

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Understaffing at Property and Procurement Impacting GVI Revenue Collections, Disaster Recovery Progress

Senate / **Published On August 25, 2023 06:00 AM /**

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Property and Procurement Commissioner Lisa Alejandro. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

The V.I. Department of Property and Procurement is grappling with severe staff shortages, as underscored by Commissioner Lisa Alejandro in her recent appearance before the Committee on Government Operations, Veteran Affairs, and Consumer Protection.

"The central issue plaguing our divisions is adequate staffing and recruitment," Ms. Alejandro informed the legislative body on Wednesday. She indicated that the problem has intensified as disaster recovery initiatives have increasingly become part of the

department's workload. When probed by Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger about the ripple effect of these projects on staff, Alejandro responded, "Our entire staff feels the impact, given the interrelated nature of our work. Every member of the team is required to expedite these contracts," while also noting that staff absences and leave only exacerbate the situation.

This isn't the first time Ms. Alejandro has raised the issue of understaffing. During her nomination hearing before the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance in July, she had disclosed that the P&P Fiscal Unit, responsible for the collection of rents on all government properties, [was severely undermanned with just six employees](#), including a single individual on St. Croix.

Furthermore, the department's "already constrained workforce" is also responsible for overseeing timelines for all other governmental projects, whether funded federally or locally, according to the commissioner. She highlighted the multi-functional role of their legal team, who manage not only the department's leases, contracts, and other agreements but also provide support to other departments lacking specialized legal or procurement staff.

The repercussions of this staffing crisis extend beyond P&P. "The short-staffing in our department has a knock-on effect on our sister agencies, causing delays in fulfilling service requests," Ms. Alejandro made known.

Steps are being taken to mitigate the staffing issues, she assured the committee. Two administrative positions, dedicated to disaster recovery efforts, have recently been filled. The department has also revised its standard operating procedures, with the updated electronic procurement manual having been released as of July 31, 2023. Additional guidelines for asset management are in the drafting stage and are planned for publication next year.