

Frett-Gregory Calls on Governor to Intervene Amid Waste Haulers Garbage Collection Strike on Eve of Thanksgiving

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Senator Donna Frett-Gregory said Tuesday she was “appalled” after learning that the Waste Management Authority had yet to disburse the \$15 million appropriated to it by the 33rd Legislature to pay down millions in debt to the territory’s waste haulers and landfill operators.

“It’s unfortunate that our waste haulers only get attention when they halt collections,” Ms. Frett-Gregory said Tuesday morning. “These are hard working men with families to support who come out everyday to make sure our trash is picked up.”

Lack of payment to waste haulers has been a longstanding problem, and it seems that access to funding isn’t the primary issue since Ms. Frett-Gregory and her colleague, Sen. Kurt Violet,

sponsored the very bill that set aside the \$15 million, now Act No. 8381. In fact, the legislation deliberately gave the Waste Management Authority one month to pay the outstanding debt, a deadline which has since expired, according to a release issued by Ms. Frett-Gregory's office Tuesday.

“My colleagues and I saw the wisdom in moving this legislation to make sure our waste haulers got paid sooner than later, especially since so many businesses struggle to make ends meet during this pandemic,” the senator stressed. “This can turn into a health issue for our people if we have poor trash collection, and it hurts our tourism product right when we need to prioritize it the most.”

She added, “All of this on the heels of Thanksgiving when our people are already suffering from COVID-19 related anxiety.”

Now under the spotlight, many are taking a hard look at the Waste Management Authority’s business practices, and it seems as though the authority did not follow their own procurement rules and are now only working out the logistics to pay the waste haulers even with the money in hand, Ms. Frett-Gregory said. She expressed extreme dissatisfaction by what was termed a "gross mismanagement," and said, “While they may be semi-autonomous, there must be an order to conducting business and it is unfair to have our waste haulers suffer because of the obvious lack of accountability.”

The trash collection strike comes after years of mounting debt and infrequent payments from the Waste Management Authority to waste haulers. Sen. Frett-Gregory is urging the governor to step in and demand the Waste Management Authority Board of Directors address this public health issue immediately.