

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Following Scathing Audit, Waste Management Will Adopt New Policies to Ensure Compliance, Director Says

Government / **Published On April 22, 2022 06:36 AM /**

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V.I. Waste Management Authority Director Roger Merritt said Thursday that the authority will adopt new internal procurement policies and procedures to ensure compliance with all applicable rules and regulations both locally and federally.

The document is set to be presented to the board next month and follows [an Office of the Inspector General audit](#) concluding that WMA expended at least \$15,593,860 without ensuring that it obtained the best price for services. That's because the authority did not always follow its procurement policy requiring competitive bidding; in some cases

operated its solid waste collection services with expired contracts and verbal/informal agreements; continued at least ten contracts on a month-to-month bases up to six years after contracts had expired; and received services from at least two vendors based on verbal/informal agreements, according to the audit.

Testifying before the Committee on Disaster Recovery and Infrastructure, Mr. Merritt told lawmakers that in addition to the new internal policies, a procurement check list has been developed and will be placed in each contract file for audit purposes.

He said the authority has met the requirements for the CDBG-MIT Action Plan which offers long-term advantages for sustainability of landfills. Funds have been approved in an amount up to \$100 million. Due to the complexity of this program, the timelines for the projected start and end dates are 12 years from the date of the grant agreement. He further explained that under that project, a few landfills will be expanded or closed.

Senator Marvin Blyden sought clarity on the impact landfill closures would have on affected areas, however Mr. Merritt said the public would not be impacted. "When you are closing a landfill, you close it out in phases and so you have an active area that basically has been filled and reach its final height and you start the closing process," he said.

Senator Carla Joseph inquired about the status of the tipping fees which were implemented in January. Mr. Merritt said that in the start, some people were not willing to pay but eventually they accepted that the fees.

Darryl Griffith, chief financial officer of WMA whose [last position](#) was executive director of the V.I. Housing Finance Authority, said that to date the amount earned from all landfills was around \$500,000.

Mr. Merritt described the tipping fees as a necessary step taken by the authority toward the goal of self-sufficiency and becoming a true autonomous agency. He also disclosed that new contracts with haulers will be multi-year and will include consumer price index increases so that if the cost of living increase by 2% or 3%, then contracts will go up by the same amount.