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Bovoni Fire Sparks Urgent Calls for WMA's Comprehensive Landfill Strategy

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The Bovoni Landfill in St. Thomas.

The Waste Management Authority has come under scrutiny for its delay in presenting a five-year plan for the Bovoni Landfill, amidst concerns over an ongoing vegetation fire at the site. A recent statement from Government House highlighted "progressive signs of containment" for the fire, but the urgency to address the landfill's management took center stage at a recent Committee on Rules and Judiciary meeting.

Senator Diane Capehart, the committee chair, questioned the landfill's current status, asserting that the Bovoni site, despite being referred to as a landfill by WMA officials, lacked essential features. "To truly earn the name 'landfill', Bovoni needs to be lined with compacted clay, have a plastic

liner, a leachate collection system, geotextile mats, a drainage layer, and gas chambers. Without these, the risk of fire persists,” Capehart articulated.

The committee also reviewed the nomination of Sandra Setorie for the position of executive director of the Public Service Commission. With over two decades of experience with the PSC, Ms. Setorie was quizzed on her stance regarding assisting the WMA in transitioning to a better facility. She responded by shedding light on the PSC's anticipation of WMA's strategic approach, stating, "We are still awaiting the WMA's five-year plan. This will give us insights into their proposed treatments for the landfill and their timeline for improvements."

Ms. Setorie emphasized the need for a strategic, long-term solution rather than piecemeal efforts. "Our continuous demand is for a detailed report that offers a month-to-month and year-to-year breakdown of WMA's resolutions for enhancing and managing the landfill. This applies not only to St. Thomas but also to St. Croix," she said. Highlighting the risks, Ms. Setorie pointed out the ongoing Bovoni fire and alerted the senators to the potential for a similar situation in St. Croix, given the current state of affairs.

The dialogue revolved around the critical role the WMA plays in landfill management. Ms. Setorie expressed, "The exact needs—whether relocation, expansion, or extension—are still unclear. Our ongoing discussions with the WMA aim to discern their strategies." She underscored the importance of the WMA presenting their blueprint to prevent future incidents like the Bovoni fire.

Concluding her remarks, Ms. Setorie indicated the PSC's proactive approach, saying, "We are recommending potential solutions and tools, but our efforts are hindered by the lack of timely reporting from the WMA." She assured the committee that the PSC is actively seeking this information from the WMA and pledged to present any updates to the legislature promptly.