

Airport P3, Crown Bay Redevelopment Talks Expected to Conclude by End of 2026, VIPA Says

Interim Exec. Director Ava Penn said VIPA's public-private partnership negotiations for the redevelopment of the Cyril E. King and Henry E. Rohlsen airports, along with talks for the Crown Bay District, are advancing toward expected year-end completion.

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A Delta Airlines flight taken off from the Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas on May 15, 2026. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

The V.I. Port Authority expects negotiations tied to two major initiatives — the P3 process for the territory's two airports and the redevelopment of the Crown Bay District on St. Thomas — to be finalized before the end of 2026, Interim Executive Director Ava Penn told members of VIPA's

governing board on Wednesday.

Delivering a report after roughly two months at the helm, Ms. Penn said she has worked with the support of VIPA's board and staff to maintain operational continuity during the authority's leadership transition, while also supporting employees and keeping major initiatives moving.

Among the most consequential items, she said, are "P3 negotiations for our two airports and the redevelopment of the Crown Bay District on St. Thomas," which have continued to advance. "Negotiations for both are expected to be finalized by year end," Ms. Penn said.

The update places two of VIPA's most closely watched development efforts on a year-end timeline: the public-private partnership process involving the territory's airports, and the planned redevelopment of Crown Bay, a critical marine and commercial district on St. Thomas.

The airport P3 — shorthand for public-private partnership — is VIPA's long-running effort to modernize the Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas and the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix through a private-sector partner. Under the structure previously outlined by VIPA, the airports would remain assets of the Port Authority and the Government of the Virgin Islands, while the selected private partner would help finance, redevelop and operate the facilities. VIPA has named Sky City/VIports Partners as the private group selected for the effort, with the project intended to bring major upgrades to both airport terminals.

Ms. Penn also told the board that VIPA is moving closer to issuing long-delayed financial audits. The authority's FY2022 audit is expected before the end of May, while the FY2023 audit should be completed "by July," she said.

Overall, Ms. Penn said, "programs continue to operate effectively, and internal processes are reviewed and adjusted where necessary to improve efficiency and impact."

Her report also touched on several active capital projects. The runway resurfacing project began at the end of April, and board members sought clarity on whether the work would be completed this year. Director of Engineering Preston Beyer said the contractual period of performance runs until February 2027, though staff is working to keep the project within that timeline.

Ms. Penn also reported that contract negotiations are being finalized with the selected contractor for the Charlotte Amalie Harbor dredging project, which is expected to begin before the end of the year.

The engineering staff also conducted a construction kickoff meeting for a terminal improvements project involving Tropical Shipping, Crowley and Island Roofs. That project is expected to begin in June.

Ms. Penn's report also included updates on VIPA's broader planning, stakeholder engagement and internal initiatives. She said VIPA staff and board members attended the Seatrade Cruise Global conference in March, and that meetings with tenants, industry partners, and federal and local agencies have continued.

The authority's engineering division also hosted strategic plan open houses on all three islands from May 5 through May 7.

On the employee engagement side, Ms. Penn said VIPA launched a new initiative granting employees administrative leave for their birthdays. The authority also provided female employees

with a small token of appreciation in honor of Mother's Day. Based on feedback received, she said both initiatives were well received.

Ms. Penn said staff would also provide board members with an overview of VIPA's financial position through March 31, a status report on outstanding receivables and collection efforts, and project updates on the authority's capital program.

She said VIPA's performance through the six-month reporting period was driven primarily by the Marine Division, supported by strong port activity and continued control of expenses. While overall performance remained favorable, she said staff continues to monitor accounts receivable and strengthen collection efforts.

Ms. Penn also used the report to recognize VIPA's 2026 employees of the year: Mario Painter, land support specialist from the IT Department on St. Thomas, and Elvis Wacky, refrigeration technician from the Maintenance Division on St. Croix.

"I want to publicly congratulate and thank these dedicated employees for their hard work and commitment to VIPA," Ms. Penn said.