

Image not found or type unknown

VIPA Approves New Fee Schedule, Drops Controversial Red Hook and Cruz Bay Charges After Public Pushback

Effective April 2026, the VIPA will roll out moderate fee increases while scrapping the most disputed charges, with Executive Director Carlton Dowe praising residents for their input and calling the final plan a fair, balanced step toward sustainability.

Government / **Published On October 29, 2025 07:54 PM /**

Janeke Simon **October 29, 2025**

Image not found or type unknown



A St. John barge transports vehicles across Pillsbury Sound — a vital daily connection for residents, as the Virgin Islands Port Authority prepares to implement its revised, community-informed marine fee schedule in 2026. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Port Authority has approved a new fee schedule set to take effect on April 6, 2026, following months of review and public feedback. While most fees will increase, the board eliminated two of the most controversial proposals — paid parking in Cruz Bay and a per-passenger barge ramp fee in Red Hook — after residents voiced strong opposition.

VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe and other officials said the revised structure reflects a balance between financial sustainability and public concern. “We appreciate that,” Mr. Dowe said, referring to the turnout at October’s public hearings. “We live in a democracy.” He described the St. John town hall as “robust,” adding that the board was “not insensitive to what the public said.”

Director of Financial Affairs Ava Penn confirmed that the parking and barge ramp passenger fees were removed from the final plan after hearing from St. Johnians who argued that the costs would place unfair burdens on residents who must travel between islands regularly. Ms. Penn said some fees would still rise but at lower rates than initially proposed.

At the Noel E. Boynes Car Ferry Dock, the new rates will increase slightly: small cars and motorcycles will rise from \$3 to \$5, pickup trucks and SUVs from \$4 to \$5, and heavy trucks from \$20 to \$30. Containers under 20 feet will now cost \$30, and those over 20 feet, including fuel trucks, will cost \$40.

BVI inter-passenger ship dues will move from \$8 to \$12 — a dollar higher than first proposed. Docking fees will increase to \$1.50 per running foot per vessel per day, with another 50-cent hike planned for 2029, bringing the rate to \$2, still below the \$3 initially suggested.

Red Hook public parking fees will rise from \$15 to \$20 per day and monthly passes from \$175 to \$250. Short-term stays between four and five hours will now cost \$15, up from \$12. Employee and tenant rates will also climb modestly, from \$100 to \$125 per month and \$5 to \$10 daily.

VIPA will also implement a new cargo overflow staging fee, ranging from \$20 per day for light vehicles to \$300 per day for large fuel tankers.

While the changes are expected to generate up to \$2.1 million annually — less than half of the \$5 million originally projected — VIPA officials said the new structure ensures fairness while keeping the authority financially viable. “We must sustain ourselves, and everyone is involved in making sure that they contribute to the upkeep,” Mr. Dowe explained. “The Port Authority is an autonomous institution. We pay our bills and we move forward.”

Residents and business owners at the public hearings had also urged that any fee hikes be phased in gradually. VIPA responded by instituting a five-year review period to allow users to prepare for future adjustments.

Mr. Dowe read from the transcript of one meeting, quoting a St. John resident who said a per-passenger fee would make it difficult to transport her elderly father and husband — both dependent on her care — to medical appointments. “We listened to that, we felt the sentiment, and that’s where some of our adjustments came along the way,” he said.

The final vote on Wednesday passed with five board members in favor and two opposed. Dowe said the process demonstrated effective public participation, adding that the revised plan keeps VIPA’s operations sustainable while addressing legitimate community concerns.