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On Tuesday, during the Public Services Commission's monthly meeting, a proposal from Advanced Sustainable Technologies Limited to construct a waste-to-energy plant on St. John was once again before commissioners. AST Cleantech, as the company calls itself, has been proposing the build as a pilot project for some time now. In re-introducing the matter to the PSC, AST attorney Boyd Sprehn noted that the plan is to "produce a little under one megawatt of electricity as a baseload unit while taking care of virtually all of the waste generated on St. John." Before construction of the plant can move forward, however, agreements must be secured from both the V.I. Waste Management Authority and the V.I. Water and Power Authority.

"Also...we try to mitigate the noise...it will be almost undetectable," he continued. He noted, in response to concerns expressed by Commissioner Laura Nichols-Samms that AST units are currently operating in Seattle, Washington, as well as in the Czech Republic and Germany, where environmental requirements are more stringent than those in the United States.

Mr. Hughes noted that the success of the project would require AST to interface with both VIWMA and WAPA. However, "neither of them is likely to be particularly responsive right now - they've got a lot of issues" to deal with, Mr. Hughes acknowledged. However, Mr. Levin informed the PSC that his company had already received a draft power purchase agreement from WAPA, which is expected to be signed within the next few weeks. Although the agreement with the WMA should be easier, because no tipping fees would be required, that process had not yet been completed. "If you can help us moving that forward, obviously we'd love any help," Mr. Levin appealed to commissioners.

"If you're not looking for money from Waste Management, I'm pretty sure they'd be happy to give you trash," Mr. Hughes quipped. He encouraged AST to continue to work closely with the PSC's general counsel and executive director on any draft agreements with the regulated utilities, "so that we can monitor and offer our comments throughout the process."

The goal, said Mr. Hughes, is to be prepared so that "when it gets ready to do something, we're already full in agreement with that." Following quick calculations on the production capacity of the unit, Mr. Levin said that the PSC can expect to see a power purchase agreement of about 10 gigawatts per year. "That's the maximum we expect," he noted.

The Virgin Islands Consortium was founded in 2014 by Ernice Gilbert and covers U.S. Virgin Islands and Caribbean news, politics, opinion, business, entertainment, culture and much more. Its mission is to offer solid and in-depth reporting and breaking news coverage on stories affecting the Caribbean, while providing both prerecorded and live video content, including interviews, shows, along with Caribbean carnivals and festivals to its users.



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