

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Board Selects Rhymer As Chief Executive Officer Of WAPA

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ST. CROIX -- Chairperson of the Governing Board of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, Elizabeth Armstrong, announced Wednesday the selection of Julio A. Rhymer, Sr., above, as the authority's Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Rhymer has served as Interim Executive Director of WAPA [since January 26](#), after the board dismissed Hugo Hodge, Jr., former executive director.

"The governing board completed its interview process on Monday and made its formal selection at a meeting Wednesday. In the end, we selected Mr. Rhymer from a field of three finalists to fill the vacancy," Ms. Armstrong said. She added that Mr. Rhymer has

had the opportunity over the last six months to manage the day-to-day operations of the Authority and he has served well in that capacity.

Mr. Rhymer, who joined WAPA in 2012 as chief financial officer, has also had the opportunity to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the public utility and has developed a keen understanding of the direction WAPA must go in to improve its operational efficiency and reliability, Ms. Armstrong said.

Attorney Gerald Groner indicated that the board's three-member selection committee narrowed the candidates for the position down to three, from the initial ten. He said while all three were capable and received equal consideration, "at the end of the day Mr. Rhymer stood out". Mr. Groner said the board was impressed by the action plan Rhymer put together to address the Authority's recent downgrade, and by the plan he presented during the interview process, which outlined his vision to lead the authority.

Asked by The Consortium about contract details, Mr. Groner said the agreement had not been completed, and a salary amount was yet to be determined.

During the interview, Mr. Rhymer outlined his short term goals for WAPA: stabilizing the utility's finances, continuing the effort towards completion of the LPG conversion project, right-sizing WAPA's workforce and acquiring new generation to improve WAPA's operational capacity.

"Mr. Rhymer brings a breadth of financial experience and knowledge to the leadership of WAPA at a time when the public utility is struggling to maintain its financial health. The board trusts that he will lean on the vast amount of experience that exists in the management of the power plants to steer WAPA into a more reliable and efficient power company, one that all Virgin Islanders can be proud of," Ms. Armstrong said.

On Wednesday, Mr. Rhymer thanked the board members for the level of confidence they have placed in him.

"I thank the board for their vote of confidence and I thank every employee of WAPA for the cooperation they have extended to me over the past months. We have had one-on-one meetings with employees to hear from them directly. I have had a top-to-bottom review of power plant operations, I have discussed plans to further develop the water distribution system and have developed ideas for improvements to our customer services division, WAPA's first level of interaction with our customers. I have a clear vision of where WAPA should go and am formulating a plan to move the utility forward."

Prior to joining the WAPA, Mr. Rhymer held leadership positions in the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor and the Virgin Islands Legislature.

Board members participating in Wednesday's meeting, which was held by video conference, included: Groner, Vice Chairman Noel Loftus, Secretary Juanita Young, Commissioner Devin Carrington, Director Marvin Pickering and member Cheryl Boynes Jackson. Armstrong was excused as was Commissioner Gustav James. Loftus chaired the meeting in Armstrong's absence.