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WAPA Secures \$138 Million FEMA-Funded Project for AMI System Replacement, Considers Expedited Timeline

WAPA to receive \$138 million for the replacement of its AMI system, which is used for remote meter reading. The project is expected to span three years, though WAPA is exploring faster completion options; no start date has been provided.

WAPA / **Published On August 23, 2024 06:32 AM /**

Janeke Simon **August 23, 2024**

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Last updated on Friday, Aug. 23, 2024 at 10:01 a.m.

At Thursday's meeting of the Water and Power Authority's Governing Board, Chief Operating Officer Ashley Bryan informed board members that the Federal Emergency Management System has approved the prudent replacement of the utility company's failing Automated Metering

Infrastructure (AMI) system, which is utilized for remote meter reading.

Last May, a [third-party analysis of the system](#), conducted at FEMA's request, found that the system was primarily failing due to the degradation of capacitors in the meters themselves, primarily due to temperature fluctuations. The devices also struggled to communicate due to increased background noise on the radio frequency they were programmed to use. Then, the conclusion was that the only workable way forward was a wholesale replacement of the entire system, something that WAPA in its current state of financial fragility would need significant federal support to achieve.

"We had been working with them in collaboration on the prudent replacement project for our entire AMI system. They have come back and have favorably accepted our proposal to replace the AMI system," Ms. Bryan said, noting that the positive response had come in just the day prior.

The WAPA COO told board members that she anticipated the project could take approximately three years, but Ms. Bryan indicated that the company would adopt a phased approach. Because "our staff is completely inundated with the manual processes that we now have to bear with the failing AMI system," the best way forward would be the hiring of a third-party contractor to work on the systemic replacement of the meters, including the programming of the new units, Ms. Bryan indicated. "Our internal capacity is not there to substantiate a project of this magnitude, so we would hire third-party contractors and project management to manage that change out."

Board members were informed that the FEMA funding would only cover the replacement of WAPA's electricity meters. Although officials attempted to have both electricity and water meters included in this prudent replacement grant, ultimately it was agreed that replacement of the water meters would be handled under the scope of a different project?.

Towards the end of the discussion on the topic, CEO Karl Knight mused that a three-year timespan may not be economically wise for WAPA. For such an extended rollout, "we are probably losing money faster than if we were to incentivize the contractor to expedite," he said. Believing that completing the project within a year would be more beneficial to WAPA, he noted that the request for proposals that will eventually go out may probably "ask for some alternative pricing to bring it in within a 12-month period, and see if that's something that any of them have the capacity to do."?

CZ2 Solutions and Ernst & Young are helping WAPA draft the RFP, Ms. Bryan advised.