



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

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

003-26-02

Thursday, February 19, 2026

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Energy Matters Update — Public Services Commission Addresses Consultant Selection, WAPA Infrastructure Modernization, Streetlight Funding, and Base Rate Proceedings

U.S. Virgin Islands — the Virgin Islands Public Services Commission (PSC) received detailed updates and took action on several significant energy matters affecting the territory, including consultant selection for electric utility oversight, infrastructure modernization efforts by the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA), outstanding streetlight receivables, and developments in the WAPA base rate investigation (Docket No. 706).

During the meeting, the Commission formally authorized staff to proceed with contractual negotiations following completion of a competitive Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process that generated seventeen responses. After review and interviews conducted by a selection committee, the recommended prime consultant is the firm led by Julius Wright, a former North Carolina utility commissioner, who will provide comprehensive electric utility consulting services to the PSC. These services are expected to include engineering analysis, transmission and distribution system review, financial modeling, and ratemaking expertise. The Commission also endorsed the engagement of Courtney Mark, a regional energy executive with extensive Caribbean generation and transmission experience, to provide supporting operational expertise. Commissioners directed PSC staff to carefully manage the transition from the incumbent consultant, Georgetown Consulting Group, to ensure regulatory continuity and uninterrupted advisory services.

WAPA presented substantial progress updates on its storm-resilient composite pole replacement initiative, funded through federal disaster recovery support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), with required local matching funds. The program is designed to replace 10,607 overhead utility structures across the territory to improve resilience against severe weather events. As of February 9, 2026, WAPA reported that 10,271 composite poles have been installed, representing full completion on Water Island, 99 percent completion on St. Croix, 97 percent on St. Thomas, and 87 percent on St. John. Completion on St. Thomas and St. Croix is projected by December 2026, barring unforeseen circumstances.

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In addition to overhead system hardening, WAPA summarized the status of multiple undergrounding projects throughout St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John. Several projects are complete or substantially complete, with others under active contract or in procurement phases. WAPA emphasized that underground systems are being designed with built-in redundancy to strengthen reliability and shorten outage restoration times following major weather events. However, certain installations along the North Shore and Catherineberg areas of St. John remain paused pending environmental review by the National Park Service. WAPA indicated it continues coordination with territorial and federal agencies to address environmental compliance requirements. Commissioners requested further details regarding total underground miles completed, system mapping, and coordination plans for the removal of overhead facilities and shared utility structures.

Commissioners also inquired about the status and funding of the Feeder 10B project on St. Croix, a critical three-mile coastal stretch. WAPA advised that funding reductions have affected the project's scope and committed to providing a more targeted update to PSC staff at the next coordination meeting.

Financial matters were a central focus of discussion, particularly the issue of streetlight receivables. WAPA reported that as of January 2026, outstanding streetlight receivables total \$9,820,759, with the last payment received in December 2024. Streetlight service is funded through a property-tax-derived streetlight fund administered by the Virgin Islands Department of Finance. WAPA indicated that payments have not resumed despite prior commitments and noted that updated consumption data revealed instances of under-billing in prior periods. The utility requested Commission support in addressing outstanding balances and funding shortfalls ahead of upcoming base rate proceedings. Commissioners observed that resolution of the issue requires careful consideration of legal and policy implications, including whether the costs should ultimately be borne by ratepayers or resolved through government appropriation, and emphasized the need for coordination among WAPA, the Department of Finance, the Office of Management and Budget, and the PSC.

Regarding the WAPA base rate investigation, the hearing examiner's interim report was not available for consideration at this meeting and will be carried forward to a future agenda for full review. Commissioners discussed accounting treatments, deferred fuel balances, and previously agreed adjustments associated with the base rate case, directing PSC staff and WAPA to continue preparation of necessary documentation and reconciliation work in advance of formal proceedings.

In closing, the PSC reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening system resilience, maintaining financial transparency, and protecting the public interest through diligent oversight. The Commission emphasized continued collaboration among WAPA, territorial and federal agencies, and consultants to complete modernization projects, resolve funding issues, and advance the base rate case responsibly for Virgin Islands consumers.

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