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USVI Moving Quickly to 100 Percent Renewable Energy on St. Croix as PSC Approves Two Applications in RFP Process

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The Union Ridge Solar Farm in Licking County, Ohio, built by Leeward Renewable Energy. By. LEEWARD ENERGY

The V.I. Water and Power Authority is seeking to transition to renewable energy in as large a scale and as quickly as possible, as the authority executes [one of the top items on Governor Albert Bryan's agenda](#). In that regard, the V.I. Public Services Commission on Wednesday approved two qualifying facility applications, one submitted by Haugland V.I. and the other by Leeward Renewable Energy V.I., whose [parent company is based in Texas](#).

At [the last PSC board meeting in September](#), there were questions on whether Haugland V.I. was actually part of the request for proposal (RFP) process as no application had been received. Also at that meeting, it was noted that Leeward Energy was one of the more favorable options based on an initial analysis.

The board delved briefly into both of these applications on Wednesday, noting that while there were similarities, there were several key differences. For starters, Haugland V.I. was a local vendor while Leeward Energy had a global presence, according to board members, though like Leeward Energy, Haugland V.I.'s parent company, New York-based [Haugland Group](#) is also a large firm in twelve locations with over 1,000 employees.

Leeward Energy's application was for two photovoltaic (PV) facilities with battery storage and backup on the island of St. Croix. This would include "slightly bigger" 3 megawatt PV facilities with battery backup. While the locations for these facilities have not been finalized, potential sites have been identified for the project.

Larry Gawlik, PSC consultant, highlighted some noteworthy elements of the Leeward Energy application. "Seal financials have been presented with the application, although I have not been provided those, they are presented so I assume somebody at the PSC who has this under their control is perhaps looking at those," he said. "They are from the parent company so it's going to be somewhat less meaningful since the parent company is very large."

Another notable aspect pointed out by Mr. Gawlik was that Leeward Energy, according to its application, had already procured some of the necessary equipment including a "sizable number of solar modules." The equipment would be available for "immediate deployment," according to the consultant.

"This particular aspect is interesting, I assume to WAPA, particularly from the perspective that one of the longest lead time items is equipment procurement," he said.

David Hughes, PSC board chair, provided some enlightenment on the qualifying facility application process, noting that the aim was for companies to "participate in a good faith discussion with the Water and Power Authority."

"This became necessary in years past because the Water and Power Authority was not always willing to do so," Mr. Hughes explained. "It was useful for the PSC to compel such a conversation and I would stress the words good faith negotiation and discussion."

In terms of what the qualifying facilities did not do, Mr. Hughes noted that it did not convey a right of exclusivity to negotiate with the public utility. The QF also did not indicate the PSC's prior approval of any specific project. The QF provides only limited guidance for price and compensation under any eventual power purchase agreement and does not imply PSC's acceptance of any individual project.

"It does not provide any implied review or approval for any project, any technology, any location that the application may contemplate," Mr. Hughes elaborated. "It is an information gathering process. It's helpful to the PSC and hopefully to the utility so that we can all know why we're having these discussions. It is simply an information process and approval that suggests that the Public Services Commission is interested in the activities that are being proposed by these entities."

Mr. Hughes noted that the QF process was not required by any entity desirous of doing business with the Water and Power Authority or the Public Service Commission.

Leeward Energy describes itself as a "growth-oriented renewable energy company that owns and operates a portfolio of 24 renewable energy facilities across nine states, totaling more than 2,500 MW of installed capacity."

Haugland describes itself as a "construction firm with affiliates and subsidiaries that provide civil infrastructure, energy, and storm restoration services."

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