

WAPA Approves \$114.9 Million Contract to Install Additional 3,600 Composite Poles on St. Croix; Approves Materials Purchase for St. John Undergrounding

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The governing board of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority has approved a number of purchases to support the implementation of long term mitigation projects. The projects, once completed, will add layers of resiliency, reliability, and efficiency to the utility's electrical systems. The action came at the board's monthly meeting on Thursday.

The board approved the acquisition of material and supplies to support the first federally-funded undergrounding project to take shape, on Cruz Bay, St. John. The undergrounding project will see overhead electrical facilities being placed in buried ducts. The undergrounding of electrical

transmission and distribution feeders, and other facilities, will allow for a more robust recovery from major outages — in particular, wind storms — where WAPA’s overhead and exposed assets are compromised. The project supports WAPA’s bid to have 50 percent of the utility’s customers accessing electrical service through underground facilities.

The initial undergrounding of electrical service on St. John Feeder 7E will encompass replacing existing aerial lines from Cruz Bay out to Northshore Road, to the Myrah Keating Smith Health Clinic, and to an area just past the Westin Resort on Centerline Road.

Other specific approval for the Cruz Bay project included:

- A \$769,961 contract with American Wire Group for the procurement of pad-mounted, liquid-filled transformers. These curb side transformers will replace smaller oil filled units currently installed on utility poles.
- A second contract with American Wire Group totaling \$2.1 million for the procurement of cable and accessories required for the St. John underground project.
- A contract with Haugland Energy for the procurement of medium voltage distribution switchgears for the Cruz Bay undergrounding project. The cost is estimated at just over \$3 million.

Another mitigation project involving the continued installation of more resilient composite utility poles. WAPA was authorized to enter into contract with Haugland Energy Group for continued work on the composite pole installation project on St. Croix. Under terms of the arrangement, Haugland Energy will replace more than 3,600 wooden poles on St. Croix, and complete other related work. The contract total is \$114.9 million, and is also funded through a 90-10 formula with FEMA providing 90 percent of the funding, and WAPA the remaining 10 percent. WAPA’s match will be provided through HUD federal grant awards, making the project 100 percent federally funded. To date, the territory-wide composite pole project is approximately 27 percent complete.

The governing board approved a no-cost, time extension to an existing contract with Fortress Electric for the installation and upgrade of electrical facilities at the Estate Richmond Power Plant on St. Croix.

Additional funding was approved for air quality performance testing at both power plants. Arcadis, Inc. will perform mandatory stack testing on various generating units. The approval increases the Arcadis contract by \$360,000, and extends the contract to the end of January. A second no-cost contract extension was approved for RG Engineering. The company is providing services to the Authority in restoring generating unit 17. Once on line, the dual fuel unit will provide additional generation capacity to the Estate Richmond Power Plant.

An amendment to the authority’s donated leave policy was approved. The change ensures that the utility’s donated leave policy complies with the V.I. Code.

A five-year contract term was approved with the Virgin Islands Workers Union, one of three unions representing WAPA employees. The collective bargaining agreement is subject to ratification by the union.

In his monthly report to the governing board, Executive Director Lawrence Kupfer provided an overview of the electrical and water systems during the month of December 2019. “We continue to use a larger volume of lower cost propane to generate electricity when compared to No. 2 oil.”

In December, we saw increases in year-on-year generation which signals a post-storm electrical sales recovery, he added.

Board members present included: Chairman Anthony D. Thomas, Vice Chairman Noel Loftus, Secretary Juanita Young, Directors Kyle Fleming and Joel Lee, Hubert Turnbull, Elizabeth Armstrong, Cheryl Boynes Jackson, and Jed JohnHope.

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