

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Board of Elections Members Discuss Potential Actions in Case of Inclement Weather on Voting Day

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Will this week's election be impacted by inclement weather? That was one of the questions raised by members at the V.I. Board of Elections during a meeting on Friday.

Last week, weather forecasts for the territory showed that there would be a significant amount of rain and potentially thunderstorms starting Monday and trickling through the week. Board members voiced their concerns to ensure that everyone was on the same page and prepared for any eventualities.

Board Chairman Raymond Williams made it clear that he did not believe the election would be delayed, but acknowledged that "it is a possibility."

"If the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) says systems are closed, we would need to look at reconsidering election day..." he said. "I want everyone to have that in the back of their mind, depending on the weather, what the potential can be."

Regarding postponing the election, it was noted that such a decision would not rest with the government. Caroline Fawkes, the elections supervisor, stated that her office, in consultation with the Attorney General's Office, would recommend "whether we proceed or not."

Members discussed how the board would best communicate updates to the public — noting that voting centers were open — if the weather was bad and the election still took place. It was a concern that some people might decide to stay at home because they were unsure of the status of the polling stations.

"If we find ourselves in this position [bad weather], I think it is most important to report that we have to close, and delay elections or whatever, but in my 20 years, and I've had the experience at least once where we consulted with both VITEMA and government, and as bad as it was, we did not shut down the election," Mr. Williams said.

"In terms of saying we're open, we can do that as well," he added, noting that the media would be informed of any changes.

Ms. Fawkes also recalled "once in our history" when the election had to be rescheduled due to a hurricane, "which is how we got that Primary [Election] to a Saturday," she educated.

On Friday, a 70-80 percent chance of rain and thunderstorms was predicted for Tuesday, November 8 (election day). By Sunday, Tuesday's forecast had changed to a 20 percent chance of rain with partly cloudy skies.