

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Board Approves One-Year Extension Of St. John Underground Grid; St. Thomas, St. Croix Soon To Follow

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Galerie technique à Montesquieu des Albères Prise de vue des 4 câbles

As has been well documented, Cruz Bay, St. John is slated to have its overhead electrical lines replaced with an underground electrical system that will minimize the possibility of damage during a major storm. But during a WAPA board meeting Thursday, WAPA requested a 1-year extension for work completion, citing continued work in the area of execution and design with contractor CDR Maguire.

The major engineering and design project named the “Cruz Bay Underground Hazard Mitigation Project” is a FEMA reimbursable mitigation project spearheaded by CDR Maguire, whose role is to complete the project as soon as possible to preserve the livelihood of St. John residents in the event of a natural disaster, according to a handout issued at the meeting.

“The project is 100 percent grant funded,” Lawrence J. Kupfer, executive director / C.E.O. explained. “Ninety percent of the money will come from FEMA and 10 percent from HUD.” When asked if the project would also be implemented on St. Croix and St. Thomas, Mr. Kupfer said that it would, but St. John would be the first island scheduled for completion. He then explained that the composite poles seen around the island of St. Croix are also a mitigation project, and in areas where electrical lines are not going underground, composite poles are going up. “A lot of the lines on St. Croix will be underground just like St. Thomas and St. John,” he made known.

Cruz Bay, St. John is a well-established commercial zone on the island of St. John, actively catering to a vast majority of retail and service entities serving the people of the island. The Cruz Bay Underground Project will strengthen the electrical system by replacing overhead lines with underground infrastructures, decreasing the impact of wind storm events and reducing the possibility of damage to the authority’s electrical system, the handout noted.

Another important issue addressed during the meeting was stack testing. Arcadis, US Inc., a WAPA contractor, received the authority’s board approval to issue a contract to complete stack testing at the Randolph E. Harley Generating Facility. Nailah Elliott, a WAPA environmental specialist who has been with the company for almost eight years, explained that every five years WAPA is required to test for emissions that are coming off of the exhaust stacks on both diesel and propane fuel. “It is a lengthy test that takes a week per fuel source, depending on the unit,” she explained.

“Stack testing is mandated to comply with local and federal operating permits as well as the consent decree on St. Thomas. Air quality performance testing will be carried out on Units 15, 23, 26, and 27 on both diesel and LPG fuel types,” said Mr. Kupfer. The scope of the work consists of air quality performance testing.

The board also unanimously approved:

- Allowing the executive director to enter into a lease agreement with the landlord of the warehouse property at 179 Altona and Wellgunst at an annual cost of \$206,796.00 for ten years
- Ratification of the extension of the general liability coverage for the period from April 1, 2019 to April 1, 2020, for a premium amount not to exceed \$1,950,000.00
- To authorize the executive director to extend contract SC-43-16 for two months with Intelligent Security until August 31, 2019 with an increased contract amount of \$450,190.40, bringing the new contract total to \$2,281,952.50
- To authorize the Executive director to extend contract SC-44-16 for two months with Comprehensive Security until August 31, 2019 with an increased contract amount of \$323,863.93, bringing the new contract total to \$2,167,436.88

Board members in attendance included Chairwoman Elizabeth Armstrong, Vice Chairman Hubert Turnbull, Secretary Juanita Young, Commissioner Anthony Thomas,

Directors Joel Lee and Kyle Fleming, Noel Loftus, Gerald T. Groner, Esq., and Cheryl Boynes Jackson.

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