



Taskforce takes action for super yacht visits



Taskforce of government agencies meeting at RRE's Kibedrikrik room.



With the arrival this week of the first of five super yachts to visit the Marshall Islands over the next year, the members of the government's taskforce spearheaded by the Office of Commerce and Investment (OCI) and the Marshall Islands Visitors Authority (MIVA), met on Tuesday to assess the process for receiving and welcoming the vessel.

"This was a dry run for us," explains OCI Chief Executive Officer Ravuni Uluilakeba. "The taskforce members (MIVA, Historical Preservation Office (HPO), Immigration, Tax & Custom, Quarantine, Foreign Affairs, Super-yacht agents, Mayors Association & OCI) met with the Mayors' Association in advance of the super yacht's arrival and now that it's arrived we can see the process in action and assess what actually needs to happen to ensure their arrivals are smooth and that all the key players are in place to receive them."

Uluilakeba acknowledges the first super yacht arrival did encounter a minor hiccup upon arrival, but with the taskforce at the ready, this "was easily overcome."

"We met with the super yacht's crew and they are telling us that apart from Fiji, the Marshall Islands welcoming spirit is well noted," reports Uluilakeba. OCI sees this process of receiving super yachts — identifying all the key players, having transparency in the process, easily accessible information and clear lines of communications from all parties involved — as a model the nation needs to adopt to not only attract investment but ensure a smooth path for potential investors.

"When the Marshall Islands receives super yachts or investors, we have to remember that they do not know our laws or culture so it is our job to make sure this information is readily and easily available," said Uluilakeba. "Having that initial meeting with the Mayors' Association and key government departments has laid the foundation for the nation to now begin promoting itself as a potential super yacht destination. The support the taskforce has received from the Mayors' Association is essential to the process. It has given the taskforce a feeling of empowerment to ensure the process that needs to be implemented is understood by everyone and that we are all working together with the blessing of the mayors and the outer island communities to attract investments and tourists alike."

Super yacht tourism in the Marshall Islands is literally in its infancy with much groundwork by the taskforce needed to nurture its growth. According to the OCI, as a result of this initial super yacht arrival the taskforce has identified the need to include other government agencies into the taskforce such as the Ports Authority, Police, Air Marshall Islands and the Directorate of Civil Aviation.

"It is a learning process for the taskforce and as we identify gaps along the way," he said. "We will do what is needed to close these gaps. Often programs fail due to a breakdown in communication. Our goal is transparency and open communication so that everyone is aware from the respective government agency down to the local fisherman living on the outer islands."