

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Significant Financial Moves at Waste Management: Approval of Kenworth Trucks Purchase and Credit Card Limits Increase

Government / **Published On June 13, 2023 07:26 AM /**

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During Monday's meeting of the Waste Management Authority Board of Directors, key financial decisions were made. The board approved the purchase of Kenworth roll-off trucks and increased the credit card spending limits for executive members, both moves forming significant highlights of the meeting.

WMA is set to invest in Kenworth roll-off trucks to facilitate waste pickup at Concordia and Mon Bijou bin sites on St. Croix. The acquisition, backed by a strong financial case, aims to improve efficiency in waste management. The estimated annual cost of operating

these pickups in-house is just over \$1.5 million, showing a considerable saving compared to the current contractor expenses of almost \$1.8 million. The five trucks, priced at \$320,000 each, will also support the upcoming transition of the bin sites into convenient centers.

The decision to bring waste pickup operations in-house was advocated by WMA's Executive Director, Roger Merritt. Highlighting the success of previous in-house operations at the Cotton Valley site, he assured the board that the authority was ready for the transition, with additional drivers already hired and certain contracts terminated. Merritt acknowledged the need for a balance between in-house services and contractor assistance but affirmed that the decision was financially driven.

Despite questions from Board Member Jean Pierre Oriol about the procurement process and the lack of competitive options, Chief Financial Officer Daryl Griffith clarified that Gecko Holdings was the only company able to fulfill the requirements within the necessary timeframe. Griffith assured the board that the procurement process was followed correctly, leading to unanimous approval for the purchase, not exceeding \$1.6 million.

In another significant financial decision, Griffith proposed an increase in the credit card limits for executive members. The new spending limits approved by the board stand at \$25,000 for Merritt and \$15,000 each for his deputy Louis Sylvester and CFO Griffith. The cards are to be used strictly for official authority business, and any violations will lead to card cancellation and withdrawal of privileges, Griffith said. This adjustment brings WMA's policies in line with other government agencies, according to Derek Gabriel and Jean Pierre Oriol, commissioners of the V.I. Dept. of Public Works and the V.I. Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources, respectively.

Furthermore, the board agreed that all three executive team members, Merritt, Sylvester, and Griffith, be signatories on the authority's bank accounts. This decision aims to enhance the efficiency and safety of WMA's financial processes, according to the officials. Board member Diana Collingwood backed this move while also advocating for a backup signatory to ensure smooth functioning. It was clarified that although the requirement for the board's special assistant to be a signatory was removed, the holder of that post could still sign if the need arose.

Aside from these financial decisions, the meeting saw a shift in leadership. Gabriel was elected as the new chair, and Oriol, was appointed vice-chair. This transition came after former chair Keith Richard's retirement and Diana Collingwood stepping down from the vice-chair position, expressing the desire for greater representation from Governor Albert Bryan's cabinet on the board.

The board also discussed organizational matters, with Merritt providing an update on the structure of a new work unit for prudent replacement management. Additionally, progress was shared about the prudent replacement project, currently undergoing insurance peer review, with completion expected by September 30. Other staffing matters, such as the appointment of Matthew Estes as the new disaster recovery director, were also highlighted during the meeting.

Having approved a new executive structure, increased credit card limits, and greenlit the purchase of trucks, the Waste Management Authority then moved on to consider other

matters, including the chief financial officer's report.

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