

Hermon Hill Wind Retrofit and Safe Room Project Update



PRESENTED BY

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Submitted to

SENATOR MARISE C. JAMES, Esq. CHAIRMAN

Senate Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure & Planning

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2 OPENING COMMENTS

3 Good morning Senator Marise C. James, Esq., Chair of the Committee on Disaster Recovery,
4 Infrastructure & Planning, and all other senators present, members of the 36th legislative staff and
5 those in the viewing and listening audience. I am Daryl D. Jaschen, Director of the Virgin Islands
6 Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA). Today I will provide an update on
7 VITEMA's Hurricane Maria Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) project known as the
8 Hermon Hill Wind Retrofit and Safe Room Project located on the Island of St. Croix.

9 FEDERAL HAZARD MITIGATION FUNDING

10 FEMA approved the Hermon Hill Wind Retrofit and Safe Room Project on April 19, 2020, with
11 approximately \$22.51 million in HMGP funding. Since that time, FEMA has approved several
12 amendments to the Scope of Work to refine the project as engineering and federal reviews
13 progressed. These amendments were one of the initial challenges to address key items required by
14 FEMA guidance. The successful processing of these amendments were the results of months of
15 coordination between FEMA and the Territory with the support of the A&E firm for this project
16 Springline Architects LLC. (SLA). Most recently, FEMA issued Amendment No. 4 on July 1,
17 2025, updating the project's engineering, construction, and contingency budgets while maintaining
18 the overall federal investment.

19 REZONING AND FEDERAL CONSISTENCY

20 The project is currently in Phase I, engineering and design. Significant milestones for this project
21 include the following: VITEMA was able to complete the necessary rezoning through the
22 Department of Planning and Natural Resources Petition to Amend the Official Zoning Map No.
23 SCZ-7 on January 26, 2023, plots No.102-A remainder, 102-B, and 102-C Estate Hermon Hill,
24 Company Quarter, St. Croix from R-3 (residential-Medium Density to P (Public) covering a total
25 of 4.579 acres. Rezoning Bill No. 35-0021 was signed by Governor Bryan on May 3, 2025. This
26 rezoning was one of the initial implementation challenges that has been successfully addressed.
27 On May 20, 2025, VITEMA successfully completed the required Federal Consistency
28 Determination (FCD) hearing on project CZM-020 VITEMA EOC Estate Hermon Hill, St. Croix,
29 demolition, and construction project. Accompanying the passing vote by the Board, are fifteen
30 (15) special conditions listed, which VITEMA is responsible for compliance and will be part of
31 the project implementation.

32 ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING DESIGN

33 Recently Spring Line Architects completed the 60% design along with the required independent
34 peer review. The peer review is a required process to ensure that the designs meet all the necessary
35 requirements as mandated by the FEMA P-361 Safe Rooms for Tornadoes and Hurricanes. SLA
36 is currently working on design adjustments based on the comments received from the Peer review.
37 As of May 30th, approximately \$2.4 million has been expended for Architectural and Engineering
38 services supporting project development.

39
40 Phase I engineering activities are scheduled for completion in October 2026. Upon completion of
41 the 100% design package, FEMA will review the Phase I deliverables. Following FEMA approval,
42 the project will advance into Phase II, including procurement, demolition, construction, and project
43 closeout in accordance with the approved schedule. Although this project has required extensive
44 engineering, environmental, regulatory, and FEMA coordination, significant progress has been
45 achieved. VITEMA remains committed to completing the remaining Phase I activities, securing
46 FEMA approval of the final design package, and moving this critical Emergency Operations
47 Center and Safe Room into construction as quickly as federal approvals allow.

48 VITEMA HERMON HILL FACILITY



49
50 **Figure 1: VITEMA Hermon Hill Architectural Design Rendering (2026)**

51 As shown in the Architectural Design Rendering, figure 1, the current building design shows a
52 three-story south wing (48 ft tall), a four-story north wing (68 ft tall), with a corridor connecting
53 the two wings, totaling 25,000 sq-feet. Due to the change in elevation slope, the four-story north
54 wing would be equal in height to the 48-foot south wing. As this project is a Retrofit of an existing

55 structure, FEMA requires that design engineers provide design options that utilize the existing
56 footprint. Under this constraint, the A&E firm is permitted to go up in elevation, as in additional
57 floors, but may not expand beyond the current two-dimension outline.

58

59 The new VITEMA Hermon Hill facility has been designed to support daily emergency
60 management operations while providing surge capacity during hurricanes and other disasters. The
61 facility will support (1) an eight (8) workstation 24-hour 9-1-1 Emergency Communications
62 Center (ECC), (2) emergency operations center (EOC) for territorial, federal, private-sector, and
63 nonprofit partners, (3) an emergency public information activities center, and (4) a continuity of
64 operations location for government functions. Supporting infrastructure includes emergency
65 power systems, resilient communications capabilities, mobile response assets, and sufficient
66 parking for routine and emergency operations.

