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WAPA Ends \$41,666 Monthly Rental of Parking Lot and Abandoned Bowling Alley, Saves \$22,000 Monthly at New Location

WAPA / **Published On November 23, 2022 04:55 AM /**

Staff Consortium **November 23, 2022**

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WAPA Line Department's new home in Market Square East, St. Thomas. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER AND POWER AUTHORITY.

The V.I. Water and Power Authority announced this week that it has cut cost by \$22,000 a month after relocating its headquarters and ending a contract that saw the authority paying \$41,666 per month as part of [a controversial three-year covenant](#).

The prior lease agreement was a three-year deal that came into effect in September 2019 and expired September this year. The lease included a dilapidated bowling alley, a small cottage and a parking lot for WAPA's Line Department at the bottom of Donkey Hill on St. Thomas. The

contract came with an option to renew, but with WAPA's announcement Monday of a new home for its Line Department and savings of \$22,000 monthly, it appears the authority under new CEO Andrew Smith opted against renewal.

The authority said not only is it saving \$22,000 a month, the Line Department's working conditions have also improved and the new space comes with more square footage.

The new headquarters is located at Market Square East.

"When we examine our strategic plan holistically, there are multiple components that go into its success," stated Mr. Smith. "Ensuring our employees have good working conditions is a priority for management, and we work diligently to meet those needs, while ensuring we remain in alignment with the strategic financial goals of our organization. The move to Market Square East was an opportunity for the Authority to capitalize on both positive outcomes."

The authority said line workers and employees gathered last week to officially launch the new operations space with a team-building kickoff event. The well-attended event provided the opportunity to see firsthand the progressive changes being implemented, as the Authority continues to balance cost savings and employee needs. The next phase is to focus on a home-based facility for the lineworkers in St. Croix, according to WAPA.

"The move from Bolongo to Market Square East is one of many steps the Authority is taking, as we work to streamline our operational structure and improve efficiency," stated Don Gregoire, interim chief administrative officer at WAPA. "The new location will offer much-needed office space for members of the Transmission & Distribution team, in addition to a generous amount of flat terrain to safely house Authority vehicles."

Much of the build-out of the facility, almost 90 percent, was done in-house utilizing the skills and experience of WAPA personnel across different departments, the authority said. This was essential to the cost savings strategy of the new headquarters for lineworkers.

"Being able to see this project completed is very fulfilling. I am proud to be able to assist the linemen with the building of this new facility," said Felix Jarvis, building and grounds supervisor.

CEO Smith further stated, "I often discuss this sense of "family" that exists at the authority. Seeing the team join together to bring this project to fruition really demonstrates our employees commitment to one another and this organization. I would like to thank all the individuals who worked long hours for weeks on end to ensure the completion of our new headquarters. Your hard work is deeply appreciated and valued."

Coral Felix-Faulkner, administrative assistant at WAPA, said, "This building is a tremendous upgrade from our previous location. I feel truly blessed to be in this new space."