



Bulletin

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Dutch delegations visit



Late February 2022, two important delegations from the Netherlands visited Saba. Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations and Digitization Alexandra van Huffelen and her delegation arrived February 22 for a two-day visit. And a 15-member delegation of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament was here on February 27 and 28. A number of important topics for Saba were discussed and information shared with both the State Secretary and the Senate delegation. After their arrival, the two delegations were briefed on the completed airport renovation project as well as the solar parks of the Saba Electric Company (SEC), SEC's plans to move to 100 percent renewable energy and the Saba Energy Strategy 2020-2025. Both delegations were given a tour of the island during which stops were made at several projects, such as the new harbor location at Black Rocks and the hydroponics farm where the guests received background information on the projects. Both delegations visited Saba Cares. State Secretary Van Huffelen had meetings the Executive Council and the Island Council. Main topics at these meetings included the good relationship between the Netherlands and Saba, the eradication of poverty and the reduction of the high cost of living, government's strained financial situation and the need to increase the free allowance, and the challenges that Saba's economy faces, in particular the banking system. For Saba, it is important that the 30 million-euro structural Caribbean Netherlands Envelope is used for the free allowance and to address the issue of livelihood. These same topics were discussed with the Senators during a session at the Eugenius Johnson Center on February

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28. Present were the Executive Council and the Island Council who provided their point of view on the topics. Presentations were given by Gideon Wilson of the Department of Community Development about poverty, members of the SEC management about renewable energy, SEC's plans and challenges, Director of Tourism Malinda Hassell about developments in tourism, Head of the Finance Department Maureen Hassell

on Saba's finances, policy advisor Justin Simmons-de Jong about nature and agriculture and Courtney Hassell about economic development. The State Secretary had a meeting with the Saba Business Association (SBA), paid a visit to a single father at the Under the Hill social housing project and had a meet and greet with the Saba Youth Council and others. She also visited the Saba Conservation Foundation (SCF), the waste management facility and the SEC power plant. Saba was the last island that the State Secretary visited as part of her introductory tour of the Dutch Caribbean islands. Part of the delegation of the First Chamber during the few free hours did the Mary's Point trail with Island Governor Johnson, Island Secretary Tim Muller and SCF park ranger James Johnson who provided information the site's heritage, history and nature. For several Senators this was the first visit to Saba. The two delegations were very positive about their visit to Saba.



Renovation Johan Cruyff Court, athletes to Curaçao

The renovation of the Johan Cruyff Court has started. The turf will be replaced, the field levelled and the back wall reinforced. The old turf had been in place since the opening of the Johan Cruyff Court more than 10 years ago and needed urgent replacing. The new turf is of a better quality and, together with the levelling of the field, it will be a huge improvement for sports. "I am very glad that the Cruyff Court is being renovated for it was highly necessary. The upgraded facility will benefit sports on Saba," said Commissioner of Sports Rolando Wilson. A group of 30 persons, consisting of 24 athletes of the Saba Comprehensive School (SCS), four coaches and two coordinators, will travel to Curaçao from March 23 to 28 for a competition of the Student Sport Federation Dutch Caribbean. Saba will compete in Basketball, Indoor Soccer, and Track & Field. Teams that place in the top 3 of their sport will have the opportunity to compete in the regional ODUCC tournament which will take place in Santo Domingo this July.

Connectivity increases, recovery expected

As Saba eased its entry requirements, more flights are being added which is positive for the island's connectivity and an increase in the number of visitors. Windward Islands Airways International (WINAIR) is executing 5 weekly flights to Saba, two times per day, early in the morning and in the late afternoon. For now, flights are not carried out on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but more flights may be added, depending on the demand. The Edge ferry comes to Saba from St. Maarten twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, departing 9am from Simpson Bay and departing Saba at 3:30pm. The Makana ferry is operating four times a week between Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. Day trippers and stay-over tourists are starting to pick up, said Director of Tourism Malinda Hassell. The demand is gradually picking up and with the limited accommodation capacity, she encouraged people to book early. "Yachts are returning to Saba which further helps to raise the visitor numbers and we also expect the return of Sea Dream which will have various calls in 2022. We are looking at an optimistic recovery for the coming quarter," said Hassell. In order for our economy to recover, it is important for the tourism industry to stabilize, stated Commissioner of Tourism Bruce Zagers. "With eased travel restrictions, it will be important that we continue to market Saba not only as the unspoiled queen, but as a safe destination. Together with our stakeholders

Provisional design Black Rocks harbor presented



Commissioner of Infrastructure Bruce Zagers and the harbor project team provided an update on the Saba harbor project during a recent visit of Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations and Digitization Alexandra van Huffelen and a delegation of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. The team presented the latest design and explained the next steps to be taken. In order to move the project forward, the Public Entity Saba wants to propose to the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW) to decide on the final project scope and to get permission to start tendering, so that a contractor can be appointed by the end of the year. Meetings are scheduled with the Ministry of IenW later this month when a delegation of the Public Entity Saba visits The Hague. The final scope includes keeping Fort Bay Harbor as the main cargo harbor and developing a new harbor for all other harbor users at the Black Rocks. An assessment showed that with relatively limited investments, the existing cargo pier at Fort Bay could be upgraded to a future-proof and hurricane-proof cargo facility. The complete separation of small vessel/tourist activities from industrial cargo activities improves the (navigational) safety and will lead to a much more attractive and tourist-friendly Black Rocks Harbor. The provisional road to Black Rocks is almost ready. The first part of the existing dirt road has been widened and a new section of the road was cut towards the new harbor area by Work Monster. Saba Roads started building a rock wall along the provisional road. A reforestation project is scheduled to start shortly. The first phase will focus planting trees on the rock catchment benches that were created along the first part of the road. To get an impression of the future development of the new harbor area, a draft master plan has been drawn up for the land-side facilities.

