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WAPA's Long-Delayed Generators Near Operation, Bringing Hope for Reliable Power and Lower Rates

After a series of missed deadlines, WAPA's \$75 million generator project is now 96% complete, with full commissioning anticipated by December. The new units aim to enhance grid reliability, improve cash flow, and eventually lower electricity rates

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WAPA's Wärtsilä Engines. By. WAPA

During Thursday's meeting of WAPA's governing board, Chief Executive Officer Karl Knight said that long-awaited efficient generators would soon be fully operational. "I have some really good news," he said, during his summary update to the board. "The Wärtsilä phase two project is 96% complete. Commissioning is proceeding," Mr. Knight continued.

When the \$75 million contract for four new generators plus a battery storage system at the Randolph Harley power plant was executed in 2020, it was anticipated to have been completed two years ago. However, timelines slipped due to supply chain issues and payment disputes, as promised completion dates came and went.

Now, however, Mr. Knight says WAPA is closer than ever to bringing the units online. He disclosed that the machines “have actually been running from about 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. this week,” and said that full commissioning is expected to come in December. Mr. Knight expressed hope that they may be able to be put into service even before then, and placed the board on notice that an emergency meeting may be requested to review and approve an operating and maintenance agreement.

When asked about what this would mean for residents in the territory, Mr. Knight told board chair Hubert Turnbull that “it means more reliability. It means WAPA's cash flow improves significantly, which allows us to deal with deferred maintenance, deal with a lot of the things that have been causing nuisance outages.”

The addition of the long-awaited units to WAPA's energy generation mix would – in the long term, Mr. Knight was careful to note – also bring rate relief to consumers. “This one is probably the flagship of what ultimately leads to lower rates,” WAPA's CEO declared.