



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA

The Cabinet Office

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Department of Communication and Information

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**Ministry of Public Works – Press Conference**

**The Hon. Michael A. Weeks, JP, MP**

**WEDCo Infrastructure and Housing Project/Grand Atlantic Condos**

Good morning, and thank you for coming at short notice.

Today I want to put an end to the misinformation, rumours and utterly fabricated statements concerning the WEDCO project to build 100 homes on the

The opposition and others in the community have attacked this project with gusto and turned it into a political football.

Let's clear up one falsehood right now.

The opposition keeps harping on about Government's project.

**This is not, let me repeat, not a Government project.**

This project has been initiated, managed and financed by the West End Development Corporation – a quango.

The involvement of Government is simply to provide a guarantee on the project, with strict terms and conditions outlined in case that guarantee is triggered.

There have also been media reports, some emanating from the opposition's malicious comments, that residents are not in support of the project or say the units could be renovated.

Hogwash!

Contrary to what the opposition claims, WEDCo has held several meetings with the existing residents to date – with no indication they were not in favor of the development.

The General Manager can speak more to this.



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In addition, there will be further consultative meetings in the coming weeks which will include residents, potential contractors for the works to be done and general information meetings.

WEDCo will be providing the times and dates of these meetings before the end of the week.

The intent of this development is to take persons out of the very old units and place them in more modern, comfortable units.

If people could see the condition of these almost 150 year old buildings, they would see clearly they need to be demolished and new, modern units built.

*This is the Government's Social Responsibility.*

Let me also clarify:

Albert Row and Victoria Row are the areas to be developed and these units are **rental units only** and are **not for sale**.

The Boaz Island units are being offered for sale once tenants move out.

Concerning the issues raised as far as the tendering process, I will let the GM speak to this as he is managing the project.

The Government supports this project as it is expected to create more than 100 jobs involving many trades.

In addition the tenants who may have felt neglected during the past few decades will have a safe, clean and affordable unit in which to live.

We are anticipating the first group of tenants to move in at the 18 month mark of the project.

Once the units are built, the rents will be:

- a. \$1,600 for 1 bedroom
- b. \$1,800 for 2 bedroom
- c. \$2,100 for 3 bedroom

WEDCO Chairman Walter Lister has released a document outlining many of the facts around this project. It has been printed in its entirety on Bernews and on Friday, May 25 was printed in the Bermuda Sun.



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To date the Royal Gazette has only used excerpts from this document and for some reason will not print it in full.

The media will be provided with this document again.

Before I hand it over to the GM and Chairman let me make one final appeal to the public.

Do not be swayed by all the negativity around this project. It's no secret an election is on the near horizon and the opposition has taken it upon themselves to make any and every issue a political battle ground.

This constant negativity is not helping move Bermuda forward.

This project is sorely needed for the residents who have been neglected far too long.

It is in keeping with Government's mandate to ensure we are socially responsible while embracing sustainable development.

Another project that the opposition and a handful of the community have taken it upon themselves to discredit and attack at every opportunity is the Grand Atlantic project.

Those who understand real estate know that you don't simply buy a residential unit in a day. There are applications, contracts, credit checks, conveyancing and so on that can take a while to complete.

I am happy to report that 5 persons have been approved by the banks to purchase the units to date.

15 additional persons are now being screened by the Bank of Butterfield for approval.

Interest in the units remains high and there is an office located on site for persons that want to view the units which is open from 10:00am to 3:00pm Monday to Friday.

Recently, some environmentalists, who, by the way are not qualified engineers, made all sorts of claims about the cliff face on the property.

Engineers carried out geotechnical surveys on the site and designed mitigating structures to ensure the integrity of the cliff face.

A wall was built along the base of the cliff and is approximately 485 feet long.



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The excavation into the bedrock was not less than 4 feet in all locations with the contractor then erecting 10 panels as high as 12 feet in some spots – with concrete poured behind them.

The depth in all locations is not less than 3 feet; where cavities were found in the cliff face, depending on the depth of the cavity as much as 8 feet of concrete was poured.

It's important to note that similar developments have taken place with no issues to date on the South Shore such as:

- a. The ***Tuckers Point Development***
- b. ***Surf Side Hotel***
- c. The ***Reefs Hotel***; and,
- d. The ***Breakers Club*** – which is right next door and has been there for several years without incident

We have done everything possible to ensure this development is safe.

I will let Major Dill speak to the any other issues that have been raised concerning the Grand Atlantic.

Finally – let me appeal to the very small groups of people who seem to take great delight in criticizing these developments.

Stop. For the sake of those who will be living in these homes, and for the sake of the entire island – stop tearing each other down.

Instead, let us build one another, together.

Thank you.