was assigned in August, and the supervising engineer's work being done by others. "No detail is available."

Project progress

The main works of the Airport Termi-
nal Reconstruction Project were preceded by mould removal and waste disposal activities, which were completed in the second quarter of this year. These necessary activities cleared the terminal building of debris left over from the passing of Irma and Maria in 2017. The contract for the main works was

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On The Military Side (above, left: "Quintana Roo") and FEMA (right) 

Steering Committee: Airport, hotel and debris projects "advancing well"

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

The steering committee met to discuss the progress of the airport, hotel, and debris projects, which are "advancing well." The committee noted that the projects have been progressing on schedule, with some minor delays due to weather and other factors. The committee also discussed the need for increased coordination with local authorities to ensure the smooth operation of these projects.

Habitat project

"The Habitat Resilience and Preparedness Project is advancing quickly," the steering committee said. The trust fund contributed to the new hospital construction — St. Maarten Medical Center (SMCC) — and other projects, particularly to cover design improvements to protect the new hospital building from disaster risks and better organise it to respond during future disasters.

The project also finances essential upgrades to the existing facility, staff training, improvements in protocols and support for SMCC in seeking international accreditation. Additional financing was provided to contribute to the hospital's COVID-19 response capacity.

"The project is advancing very well, with upgrades to the existing facility being completed. This has had significant positive impacts on the provision of on-site care, and the construction is a significant step forward for the country," the steering committee explained.

"The construction of the new building is advancing well with the basement currently being completed. This project has benefits for hospital staff and patients, as there is now a dedicated facility," the steering committee noted.

This project also benefits from exemplary project management, despite the many challenges posed by COVID-19. The project is on schedule, and the steering committee expects it to be completed by the end of the year.

Debris management

"The Emergency Debris Man-
gerement Project (EDMP) has been successful so far," the steering committee said, especially in cleaning up debris from the hurricanes. "We are happy that these activities are scheduled to be continued for at least another year. This has been a major undertaking, in which more than 1,000 cubic meters of debris has been removed from Simpson Bay Lagoon and Mullet Pond, and is currently being transported over and offshore for environmentally-friendly disposal and processing."

The EDMP also procured heavy equipment to improve the operations at the solid waste disposal sites on Pond Island. "With this, the Government can more adequately manage the Pond Island sites," the steering committee said.

The steering committee also noted that the plan to landfill the adjacent community at significant health and environmental risks was abandoned, but the activities essential to proper waste management — including the remaining reorganisation of waste improvement in the use of space, and adequate protection of the community — cannot be undertaken without the prior resettlement of the community.

Resettlement

The National Resettlement Program Bureau (NRPB), with support from the Government, is consulting with the community on a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) that will be implemented before these initiatives can start. "The engagement is a major component in developing and implementing the plan, the NRPB has the plan, the RAP and the Government can disclose the RAP and begin to jointly implement it," the steering committee said.

"Again, we want to reiterate that the resettlement plan is part of a larger (long-term) effort to restructure the existing settlement and develop the municipal sector, which will have significant positive impacts on the health and welfare of the Muirtersen and improve the environment for the sustainability of St. Maarten's tourism economy."

Projects in preparation

The trust fund has several projects in preparation. The one that will be discussed at the next meeting is the Mental Health Project. Objectives of the Project are to improve public and inclusive learning environments, as well as cultural development, to improve the efficiency of St. Maarten's education system.

Under this project, sister Marie Laurence and Charles Dauphin of the Dauphin and Philippep Jubilee Library (PJJL) will be reconstituted. They will focus on an information system to improve data management and teaching in St. Maarten's Communication, Youth and Sport.

"This, in turn, will allow for the development of new developments and decision-making," the steering committee said.

The project is its final stages of preparation, and is expected to be started in the second quarter of this year. Architectural designs still need to be completed in approximately four years. Architectural designs need to be completed before buildings and contracts for the reconstruction works can be processed when these are final.

The Mental Health Project is also in the final stages of preparation. It aims to facilitate the provision of a broader range of quality mental health services.

The precise objectives are being defined, according to the steering committee.

The steering committee said that the "NRPB is working with the World Bank on a project plan, based on input from key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Health Department, and others. More information about the project will be available in 2022."

The steering committee referred to a new housing project involving up to 20 million dollars, mentioning the need to improve and invest in the social housing sector, and to better understand how to stimulate the market to deliver affordable housing that St. Maarten's need. The housing project should aim for a green, resilient, and climate-smart design. Finally, the steering committee noted that public urban spaces are also being discussed as a valuable entry point to improve everyday life in St. Maarten.

More will be known about this project by the end of the year. The steering committee also referred to being in the final stages of the "St. Maarten’s most valuable through upcoming housing and mental health projects," Burruel said.