



**Government of the United States Virgin Islands
Public Services Commission**

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PSC Regular Meeting

The Virgin Islands Public Services Commission (PSC) held its Regular Meeting today, Tuesday, May 9, 2023. Viya dba VITELCO, the Virgin Islands Ferryboat Franchisees, and the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) came before the Commission to provide testimony and updates.

In telecommunication matters, Viya filed a Petition for Forbearance in December 2022. The Petition seeks to relieve the company from rate regulations and other requirements not applied to other telecommunication carriers in the territory. A Consent Order was proposed and negotiated between PSC Staff and VITELCO, and the Petition for Forbearance was granted. As Broadband VI continues to build out its new system, which is expected to take a total of five years, VITELCO's request will be revisited.

In Ferryboat matters, the PSC's technical consultant, Avery Williams, proposed a draft report for ferry franchise rate review for future discussion. The Commission and the Ferryboat Franchises' counsel, Atty. Maria Tankenson-Hodge discussed the matter pending additional review and future submissions. The Commission directed Staff to respond to those issues for the next meeting in June.

In Energy Matters, WAPA CEO Andrew Smith gave updates on upcoming projects like the new Wartsila Units set to be online in June 2023 and the wind and solar power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with Advance Power and VI Electron, respectively. Advance Power is proceeding through the process of securing the necessary leases and permitting; once the permitting is completed, it should take Advance Power about 18 to 24 months to get the units online.

VI Electron can move faster and has already begun securing and clearing the site for the first of two new solar fields on St. Croix. VI Electron is expected to build two more fields on St. Thomas and a single larger field on St. John. VI Electron hopes to have 10 megawatts of solar power available in September 2023 on St. Croix.

The new solar field on St. Croix brings the need for battery storage to the fore. With the existing solar power on St. Croix, nearly half the island's needs could be met by solar power, but a means of smoothing the flow for any interruption is necessary. VI Electron and WAPA discussed available systems and controls and the need to move swiftly. The Commission reminded both parties that the solar power would be purchased at half the current LEAC rate and less than half of WAPA's current fuel costs, so it is urgent that a solution be found.

Advanced Sustainable Technologies (AST) Cleantech applied for certification as a Qualified Facility (QF). AST's immediate application concerns a proposed Waste-To-Energy (WTE) plant on St. John. It is a small plant, anticipated to produce only 750 kW, but sufficiently large to address most of St. John's waste disposal. AST has similar plants operating in Europe. It would be a baseload addition, as it is intended to run 24/7. Any WTE plant is likely to require agreements with both VIWMA and WAPA to be cost-effective. AST has indicated an interest in building larger facilities on St. Thomas and St. Croix if this plant is successfully built and operated. The Commission granted AST Cleantech QF status, cautioned that the plant's electricity sold would compete with solar and wind for appropriate pricing and that the remaining costs would need to be cost-effective for the Waste Management Authority.

The proposed Customer Service Regulations to handle customer complaints from the different utilities were accepted with three changes:

- WAPA customers must first bring a complaint to WAPA to resolve that complaint, and WAPA has 30 days to resolve the matter.
- The customer's service must be restored while the complaint is pending, with some payment limitations.
- If the utility does not resolve the matter, the customer can bring the complaint to the Public Services Commission, and WAPA must respond to the complaint within 15 days.

The Waste Management Authority was again scheduled to appear but sent a late notice that it could not appear. The Commission directed that the matter be placed on the next agenda and have a subpoena served on Director Roger Merritt for his testimony.

There was no executive session held in today's meeting.

All four Commission members (David Hughes, Pedro Williams, Andrew Rutnik, and Raymond Williams). Ex-officio members Senator Marise James and Senator Carla Joseph were excused from the meeting.

Learn more about the VIPSC matters and efforts by visiting the Facebook page and website – www.psc.vi.gov

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