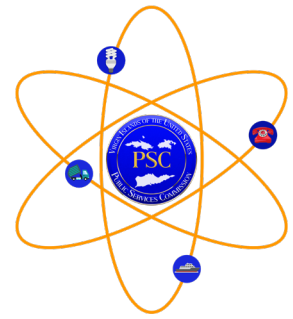




## Government of the United States Virgin Islands Public Services Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

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### **PSC Regular Meeting**

The Virgin Islands Public Services Commission (PSC) held its Regular Meeting today, Tuesday, September 19, 2023. The Commission discussed ongoing matters with regulated utilities: Broadband VI (BBVI)/Liberty and the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA). The Commission also addressed matters concerning VITELCO (Viya), Vitelcom/Choice (also Viya), and Liberty (formerly AT&T Mobility). STT/STJ Ferry services and additional WAPA items were also set to be addressed in today's meeting, but the Commission voted to have those matters moved to the PSC's next meeting in October 2023.

In November 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that BBVI was awarded the Connect USVI Stage 2 funding for the territory, totaling \$84,556,870.

The objective of the Stage 2 program is to construct or upgrade a wireline network to meet the FCC's broadband technical specifications. At a minimum, the new network must provide download speeds of at least 1 gigabit and upload speeds of at least 500 megabits; the new network must also offer telephone service. BBVI has six years to complete network expansions, upgrades, disaster preparation, and resiliency projects they are committed to completing under the Universal Service Fund (USF) stipulations. The award also covers required maintenance as each network portion is placed in service. Ricardo Portela of BBVI and Liberty provided status updates on the projects. BBVI's objectives are to:

- Minimize trenching and total construction
- Leverage fixed and mobile network synergies
- Minimize permit requirements

Funds are released at a rate of \$704,640 per month (\$8,455,687 per year) for a ten-year period. The first release of funds was in July 2021. The funding provided through this FCC award is not the project's total cost – BBVI is responsible for funding the remaining costs. At the recommendation of the PSC's consultants, Georgetown Consultant Group, subject to specific conditions, the Commission unanimously voted that Broadband VI, LLC, be granted USF recertification.

In addition, the former FCC Universal Service Fund program, which was to have expired, has been extended for an additional two and a half years. For more limited purposes, the extended program is focused on the hardening and resiliency of the networks in the event of disasters or emergencies. The Commission recertified VITELCO (Viya), Liberty (formerly AT&T Mobility), and Vitelcom/Choice (Viya) for continued participation and receipt of support.

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On July 28, 2023, WAPA submitted a preliminary Petition for the Electric Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause (LEAC) that is set to expire at the end of September 2023; however, the Authority is not seeking a rate increase at this time. Chairman David Hughes proposed a motion that the Electrical LEAC rate for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (October 1 – December 31, 2023) be renewed at the current rate of \$0.2222/kWh. The motion was carried by Chairman David Hughes, Vice Chair Pedro Williams, and Commission Raymond Williams. Commissioner Andrew Rutnik abstained from the vote.

All four Commissioners and Ex-officio members, Senator Marise James and Senator Carla Joseph attended the meeting.

Learn more about the VIPSC matters and efforts by visiting the Facebook page and website – [www.psc.vi.gov](http://www.psc.vi.gov)

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