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WAPA Board Receives Update on Critical Infrastructure Projects, Reliability Improvements, and Disaster Recovery Progress

U.S. Virgin Islands (July 24, 2026) — The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority ("WAPA" or "the Authority") Board of Directors received updates Thursday on major infrastructure projects, disaster recovery efforts, and reliability improvements designed to strengthen the Territory's electric and water systems. The Board also received updates on temporary generation, water infrastructure, battery storage, and long-term facility improvements across both districts.

Authority leadership acknowledged that customers have experienced both planned and unplanned outages in recent weeks and recognize the frustration those interruptions have caused. Including the Feeder 13 Bypass Project on St. Thomas, a critical Hurricane Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) project that will strengthen service reliability for customers on both St. Thomas and St. John. Once completed, the bypass will provide the Authority with additional flexibility to reroute power when maintenance or unexpected faults occur. The existing underground portion of Feeder 13 is approaching the end of its service life, making the project a key component of WAPA's long-term modernization and resiliency efforts.

To complete the final connection, crews must safely tie the new transmission line into the existing electrical system near the Randolph Harley Power Plant. Because the work involves the 34,000-volt transmission infrastructure, portions of the system must be temporarily de-energized so contractors can work safely.

"We have to tie in behind the Harley Plant in a manhole; that required us to de-energize that line so that the contractor Haugland Virgin Islands can work safely. It's just work we can't do with the line energized... We're talking about 34,000 volts. We can't work safely in that space without de-energizing," said CEO and Executive Director Karl Knight.

Knight explained that the contractor originally requested two consecutive uninterrupted eight-hour work windows but still requires approximately four additional hours to complete the final tie in. WAPA is evaluating the timing of that remaining work with the goal of minimizing customer impacts and completing the project before schools resume on August 10.

To reduce outage durations, improve coordination, and provide customers with as much advance notice as possible, WAPA conducted after-action reviews with its contractor and internal teams, refining work sequencing, contractor staging, switching procedures, and restoration coordination.

"We had a robust after-action review with the contractor and internally... We understand the time constraints, the economic impact to customers and to the Authority, and the need to work as expeditiously as possible. I wish there was a different way or a different approach," Knight said.

Construction is also advancing on several additional reliability projects. On St. John, work continues on the backup submarine connection to Feeder 7E serving Cruz Bay. On St. Croix, underground construction is underway along Queen Street/Feeder 1A in Christiansted with schedules coordinated to complete the most disruptive excavation work before peak holiday activity whenever possible.

The Board also received updates on FEMA-funded temporary generation projects that will strengthen reliability while permanent generating facilities are constructed. Knight reported that transportation is underway for four replacement generators designated for St. John, with two currently at the Port of Alabama awaiting shipment and the two other units on their way. The progressive design-build contractor, RG Engineering, has also placed deposits on the acquisition of gas turbines for both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

Knight also advised the Board that WAPA has not been notified of any impacts to ongoing HUD- or FEMA-funded projects and that the Authority continues moving forward with work already underway.

The Board also received an update on battery energy storage initiatives, including an anticipated solicitation for an 8-megawatt-hour battery energy storage system (BESS) and continued support for customer participation in the Virgin Islands Virtual Power Plant (VPP) and battery rebate programs.

Interim Chief Operating Officer of Water Distribution Don Gregoire updated the Board on water production and conservation efforts.

"Customers are filling their cisterns. Be vigilant. Try not to fill the cisterns completely. Give the system time to react to the demand. Seven Seas is working at optimal demand. It has reached its limit in terms of how much water we can produce," Interim COO Gregoire said.

Knight added that long-term water improvements—including additional storage, pumping capacity, and infrastructure upgrades through FEMA's Prudent Replacement Program with contractor Kiewit—will expand production capacity and strengthen system reliability.

The Board concluded the meeting by approving a motion to postpone the Board officer elections until its next meeting to allow all members the opportunity to participate.

WAPA remains committed to communicating openly with customers, providing advance notice of planned service interruptions whenever possible, and completing the infrastructure investments needed to build a stronger, more resilient utility.

"We are at a stage in our disaster recovery where some of the major projects are starting to kick off. Unfortunately, some of those projects will be disruptive... The work we're doing is really meaningful... We need to get to the finish line," Knight said.

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.