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**GOVERNOR MAPP DISCUSSES PLANS FOR NEW
CAHS CAMPUS AND TERRITORY'S SCHOOLS AT TOWN HALL**

Community offered ideas for new building design, modernizing athletic facilities and more

ST. THOMAS, USVI – Residents on St. Thomas expressed their concerns, offered ideas and learned about plans for new public school construction in the district, including the rebuilding of Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS), at a town hall meeting hosted by Governor Kenneth Mapp on Monday, October 16 at the CAHS Ruth E. Thomas Auditorium.

Governor Mapp, joined by Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter, Education Commissioner Dr. Sharon Ann McCollum and other Department of Education officials, offered insight into plans for rebuilding the Territory's public schools.

“What I hear from you all is let's take the opportunity to modernize and rebuild Charlotte Amalie High School,” Governor Mapp noted. “This is the first time that the U.S. Government has said, ‘You know what, it's time for us to do right by the U.S. Virgin Islands and support their complete reconstruction and not do it on a piecemeal basis’.”

While detailing the processes of acquiring disaster-related federal assistance, the Governor said CAHS could qualify for reconstruction under the amended Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Act. Following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the federal law was amended under Section 428 (March 2018) for the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico to address pre-disaster deferred maintenance issues affecting critical public buildings. It also allows for the rebuilding of facilities to international building code standards and the most up-to-date codes regulated by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

During the meeting's segment where public comment was received, CAHS vocational education teacher Iambakisye Richardson offered his ideas on how the historic high school should be rebuilt in order to optimize efficiency and student achievement.

"What is most important for this school when it's rebuilt is to not just look at the core four," he began. "We have an entire string of classrooms from the tennis courts back to the mechanics lab. Level the whole thing."

Richardson went on to describe what a more modern Charlotte Amalie High School could look like.

"Build a five-story tiered structure designed to accommodate the armed services (JROTC), Career and Technical Education, and take that and make it the same section for business, health occupation, nursing and while doing that, make it the section where our seniors can go for on-the-job training," he explained. "This frees up Building B to accommodate our core courses."

Governor Mapp expressed admiration for Richardson's commitment to students.

"Mr. Richardson, I want to thank you for your passion for teaching and working with the young people in the community," the Governor said. "That is the kind of input that we are looking for."

In turn, Lt. Governor Potter invited Richardson to "have a seat at the table" when designing the new CAHS.

"I want to personally invite you to be a part of the team involved in designing the layout of the new school," Potter offered.

Following rigorous commentary from attendees regarding handicap accessibility, modernizing athletic facilities, and other obstacles students face, among other topics, Commissioner McCollum expressed her appreciation for the community's involvement in helping to shape a better future for students.

"Community members presented different points of view that we are going to incorporate," she said. "It gives me encouragement in regards to formulating the advisory committee that we will incorporate teachers, the community, students, every stakeholder, and the business community. We will design a new school that will incorporate the vision of the community."

While the gathering gave St. Thomas residents an avenue through which they could voice their concerns and share ideas, Department of Education Chief of Staff Anthony Thomas pointed out that it was only the beginning of an effort to engage the public on new school construction.

"Everyone should know that this is the beginning of a long process and we have many more forums to do," he said, adding, "I think the Governor did a good job at explaining what it's going to take from the community to have a beneficial outcome."

Department of Education officials thanked the community for providing input and encouraged attendance at upcoming town hall meetings that will discuss plans to rebuild the Territory's other public schools.

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