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WAPA CEO Andrew Smith Resigns; Bryan Considering Karl Knight as Replacement; WAPA Confirms Resignation

Two years into his role, WAPA CEO Andrew Smith resigns amid continuing operational difficulties and fiscal distress, with Governor Albert Bryan reportedly pushing for Karl Knight as his successor

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Aerial shot of the WAPA Richmond Plant on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Update: The V.I. Water and Power Authority on Monday morning announced the resignation of CEO Andrew Smith, following Consortium reporting on the matter. This publication reported Sunday night that Mr. Smith had tendered his resignation to the WAPA board following two years

as head of the battered utility.

In its announcement, WAPA said Mr. Smith had worked with the utility to improve WAPA's financial and operational performance. His last day at the authority will be June 30th, 2024.

"The Governing Board recognizes and thanks CEO Smith for the changes and improvements he brought to the Authority," the board said in its statement. "Under CEO Smith's leadership and vision, the Authority embarked on an industry-standard approach to commercial decision-making that is data and analysis driven." The board added that Mr. Smith's leadership led to the acquisition of Vitol's propane infrastructure at the WAPA plants, which the board says is "nearing receipt of grant funding." Additionally, Mr. Smith led "successful negotiations with Wartsila to remobilize and complete the installation of the new generation and battery energy storage at the Randolph Harley Power Plant," according to the statement.

Regarding a successor, the board said it is ensuring "a smooth, sustainable leadership transition that continues the successful execution of the Authority's strategic plan."

Original Story: [After just two years on the job](#), Andrew Smith, hired by the V.I. Water and Power Authority in January 2022 as CEO of the beleaguered utility, has submitted his resignation to the WAPA governing board, the Consortium has learned through several sources with knowledge of the matter.

Mr. Smith's resignation comes as the authority continues to [struggle to stabilize power](#), and as it faces financial woes that have [brought WAPA's viability as a utility into question](#).

The Consortium has also learned that Governor Albert Bryan Jr. is lobbying to make Karl Knight — Mr. Bryan's current chief of staff — CEO of WAPA. Attempts to reach Mr. Knight and Mr. Bryan were unsuccessful. Kyle Fleming, chair of the WAPA board, declined to comment when reached. Mr. Smith has not responded to a request for comment.



WAPA CEO Andrew Smith (Credit: WAPA)

It was not clear whether WAPA's board had someone to take of the role of CEO with the exit of Mr. Smith. However, Mr. Knight was once part of the WAPA board by virtue of his position of V.I. Energy Office director during the former Governor John P. de Jongh administration. It was during this period that the board unanimously approved the now-infamous Vitol deal in July 2013, with Mr. de Jongh at the time declaring that the deal would move the territory away from dependence on fuel while decreasing the bills of customers by 30 percent.

That never occurred, and during Mr. Knight's tenure on the board, from May 2011 to Jan. 2015, the propane conversion project's budget had seen three of four revisions relative to cost — which had to be approved by the WAPA board — going from the original \$87 million to \$150 million by Nov. 2014, according to the [2021 V.I. Inspector General audit](#). The audit found the Vitol agreement to be riddled with mismanagement — from \$113 Million in cost overruns, and an incompetent board, among a plethora of other questionable and bad decisions. Those revisions along with other overruns skyrocketed the cost of the project from the original \$87 million to over \$200 million.

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