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Low Complaint Numbers Disputed as Liberty VI Addresses Service Issues

Liberty VI reports resolving 52 out of 66 complaints since January, but PSC Executive Director Sandra Setorie highlights ongoing customer service issues and new complaints about T-Mobile connectivity

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Liberty VI reported receiving only 66 complaints since January, with 52 resolved and 14 still pending, claims manager Christian Trinidad said during a Public Services Commission (PSC) meeting on Wednesday. Despite this, PSC Executive Director Sandra Setorie indicated there has been no decrease in customer service issues since the company's acquisition and transition to its own network infrastructure.

"Staff has not seen a decrease in the customer service issues or complaints since the migration," Setorie told commissioners, addressing Liberty USVI's ongoing service challenges. A new issue

has also surfaced, with T-Mobile customers unable to access Liberty customers via calls or texts, she added.

PSC staff continue to document these issues and are researching effective tools for seeking relief, following the legislature's directive. General Counsel Boyd Sprehn explained that the staff is preparing to file actions with the Federal Communications Commission to address connectivity issues, number portability, and access to competitive services and markets.

During the meeting, PSC Commissioner Laura Nichols-Samms highlighted persistent poor signal issues on St. John, leading to dropped calls. She suggested that the low number of complaints might be due to Virgin Islanders being preoccupied with more pressing challenges, like power outages from WAPA. Nichols-Samms emphasized there had been no change in service on St. John and inquired about Liberty's progress in opening an office on the island.

Catherine Kling, Liberty's Director of Commercial Sales, responded that the company was waiting for a space in Cruz Bay to be remodeled. However, Nichols-Samms noted that occupants of the space claimed Liberty would not be part of the remodel. Kling mentioned that their second option didn't work out, and they are exploring a third possibility but have concerns about its viability.

"I wouldn't mind doing that but I just feel like we've gone on talking about this for the last three meetings, and I just feel like we're not getting anywhere," Nichols-Samms expressed. She emphasized the need for a St. John office, noting that Liberty customers are spending extra money to travel to St. Thomas for services.

Liberty's attorney Adam Marinelli pushed back, stating that Liberty is not a public utility and it is improper to demand the company open a store on St. John. He argued that the PSC must accept the possibility that it may never happen, noting that other private telecommunications providers are not being pressured similarly. Commissioner David Hughes supported Marinelli, suggesting that the PSC should not micromanage Liberty's activities and should move on if the company finds the investment unjustifiable.

Regarding the low signal issue, Kling said that the number of cell sites had not changed since the migration, so coverage should be consistent. She noted that Liberty is awaiting permits to deploy a fourth site in Coral Bay in collaboration with FirstNet and promised to investigate reports of an expanding dead zone in western St. Thomas.

The meeting also touched on Liberty's home fiber build-out. "It's not moving at the rate that we would prefer," admitted Jose Arias, Director of Construction and Design for Liberty. However, progress is being made, with around 200 home passes released for sale. Arias noted that Liberty is working with the Department of Public Works and the Water and Power Authority to advance the project.