

The Virgin Islands Consortium

No One Showed Up To Submit Comment For Or Against WAPA Rate Increase Request During PSC Public Hearing On St. Croix; Oct. 25 Is Deadline For Written Statement

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ST. CROIX -- The Public Services Commission's first of three hearings seeking feedback from the community before it decides whether to green-light the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority's latest base rate hike request, was a no-show on St. Croix.

PSC members and Hearing Examiner Attorney Kye Walker were at the PSC office in Christiansted from 5:30 p.m., but an hour later no one had arrived; save for a handful of individuals, most likely WAPA employees, who did not comment.

The matter at hand is consequential. The PSC has delayed action on the WAPA base rate increase request multiple times, and gave itself until its next meeting in November to finally decide. The public hearings serve as a forum to hear from Virgin Islanders concerning what the PSC's decision should be, although many will argue that the commission -- which has received [well over 1,000 petitions from residents calling for the PSC to deny the rate increase](#) -- should know the community's stance.

Indeed, PSC Commissioner Donald Cole said during the no-show public hearing that community members expect the PSC to know where they stand, however, Ms. Walker said she would not make assumptions. "The hearing examiner has to have a record so that my report is based on the record. I can't assume what the position of the public is," she said.

The no-show hearing on Monday could be in part attributed to the location. The PSC now shares space with the Board of Education in Christiansted behind a building directly across from the public library. And when the PSC on Oct. 15 [announced the planned public hearings](#), the only location it gave was the St. Thomas PSC office. For St. Croix and St. John, the PSC said the location was "to be determined." PSC members said Monday that the commission issued a new notice with location details, but the Consortium never received it. We checked our inbox multiple times to see whether we had missed the release, but we did not; it simply never came -- leaving the tens of thousands of Virgin Islanders and St. Croix residents who read the online paper without critical information as to the location of the hearings.

There's a recourse, though: According to Ms. Walker, St. Croix residents can submit written statement to the PSC that will help inform her report to be submitted to the PSC.

The deadline to submit the statement is Oct. 25.