

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Fearing Increase In Cost For Customers, Gittens Calls On Waste Management To Rethink Tipping Fees

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Kenneth Gittens is calling on the decision makers at the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority and the Public Service Commission to reconsider their plans to implement tipping fees (the dumping of waste) at the territory's landfills by the end of the month, according to a release Mr. Gittens's office issued Wednesday.

"From early this summer when the talks became public until as recently as this week following town hall meetings in both districts, where most of the sanitation engineers were in attendance, my office's telephone lines and my personal cell phone have been inundated with calls from individuals in the trash hauling industry, saying that the proposed introduction of tipping fees and drastic price change will be detrimental to their

businesses," Mr. Gittens said.

According to the second-term Democrat, the increase from no fees to tipping fees that range from \$31 per ton to as much as \$65 per ton, is a drastic increase that the haulers say they cannot absorb and will be forced to pass on the cost to their customers.

"The way I look at it, if someone is doing some yard work or demolition and rents a bin for a few days for \$100, that price can easily double or triple. With the implementation of the new fees, each haul will be weighed and charged based on the content, type and rate," he said.

It is well documented that the authority requires revenue to assist with efficiently operating the territory's landfills, according to Mr. Gittens, but he said it is something that has to be done without stifling the small business owners by shocking their customers into not using their services.

"As we look towards increased recycling and reducing our waste in our territory, we need to comprehensively come up with an alternative means of raising revenue for the authority," he said.

"Additionally, we must look at a flat rate or gradually introducing and scaling up the tipping fees over the course of several years rather than what is considered an abrupt implementation. We have to look at what will be good for our government, but we cannot lend a blind eye to things that could possibly cause a hardship on our residents and business owners. I am pleading with the PSC and VIWMA to reconsider the stop/drop implementation and consider a gradual implementation," Mr. Gittens concluded.