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Fate of WAPA Lawyer Who Ranted 'F*ck Black Lives Matter' Will Be Decided at Emergency Board Meeting Monday

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Mark Kragel doing woodwork By. Facebook

The Water and Power Authority Governing Board will meet in emergency session on Monday to determine the fate of executive Mark A. Kragel, after the Deputy General Counsel's "overtly racist and repugnant" Facebook comments set social media on fire in the territory, said WAPA board chairman Anthony Thomas.

Online comments were posted over the weekend in which Mr. Kragel, who is white, describes the Black Lives Matter movement as a "domestic terrorist organization" with the "spoiled mentality of fools (who) have zero idea of what it takes to be an officer." Kragel's rant ended with "F*ck

BLM.”

Mr. Thomas said Saturday evening that the board will decide what, if any, steps will be taken regarding Mr. Kragel, who has worked as a top lawyer for WAPA for more than 10 years. Asked if Mr. Kragel should be terminated, the chairman said the Board as a whole would decide. “What I can say is that this behavior will not be tolerated. Racism will not be tolerated. There is no room in the Authority for this type of thinking,” he said. “WAPA employees are made up of those who value and respect all people equally.”

The Black Lives Matter has grown into a global movement in the aftermath of the brutal killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer last month. Mass protests around the country have since called for reforms in policing and an end to police brutality worldwide. Black Lives Matter became the global rallying cry.

Mr. Kragel’s comments are an illustration of how racism permeates government and social systems in the U.S. mainland, and here in the territory, Virgin Islanders have said online following the remarks.

“These remarks come from within his heart, and cannot be condoned or forgiven, and it requires his immediate termination,” Clarence Payne, founder of the Virgin Islands Alliance for Consumer Justice, longtime critics of WAPA.

WAPA CEO Lawrence Kupfer said in a press release Saturday night that the Authority discourages employees from making “unpopular, politically incorrect and or inflammatory statements” on social media.”WAPA encourages and expects that all employees will conduct themselves in a manner that is aligned with the reasonable expectations of our diverse and culturally sensitive Virgin Islands community.”

Mr. Payne said Kupfer's statement is not enough. “Larry's insensitive remarks just gave cover to his racist” attorney. “If Larry doesn’t amend his release to strongly recommend termination of Mark, then the Alliance for Consumer Justice will demanding that Larry join Mark in being terminated from their positions at WAPA. It is that simple.”

Mr. Kragel has been on the WAPA payroll for at least 10 years, representing the authority in local and federal courts. As recently as May 2018 Mr. Kragel was also a senior attorney in the civil litigation group at the prominent Virgin Islands law firm BoltNagi. Kragel is no longer listed on the BoltNagi website as an attorney with the firm.

In 2018, Mr. Kragel associated with Virgin Islands high school students as an attorney-coach for the V.I. High School Appellate Moot Court.