



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS NEWS RELEASE

(340) 774-3552 • [communications@viwapa.vi](mailto:communications@viwapa.vi) / [www.viwapa.vi](http://www.viwapa.vi)

## **WAPA Governing Board Approves Water System Upgrades**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS (May 23, 2025) – The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority’s Governing Board convened for its scheduled meeting yesterday, approving a series of critical infrastructure projects aimed at strengthening the territory’s water distribution network, modernizing the electrical grid, and investing in the next generation of Virgin Islands engineers.

Among the major approvals was the Mahogany Estate Waterline Rehabilitation Project on St. Thomas. The project will replace potable water lines originally installed in 1965 with modern PVC piping, increasing line sizes to meet current American Water Works Association (AWWA) standards. The upgrades are anticipated to improve water quality, strengthen system pressure, and lower operational and maintenance costs for customers in the area. Notably, the project was presented by La’Ron Henry, a proud former WAPA scholarship recipient who returned to the territory after earning his engineering degree and has dedicated the past six years of service at the Authority. The \$2.7 million initiative is fully funded through an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Drinking Water Capital Improvement Grant.

The Board also approved a similar project for the Blackbeard Hill area on St. Thomas. Installed in 1950, the existing waterlines and pump station infrastructure will be replaced to improve service reliability and compliance with modern standards. This \$3.3 million project will not only address aging infrastructure but also introduce a modern, energy-efficient pump station to better serve the area’s growing water service needs. Like the Mahogany Estate project, this initiative is supported by EPA grant funding. Both projects are part of a larger billion-dollar capital improvement plan spearheaded in partnership with the Office of Disaster Recovery . WAPA officials noted that on St. Croix alone, contracts have already been executed for over 90 miles of pipeline rehabilitation.

To support the continued rollout of WAPA’s Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project — an initiative designed to improve billing accuracy, customer transparency, and grid resilience — the Board approved two amendments to existing contracts. The first amendment, valued at \$427,350, allows for the manufacture of 140 additional composite poles to support the AMI system’s collector installations. These hurricane-resistant poles will improve post-storm recovery efforts and help reduce the frequency and duration of outages. The second amendment, totaling \$242,500, expands project management services provided by Barkley Technologies. This will ensure comprehensive oversight of the AMI pole installation efforts through the end of 2026.

In addition, the Governing Board approved a time-only extension to the Authority’s contract with Arcadis, which provides air permit consulting and engineering services related to the Randolph Harley Power Plant Consent Decree on St. Thomas. The no-cost extension, moving the contract’s expiration to November 30,

2025, will allow the Authority to maintain essential compliance services while advancing negotiations with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Justice (DOJ). WAPA previously succeeded in terminating the Consent Decree on St. Croix and remains committed to achieving the same on St. Thomas.

During his CEO's report, Karl Knight highlighted the Authority's growing list of federally funded infrastructure projects and ongoing system hardening efforts as hurricane season approaches. He acknowledged that while the system is not yet fully resilient, WAPA is stronger today than it was a year ago, thanks to consistent project progress and infrastructure upgrades across both districts. CEO Knight also took a moment to recognize this year's WAPA scholarship recipients, including Joshua Calcano, a University of the Virgin Islands dual-degree engineering student and Daniel L. Newton, an Electrical Engineering major at the University of Florida. The St. Croix and St. Thomas natives share a passion in renewable energy and looks forward to contributing to sustainable solutions upon their return to the territory.

"Our infrastructure is aged, but we are steadily making progress," said CEO Knight. "These projects will improve the quality of service for our customers, strengthen our ability to recover after storms, and continue our commitment to investing in our youth and the future of public utilities in the Virgin Islands."

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**About WAPA:** The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority is an autonomous agency of the Virgin Islands Government which produces and distributes electricity and drinking water to residential and commercial customers in the territory. WAPA was created by the Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1964 through Act No. 1248. Today, WAPA generates electrical power at production plants on St. Thomas and St. Croix and distributes electrical service through smart grids to customers on St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John, Hassel Island, and Water Island. Potable water is distributed to almost 13,000 customers through water lines and standpipes. WAPA also has the responsibility of installing and maintaining streetlights.

(340) 774-3552 (STT/STJ) • (340) 773-2250 (STX) |  Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority |  @VIWAPA