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Looking to Avoid Major Failures, Board Asks WAPA to Put Maintenance Funds Package Together For Generators

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Wartsila generator offloaded from transport vessel at Crown Bay homeport dock. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER AND POWER AUTHORITY

V.I. Water and Power Authority board member and Dept. of Property and Procurement Commissioner Anthony Thomas has instructed WAPA Acting Executive Director Noel Hodge to develop a maintenance cost breakdown for all the engines at the power plants so that funding could be identified and lobbied for on behalf of the authority.

The instruction comes [following the arrival](#) of four new generating units in St. Thomas, and as Hodge detailed continued maintenance issues of a unit at the Randolph Harley Power Plant which

led to further discussion about general maintenance of all the authority's generating units.

“I don’t care where it comes from. We might not have it but we need to reach out to the government as a whole if that is our challenge because if those things are not maintained... it is not if it’s going to happen, it’s when it’s going to breakdown,” Mr. Thomas said during a governing board meeting Tuesday after learning that an engine at the Randolph Harley Power Plant which was leased from GE has continued to give problems although it received some maintenance in the summer.

Said Mr. Hodge, “Back in the summer we did bring GE in, we had a problem with the unit in terms of max emissions; we were able to get that sorted out. However, recently we have noticed that the problem has come back so we have to bring GE back to fix the problem and really get to the root cause of it.”

Recalling that it was a maintenance issue that crippled the authority 30 years ago, Mr. Thomas said maintenance of the power engines should be a priority because failure to engage in regular and mandatory maintenance can result in breakdown of engines, and in the end, the customers will be greatly affected.

“The people need to hear that funding has to be found... There is a reason why we have to have these maintenance schedules and I know it's not your fault, but I need to hear more noise about it in the public sphere even if we have to go out there and make the most noise for you,” Mr. Thomas said.

“We have to argue that that is a major part of the issue that has crippled the authority in the past and we are not going to let it happen now. We don’t care if you don’t like what we have to say but we have to tell you, we need the money, the funding to get the maintenance done,” the P&P commissioner continued.

In the St. Thomas-St. John District, WAPA has been experiencing sometimes daylong power outages because of generation issues at the Harley Power Plant. The most recent hourslong, district-wide outage [occurred on Nov. 24](#).

“It is not their fault that they don’t understand, it is our fault that we are not pushing hard enough to make this clear to all the players. We need help, we need to make sure it is done because maintenance is a big issue that hurts these mechanical engines,” said Mr. Thomas.

He asked Mr. Hodge to put a package together detailing costs for maintenance and the duration for installing the new units, seeking to get a better understanding as to why the new engines cannot be operational before February 2023.

In a previous meeting, Vernon Alexander, director of project management at WAPA told the Public Services Commission that the four Wartsila Units or generators which arrived in the territory recently would not be operational until February 2023.

“We will be able to achieve substantial installation, substantial completion by December of 2022, and commercial operation by February 2023,” Mr. Alexander told PSC commissioners during the PSC's regular meeting in early November.