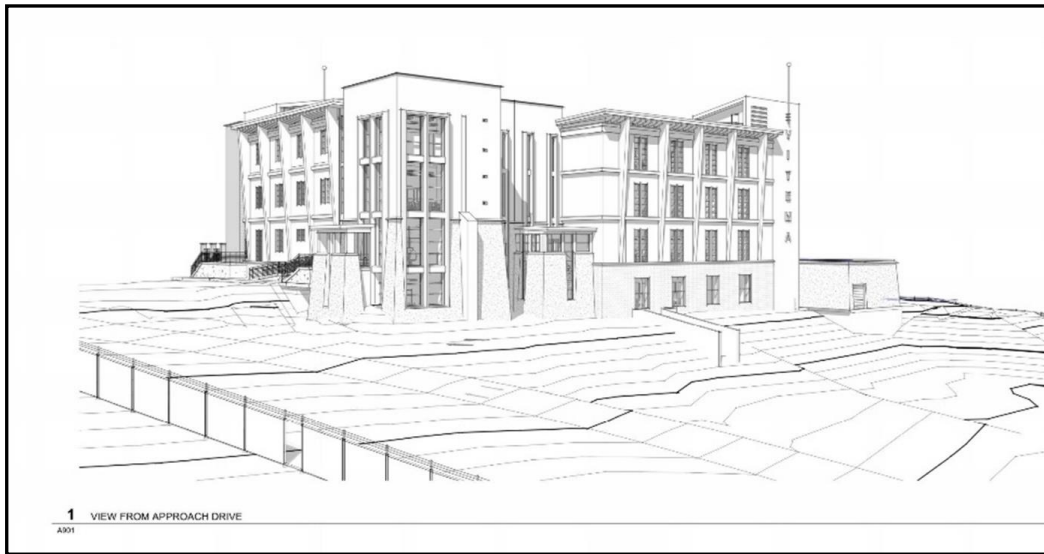
In 1992 the VI Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) and Department of Property & Procurement (DPP) deeded the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) 4.86 acres of Hermon Hill, known as Plot 102-A for the purpose of establishing an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the existing 2-story building. VITEMA successfully operated its St. Croix EOC until 2011, when due to mold, the building was deemed unhealthy to occupy. VITEMA relocated its EOC at a rented three (3) story building in downtown Christiansted to serve as a base for coordinating emergency preparation, response, and recovery operations.

As a result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017, VITEMA and FEMA jointly agreed that an opportunity existed to not only retrofit the old Hermon Hill VITEMA EOC but to relocate the district's 9-1-1 operations from a rented building. The expanded capacity provided space to coordinate the combined efforts of local agencies, federal partners, and the private sector to prepare for and respond to a major disaster at a level Category 5 hurricane. The additional space could serve as conference rooms for other government agencies to hold planning sessions and conduct tabletop exercises with virtual links to other training sites or EOCs such as those on St. Thomas and St. John.

Adjoining areas, Plot 102-B (0.394 acres) and Plot 102-C (0.502 acres), were both deeded from VIFHA to DPP on 19 September 2008. VITEMA is requesting all three Plots which are zoned R-3 to be zoned Public (P) which is in line to the desires of the Government of the Virgin Islands for the purposes of government building and parking lot development.

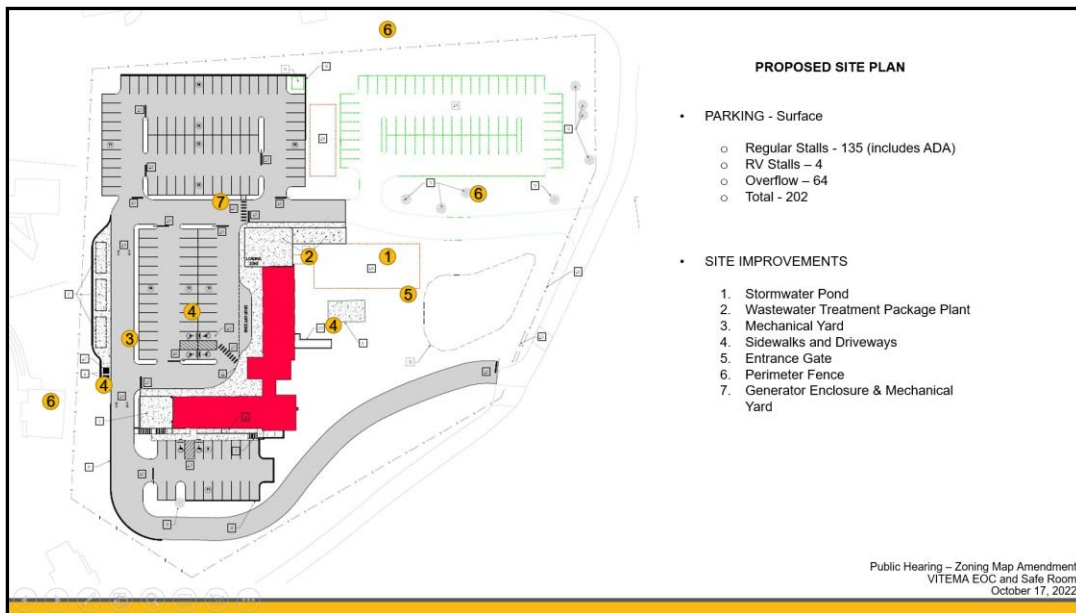
Approval in 2021 of the VITEMA \$22.5 million dollar retrofit by FEMA came with several constraints which the Territory must comply. First, the site selected had to be at Hermon Hill; second, the building had to be contained within the footprint of the original structure; third, the safe-room design had to accommodate up to 200 emergency response individuals to serve as a safe-haven while a storm passed St. Croix. Finally, federal funding was limited to the building, parking lot, and emergency power generation. Earlier, in 2019-2020, an engineering study

