

Waste Management Authority - Use Fee Overreach

November 21, 2007

This is Holland Redfield.

This is a follow-up to our November 19th editorial on the Waste Management Authority's onerous proposed fee schedule which we strongly oppose.

It will be our intent that when an issue is of such a magnitude and can have such a negative impact on the people of the Virgin Islands that we will wrestle it to the mat. It is time to put an end to the fun and games our Waste Management Authority is having. These controversial waste management fees have put the fear of God into our beleaguered consumers.

This is an issue that each and everyone of us needs to keep a close eye on particularly with the Waste Management Authority's board putting in place, with no public discussion, \$3.2 million in new contracts to support this bureaucratic monster.

Hats off to Senate majority leader Celestino White, Sr. for his strong stand informing the Authority not to spend more money to collect environmental fees. The senator was quoted as saying - "In my strong view, all will be naught."

Even more poignantly, the senator depicted the Waste Management Authority as a "group of drunken sailors who, from the beginning, spent lots of money on high salaries."

Senator White was further quoted; "they showed early on that they can be a run-away train. We're going to reel them in."

It has been our opinion that these poorly-crafted regulations will be dead-on-arrival when they reach the Public Service Commission.

We certainly cannot speak for the PSC however they are clearly going to look to Government House and the Legislature for political direction or cover in handling this hot potato. Neither the Executive or Legislative branch can withstand the political blows from their constituents.

We are heartened to see Senator Norman Jn-Baptist has made it clear that he intends, in the first week of December, to introduce legislation to repeal the environmental user fees.

It is our hope that this User Fee issue does not get bogged down in a majority/minority conflict. Here is an opportunity for the 27th legislature to demonstrate leadership and put their constituents first.

Further, it is our hope that the Governor steps into this issue and uses his executive authority and directs the WMA to cease and desist their forward movement on this controversial issue until they re-evaluate the methodology with which they have approached this thorny issue.

Clearly this would avoid an unnecessary political clash between the Executive & Legislative branches of government.

We are confident that the Governor will do the right thing.