

## EDA Board OKs Leatherback Brewing Microgrid, Satellite Brewery

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Kegs of craft beer sit on the racks at Leatherback Brewing Company. (Anne Salafia photo)

Leatherback Brewing Company has been given the green light to construct a solar microgrid at its location in the William D. Roebuck Industrial Park on St. Croix, and to open a satellite brewery on St. Thomas.

The Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, during their Economic Development Park Corporation Governing Board meeting Thursday, unanimously approved the plan that includes replacing a roof damaged in Hurricanes Irma and Maria in return for a rent abatement for the brewery of \$5,000 per month for 84 to 96 months – the amount of time estimated to recoup its investment.

During its executive session, the EDA board also unanimously approved Leatherback's petition to admit a new entity member, 211 Granada del Mar, LLLP, solely owned by David Alan Johnson, and to operate a satellite brewery and tasting room on St. Thomas, according to a summary by EDA CEO Wayne Biggs Jr. at the conclusion of the session.

The St. Croix roof replacement is slated to be funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but negotiations still are ongoing, said Biggs, who presented the proposal to the board during its decision meeting. Since the solar grid will be roof-mounted and cannot proceed without the repairs, Leatherback is folding it into the scope of work.

The EDA board agreed to the deal, with the roof replacement not to exceed \$450,000. Florida Welding West Indies Steel Inc., an Economic Development Commission eligible supplier, was selected for the project after coming in with the tightest timeline of two companies that responded to the RFP, Biggs said. Work is expected to start in about three weeks, he said.

The microgrid and roof project will cost a combined \$1.472 million, according to Biggs, with the solar work done by West Indies Power, a V.I. company partly owned by one of the founders of Cane Bay Partners on St. Croix.

Tenants of the EDC industrial park will receive the benefit of reduced power rates, and the roof warranty will be transferable to the Economic Development Parks Commission, said Biggs.

Biggs told the EDA Board that his office is working to settle FEMA claims for the Roebuck Industrial Park as well as the Virgin Islands Industrial Park on St. Thomas.

Thanks to negotiations by the Office of Disaster Recovery and Witt O'Brien's, the territory's recovery consultants, the St. Thomas claim is currently about \$7.2 million, up from an original estimate of \$1.5 million, and the St. Croix park stands to receive \$5.7 million, up from \$1.2 million, said Biggs.

The claims should be settled within 30 days, once negotiations seeking an additional \$700,000 for St. Thomas and \$500,000 for St. Croix are completed, the CEO said.

The William D. Roebuck Industrial Park, located between Christiansted and Frederiksted, is the largest of the two parks. Situated within four adjacent buildings, it has 158,700 square feet of commercial space. Consisting of 20,000 square feet of commercial space, the Virgin Islands Industrial Park is located on a hillside just outside of Charlotte Amalie and overlooks the Crown Bay Marina Center in Sub Base and King Airport.

FEMA negotiations also are ongoing for repairs to the Fleming Building at 4 King St. in Frederiksted, which houses the main USVIEDA offices on St. Croix, said Biggs. Because it is a historic building — built by William Fleming in 1902 using bricks from structures destroyed in the 1899 hurricane, according to the EDA website — it falls under FEMA's cost replacement repair program, said Biggs.

In other business during its executive session, the board voted unanimously to grant St. Croix resort Sand Castle on the Beach a one-time 10-year extension of its EDC benefits, with the stipulation that it maintain 10 full-time employees. Thirty percent of the workforce must be USVI residents, and not less than 20 percent must be engaged in management or technical positions. The resort also must make a minimum \$350,000 capital investment, give \$12,000 per year in charitable contributions, and offer its employees a health care plan and 401K program.

Lovango Island Holdings — which proposes to develop a resort on Lovango Cay between St. Thomas and St. John — was granted additional time to commence operations due to COVID-19, to Jan. 1, 2022. Financial services firms DIAM Management Inc. and Real Impact Corporation both were granted temporary employment waivers — DIAM to reduce its workforce from eight members to five, and Real Impact Corporation from 10 to five — through Dec. 31, 2021.

Board members attending Thursday's EDA meeting included Chairman Kevin Rodriguez, Vice Chairman and Labor Commissioner Garry Molloy, St. John member and chairman of

the Enterprise Zone Commission Jose Penn, Agriculture Commissioner Positive Nelson, and St. Croix businessman Philip Payne. Board Secretary Haldane Davies, vice president for Business Development and Innovation at the University of the Virgin Islands, had an excused absence.

Editor's Note: This originally incorrectly identified which company named West Indies Power is involved in the project. It is a V.I. company named West Indies Power.



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