determined that the existing building structure could not meet the FEMA requirements for occupancy, and as such, FEMA approved demolition of the existing structure and authorization to build up several stories. VITEMA could build up but not outside the original footprint.



Today the current design shows a three-story south wing (48 ft tall), a four-story north wing (68 ft tall), with a corridor connecting the two wings, totaling 25,000 sq-foot. Due to the change in elevation slope, the four-story north wing would be equal in height to the 48-foot south wing.

Parking onsite accommodates 135 vehicles and room for an additional 64 vehicles overflow. Part of the parking area would serve to hold VITEMA’s mobile EOC, its four-mobile 100kw generators, and several mobile light-sets. VITEMA has a fleet of approximately 10 vehicles which will be parked at the facility. There are normally 10 visitors to VITEMA per day, Monday – Friday, but there may be an increased number of visitors during key events, such as curfew pass issue and classroom training events. VITEMA does not operate any public distribution of food or water from this facility.



The facility will have a maximum of 8-individuals operating 24-hrs a day in capacity as 9-1-1 operators. During normal operations Monday-Friday, 8 am – 5 pm, an additional 52-individuals will work out of the facility in the capacity of operations, planning, logistics, admin & finance, public information, communications, hazard-mitigation, and public assistance. During times when VITEMA offers classroom training to GVI agencies and strategic partners, an additional 40-individuals will be at the facility.

During times of emergency preparation and response, such as during Hurricane threat, all training would be suspended, and up to 90-individuals (running 45 per shift) would be on-site to conduct coordination with local, federal, and private sector partners. Under the FEMA / VITEMA Community Lifeline approach, agency representatives would focus on Safety & Security, Health & Medical, Communications, Hazards Materials, Food, Water & Shelter, Energy (Power & Fuel), and Transportation assessment and restoration efforts. Based on the guidance from the Governor, VITEMA could conduct emergency press conferences at the Hermon Hill facility.

During a major communications outage or training for an outage, the Bureau of Information Technology, FEMA or Private Sector partners, may temporarily erect satellite dishes and communication towers. Normal 24-hr radio communications support 9-1-1 operations, and back-up communication capabilities include devices connected to several antennas approximately 10 ft -20 ft in height. No commercial cellular towers are identified to be placed at the facility site but an emergency private provider cell on wheels (COWs) may be required if 9-1-1 communication outages occur. There is currently no plan or funding to place a helicopter landing zone at Hermon Hill.

A cistern meeting VI-code along with WAPA water line feeding the building is required. A septic system is no longer permitted at the site and the structure will tie-into VIWMA system with a dedicated lift station. An emergency generator with diesel storage tank permits 24-hour operations and will be contained in a noise reduced concrete structure. A storm water retention pond is designed to reduce water run-off but will not eliminate run-off to the neighboring areas as the facility sits on-top of Hermon Hill itself. Approximately 0.6 miles of the Estate Hermon Hill Road will serve as both a demolition haul-out road and a construction road. Coordination with Department of Public Works (DPW) has begun to outline the process to identify any temporary and permanent road repair from damage caused by heavy vehicles. Appropriate measures will be followed in accordance with DPNR requirements to minimize dust, road debris, and noise to the surrounding community during demolition and construction phases.

A construction fence will be placed around the perimeter of the facility, but VITEMA will need to seek separate funding to establish an improved physical security posture to include entrance gate-controlled access, security cameras, and landscaping. The paved road going around Hermon Hill, VITEMA Road, is narrow and may need to be identified as a one-way road, in coordination with the DPW or widened to support increased traffic flow in and out of the facility. As for off-road parking, there is not enough room for off-road parking and all vehicles will be required to park at the VITEMA parking lot on top of Hermon Hill, where there is room for 135 vehicles and 64 over-flow vehicles.

VITEMA has recently hired a full-time construction program manager, Mr. Asante Richards, who will coordinate with the demolition and construction firms to ensure proper work performance, coordinate with the DPW on road and site requirements, ensure DPNR

environmental standards are maintained, and serve as a point of contact to the community to address their concerns during demolition and construction phases of the project.

Daryl D. Jaschen

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Director