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WAPA Approves Territory-Wide Tree Trimming Contract; Tables Consulting Agreement

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The governing board of the V.I. Water and Power Authority Thursday approved contract amendments that paves the way for tree trimming services on all three islands, the authority has announced. The service is required to prevent vegetation overgrowth from impacting electrical circuits, WAPA said.

When tree limbs or broken branches impact the electrical system, specifically, primary service lines, electrical faults trip distribution feeders which result in service interruption to customers, the utility explained.

The board voted to add the tree trimming service to the scope of existing contracts with companies now installing composite utility poles across the territory. The contract amendments were

approved with BBC Electrical Services for work on St. John and with Haugland Energy for tree trimming on St. Thomas and St. Croix. The composite poles are being installed in areas where electrical circuits will not be undergrounded.

According to the release, members also approved a contract with Electric Cities of Georgia for an in-house lineman training and development program for a two-year period, through June 30, 2023. The two-year contract totals \$516,500 of which \$215,000 will be funded by a federal grant.

The training program with ECG began in 2019 but was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic during which time the existing contract expired. Various training deliverables remain outstanding and further training is required to secure the necessary lineman certifications.

WAPA said among the benefits to be realized by employees who complete the training: increased upward mobility and promotion opportunities, increased workplace safety, national certification hotline work as well as development and improvement of situational awareness. The Authority will realize cost savings as the training will be held in the Virgin Islands.

A resolution to allow the Electric and Water Systems to be operated at Fiscal Year 2021 budget levels until the FY 2022 budgets are approved by the governing board was also ratified. WAPA's fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30.

Additionally, a three-year contract with Sustainable Capital Advisors, LLC to provide consulting services to the Authority in the overall development of capital planning, budgeting and potential financing plans, alternatives and the sale of securities was tabled for possible future consideration.

WAPA said Interim Executive Director Noel Hodge updated board members on some preliminary findings into the cause of the extended districtwide service interruption which began on the night of June 17th and lasted through the morning hours of June 18th. Hodge reported that an electrical fault on Feeder 7E worked its way back to the power plant causing Unit 23 to trip offline. The loss of the "line engine", Unit 23 caused the three other units to fall offline resulting in the districtwide outage.

Hodge told board members a review of data continues to determine the circumstances leading up to the inability of the Authority's largest generator to sustain the fault and remain online. He said once the power plant lost all generation capacity, personnel were faced with a perfect storm of sorts, "several of our other ordinarily available units were simply not available to us last Thursday night and Friday morning." Units 14 and 15 were sidelined by various mechanical issues from days prior and were being worked on. A leased unit, Unit 27, also failed to "black start" meaning there must be some other generation dispatching power already to the grid for that unit to be brought online.

"Personnel spent hours working on Unit 14, one of two units at the Harley Power Plant, that can not only black start but can synchronize to a dead buss," Hodge explained. He said just as important as understanding the fault on Feeder 7E, we want to fully understand why Unit 23 failed once the electrical fault worked its way to the plant. "We are also looking at some short-term measures to provide us more flexibility to recover the power plant more efficiently once we have lost all generation and station service."

In executive session, board members discussed legal matters, no votes were taken.

Board members in attendance included Chairman Anthony D. Thomas, Vice Chairman Jed JohnHope, Director Kyle Fleming, Cheryl Boynes Jackson and Hubert Turnbull. Secretary Juanita

Young, Director Joel Lee and Elizabeth Armstrong were excused.

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