International Women's Day



Women on Saba on Tuesday, March 8 celebrated International Women's Day with a well-attended event at Queen's Garden that put strong women and female entrepreneurs in the spotlight. Befitting the objective to celebrate the power of independent women, six women with their own business on Saba received an award. Verna Robinson Simmons of Verna Security

Company, Gloria Johnson of Tropical Bakery, Angie Ignacio of Unspoiled Queen Massage & Wellness, Maria Christina Sarmiento Firme of Angelina's Saba by Owaichie Bar & Restaurant, Lourdes Simmons of Aggies Bakery & Catering Creation and Veronica Janzon of Saban Rock Living each received a gift

bag with products made by women on Saba. All six recipients shared a short story about their business, their success, their challenges and how they wanted to inspire others to become their own boss. Master of Ceremonies (MC) was Elsa Peterson opened the evening with a short, historic description of the fight for freedom and equal rights for women. "Each one of you were created in a marvelous, unique way with all your talents, strengths, weakness, wisdom, understanding and much more. Continue on the path that you



are traveling to make it a brighter, better world for the generations to come," said Commissioner of Gender Affairs Rolando Wilson. Janelie Barnes, a self-made successful entrepreneur and a domestic violence survivor, gave the keynote speech. "Let's choose to lift each other up, rather than tear each other down. Let's choose to set the example of kindness, love, compassion, understanding. Let's choose to extend a helping hand where it's needed. My fellow women, we need to restore our morals, values, principles and self-esteem, not only within ourselves, but also in our children for future generations to follow," she said. Coordinator of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Mildred Rijniner spoke of a broader effort to empower women. "We are here to recognize that we must do it together with the community to raise the position of the women. Strong women too have moments where they can use a strong supporting hand, whether by their faith, partner and or society. We must work together to bring across desired changes," she said.

Solar parks, subsidies help to mitigate higher electricity prices

With fuel prices and the cost of transport continuously increasing, the energy generated from the solar parks, along with the subsidies from the Dutch Government, have prevented an even steeper increase of the electricity bills on Saba. The 2MWp solar parks of the Saba Electric Company (SEC) have not only contributed to a vast increase in sustainably generated energy, but also had an impact on the electricity bills. On sunny days, the energy demand during the day is fully supplied by the solar parks. During daytime on sunny days, the diesel generators at the SEC power plant with a capacity of 4.3MWH don't have to run, which saves a lot of fuel and on maintenance expenses because the generators are running for much less hours. During the late afternoon, once the 2.3MWH battery storage has been depleted, the generators turn on. Fossil fuels are not only bad for the environment, but the prices are also high and have been steeply increasing. Prices increased by 114.2 percent from June 2020 to February 2022. The price SEC pays for fuel is based on the market price per gallon plus a fixed amount that includes all logistics up to the point of consumption. The high and continuously increasing transport costs make clear that investments in renewable energy are very valuable. Without the solar parks that reduce the amount of fuel used and the subsidies provided by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate (EZK) that fully subsidized the fixed rates in the past three years, the electricity bills would have been much higher. And, without an additional subsidy from the Public Entity Saba, the variable fee from July 2021 would increase by 29.498 percent instead of 9.68 percent. As part of the Saba Energy Strategy 2020-2025, SEC is striving for 100 percent sustainable energy in the future. There are plans to add 1 to 3MW in additional renewable energy, with a wind-turbine project at the harbor and researching the possibility to expand private solar systems. The European Commission recently approved 4.1 million euros for Saba in grants for investments in renewable energy.



Highest point

The highest point of phase 2 of the Under the Hill social housing project was reached on February 23. Phase 2 consists of three buildings with 18 units of 1, 2, and 3-bedrooms. The Public Entity Saba assisted with the transfer of 18,000m² of government owned land to the Own Your Own Home Foundation (OYOHF). Funding for this project came from the European Union (EU), the Dutch Ministry of



Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations BZK and Bazalt Wonen, a housing corporation from the Netherlands, formerly Woonlinie. The main contractor for this project is Van Boekel along with various subcontractors. The groundbreaking for this project took place early December 2018. The project has been challenging due to difficulties in the excavation of the very steep hillside and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will be completed by the end of this year. Once the units are ready, this will help to alleviate the burden for people in dire need of housing. OYOHF will manage the houses and rent them to the tenants. “I am extremely happy today to see the progress that has been made in the Phase 2 housing complex. The highest point and the rafters are now in place. I hope that the work will continue to move along smoothly as was scheduled,” said Commissioner of Housing Affairs Rolando Wilson.

Temporary housing for daycare

Preparations are in full swing at the Laura Linzey Daycare Center to install prefab housing as a temporary provision until the new permanent location for the daycare is constructed. The 18 prefab units have been shipped from China and are scheduled to arrive in St. Maarten next month. The 20-foot prefab units are fully equipped and hurricane resistant. The 18 units, which will be placed in an L-shape, will include a kitchenette, toilets, classrooms and a staff area. The units will be installed in the backyard of the current daycare location at the former Governor’s House. Work Monster has been awarded the contract to finish the prefab housing project which includes the installation in cooperation with the Planning Bureau and the daycare center. “The prefab units will help us to meet the



quality standards while at the same time creating room for growth,” said Laura Linzey Daycare Center Manager Tessa Alexander. The target date for the opening of the daycare center in the prefab units is June 2022. The project is funded by BES(t) 4 Kids. “This is positive for the development of the daycare children since all children and staff will be in one location,” said Commissioner of Social