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DeGazon Submits Measure to Establish Full-time PSC, Give Commission More Teeth

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Senator Allison DeGazon By. VI LEGISLATURE

Senator Allison DeGazon has submitted legislation that would establish a full-time Public Services Commission. In a release issued earlier this week, the first-term Democrat said her frustration with the ongoing issues at WAPA coupled with the lack of adequate oversight power from the PSC, led to her submission of the measure.

Ms. DeGazon said the current membership of the PSC "are essentially volunteering their time, effort and expertise in critical decisions on the territory's utilities and infrastructure." She said the bill would give the commission more authority along with having paid, full-time commissioners.

“It would be more cost effective having a full-time PSC. This would reduce payouts to consultants which is currently at \$1 million or more annually,” Ms DeGazon said.

Last month, PSC Executive Director Donald Cole complained that the work of the commission requires the review of hundreds of pages of technical, financial and legal information in advance of each meeting, and the stipend given does not approach the minimum wage.

A full-time commission would remove that issue, the senator contends.

The contents of the bill will be made through working session with Ms. DeGazon's colleagues in the 33rd Legislature and PSC members, to establish the model and expected outcomes and produce the best legislation possible, Ms. DeGazon's office said. The first meeting is expected soon.

“This would create more accountability and apply pressure on WAPA to submit accurate information in a timely manner,” the senator said.

Ms. DeGazon said her bill comes at a time when Virgin Islanders are at their wits end with WAPA, especially after a recent announcement that it would be [issuing 60-day billing cycles](#) and that [APR Energy has announced](#) that effective Wednesday afternoon, it would suspend power generation services to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority following a default in payments. WAPA is said to owe APR millions of dollars.

“I agree with the community that it’s time to take bold action to manage the WAPA ordeal and this legislation is a strong step towards protecting our residents,” DeGazon said.