67

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

75

76 The facility will have a maximum of 8-individuals operating 24-hrs a day in capacity as 9-1-1
77 operators. During normal operations Monday-Friday, 8 am – 5 pm, an additional 52-indiviudulas
78 will work out of the facility in the capacity of operations, planning, logistics, admin & finance,
79 public information, communications, hazard-mitigation, and public assistance. During times when
80 VITEMA offers classroom training to GVI agencies and strategic partners an additional 40-
81 individuals will be at the facility. Our federal partners, primarily FEMA, will have office space
82 available for their use as part of the full time Caribbean Area Office staff or during surge operations
83 in preparation for, or response to, a disaster event, such as a major Hurricane threat to the Territory.

84

85 During a major communications outage or training for an outage, the Bureau of Information
 86 Technology or Private Sector partners, may temporarily erect satellite dishes and mobile
 87 communication towers. Normal 24-hr radio communications support 9-1-1 operations, and back-
 88 up communication capabilities include devices connected to several antennas approximately 10 ft
 89 in height. No commercial cellular towers are identified to be placed at the facility site but an
 90 emergency private provider cell on wheels (COWs) may be required if 9-1-1 communication
 91 outages occur. There is currently no plan or funding to place a helicopter landing zone at Hermon
 92 Hill. Emergency backup-power is provided by two (2) generators (primary and backup) housed in
 93 a separate building next to the main facility. FEMA does not fund any solar micro grid temporary
 94 power solutions as part of the project.

95 **CHALLENGES**

96 During both hearings on the Plot Rezoning and on Federal Consistency Determination, a concern
 97 was raised regarding having an Owner Representative at the Hermon Hill site to ensure monitoring
 98 and enforcement of the special conditions listed by the Federal Consistency Determination Board
 99 as well as availability by neighboring residents to address any concerns. VITEMA has
 100 authorization to hire an Owner Representative who will be located at the job site during demolition
 101 and construction phases. The funding for this position is 100% federal.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
	SITE STABILIZATION & STORMWATER MANAGEMENT				
1	SITE WORK AND DRAINAGE	1	LS	\$ 3,374,050	\$ 3,374,050
	EOC BUILDING CONSTRUCTION				
2	BUILDING CONSTRUCTION	1	LS	\$ 37,022,510	\$ 37,022,510
	FURNITURE, FIXTURES & EQUIPMENT				
3	PROJECTED FFE EXPENSES	1	LS	\$ 7,208,035	\$ 7,208,035
	TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST				\$ 47,604,595
	DESIGN & PROJECT ADMINISTRATION				
4	A/E DESIGN CONTRACT FEES	1	LS	\$ 3,824,750	\$ 3,824,750
5	PM - CONSTRUCTION PHASE (From CEF Summary)	1	LS	\$ 1,431,392	\$ 1,431,392
6	CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION & CLOSEOUT	1	LS	\$ 1,335,000	\$ 1,335,000
	DESIGN & PROJECT ADMINISTRATION COST				\$ 6,591,142
	TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST				\$ 54,195,736

102
 103 **Figure 2: Hermon Hill Wind Retro Fit / Safe Room and Site Stabilization Estimate Costs (Feb 2026)**

104
 105 While the testimony so far is focused on the costs, as shown in Figure 2, for the A&E, demolition,
 106 and construction costs, which are all Federally funded, there is an additional federally funded
 107 project which supports site stabilization and storm water management. This project is funded at

108 \$3,374,050 and is scheduled to be completed concurrently with the construction of the VITEMA
109 Hermon Hill facility. However, there are additional costs associated with the Hermon Hill facility
110 which are yet to have funding identified. These overall unfunded items are for Furniture, Fixtures,
111 and Equipment (FFE) and were identified during the design phase with an additional total cost
112 estimate of \$7,208,035. FFE costs include office furniture, phone system, electronic security
113 system, computer workstations, video equipment, backup power supply and physical security gate
114 access.

115 Once the facility is operational, VITEMA has identified an annual Operations and Maintenance
116 Budget requirement of \$280,000. This cost estimate covers HVAC, plumbing, electrical &
117 lighting, generator services, fire safety systems, security, communications, elevator, landscaping,
118 stormwater, cleaning, and parking areas.

119 Outside plant installation and connections for water, sewer, electrical, and telecommunications is
120 being coordinated through the Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR). The ODR efforts ensure overall
121 St. Croix interagency coordination is tracked and work assignments are scheduled to meet
122 construction timelines and certificates of occupancy needs.

123 **CLOSING COMMENTS**

124 In closing and as a summary of this testimony, and I want to emphasize, the VITEMA Hermon
125 Hill facility is being designed and funded to comply with FEMA P-361 Safe Room standards. But
126 unlike other safe rooms being built in the territory, this is not a public congregate shelter. This
127 facility, when needed to serve as a safe room, will be for the protection of 9-1-1 operators, local
128 government officials, federal partners, agency representatives, and military staff, who are on the
129 Island of St. Croix in preparation for, or responding to, a Territorial or Federally declared disaster.
130 Committee Chair, Senator Marise C. James, Esq. and other committee members, this concludes
131 my testimony and I am prepared for your questions.