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Noel Hodge Tapped as WAPA Interim Executive Director

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Noel Hodge

The governing board of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority has selected Noel Hodge as interim executive director and chief executive officer. The appointment takes effect immediately while a search for a permanent executive director gets underway. Mr. Hodge is currently the chief operating officer of the water system.

A message from board chairman, Property & Procurement Commissioner Anthony Thomas to employees on Monday, heaped praise on former director Lawrence Kupfer whose three-year term at the helm of the company ended with his resignation in recent days. "Director Kupfer's contributions and accomplishments were often undervalued and underestimated. He entered

WAPA with the electrical system freshly restored from the 2017 hurricanes and at a time when WAPA was struggling to resume its monthly billing. Mr. Kupfer stabilized the Authority, saw it through some of its most difficult financial times, and to the end, was committed to developing a brighter financial outlook for the company," said Mr. Thomas.

The board chairman noted that while facing the challenges induced by Covid-19, Mr. Kupfer advocated for sweeping improvements to the power generation and water distribution systems in both districts while empowering staff to pursue federal funding for a host of mitigation projects that will materialize over the next few years.

Mr. Thomas also sang the praises for Clinton Hedrington, chief operating officer of electrical system who is retiring this month after more than two decades of service in various positions at the authority. "No words will adequately thank Clinton for his years of dedication, commitment, and vision to the Authority. A consummate professional, Clinton...frequently spearheaded projects and system upgrades that placed WAPA on par with leading utilities in the nation," wrote the board chairman. Mr. Thomas said during the last three years that Mr. Hedrington became WAPA's go-to person on FEMA projects and federal funding. "He is a brilliant electrical engineer and a native Virgin Islander whose contributions are immeasurable."

Another WAPA high-profile figure to retire suddenly is Gregory Rhymer, a former special advisor to Mr. Kupfer. Mr. Rhymer's departure from the company last week was not mentioned in Monday's communication with the employees.

In the [three-page letter](#) obtained by the Consortium, Mr. Thomas sought to reassure the utility's more than 500 employees, "I assure everyone that the governing board and the administration is committed to developing a utility that will provide more efficient, reliable, and cost-effective service. This goal will be accomplished when we work together."

Mr. Thomas also expressed gratitude to the men and women of WAPA whom he said work tirelessly each day to ensure the availability of electrical and water service to the territory. "The members of the governing board do not take lightly the sacrifices you make each day to provide outstanding service to our customers."

According to Mr. Thomas, Mr. Hodge and his team will ensure the continued functionality of the services provided to the public and the day-to-day operations of the company. "At the same time, the governing board will continue our efforts towards identifying permanent employees to fill the leadership roles. As this transition period evolves, we may very well see additional personnel changes and even perhaps the reassignment of some current employees," he said.

Mr. Thomas readily acknowledged that the transition may not be smooth sailing at times, "Although there may be growing pains, the nine members of the governing board stand ready to assist and fully support the leadership of WAPA as we build a brighter future together."

Mr. Hodge has held leadership positions in the water division for several years and was a previous maintenance manager at the St. Thomas power plant. He has served as the COO of Water System since the latter part of 2016.