

Covington commissioner posts union rant on Facebook

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COVINGTON, KENTUCKY (FOX19) - A Covington Commissioner is apologizing Thursday after going on a Facebook rant attacking the local firefighters union.

"This is a sad day for me in some sense but on another sense it's also a learning lesson too," Steve Frank told FOX19. "I lost my temper. I deeply apologize. It was inappropriate."

Frank says the frustration expressed in the posts was real and came from, he says, the efforts to defend what the commission enacted "to make certain that Covington is financially solvent". Those efforts included dropping the staffing levels of shifts within the fire department.

"It hurts when one of the parties is seeming to always be trying to regain whatever we had to go through last year and everybody else still seems to be pitching in to make ends meet," he said of the city's talks with local unions. "I'm sorry, perhaps by my own behavior I'm jeopardizing those efforts."

In the posts, which have since been taken down, Frank states:

"If you live in Covington; Local 38 the Firefighter's Union isn't here to help you ... they are only here to pick your bones clean."

He went on to say:

"... I never got into this to be popular. Local 38 is going to pay for what happened tonight. They pissed on Covington and I'm here to see that they suffer for it." And "... [expletive] LOCAL38 AND THE SHIP THEY RODE IN ON. LONG LIVE COVINGTON FOP AND ASCME!!!!!!!!!!"

On Thursday Frank apologized to union members.

"Local 38 are human beings too and they didn't deserve what I said," Frank admitted. "I just felt nothing but frustration when we have worked so hard and so long to begin to turn this city around."

Frank also took a stab at fellow city leaders in his postings:

"... What was required to keep Covington from financial implosion apparently isn't a problem for at least 3 of the new Commissioners and your Mayor. I spit in their general direction."

Frank says argues he is not a typical politician, admitting he can sometimes be too frank with his thoughts. The commissioner also admits he had been drinking when he wrote the posts.

"Believe me, don't have a drink and get on Facebook," Frank said. "It could come back and hurt your reputation or come back and do all sorts of things you're not happy with. I'm just trying to be straight up with people."

"Obviously Commissioner Frank has made some threatening statements and we are taking them very seriously," Local 38 Union President Chris Black told FOX19 Thursday.

Black said the union has passed the statements on to their legal counsel to see if there are any ethics violations or legal recourse they can take against the postings.

"It is disheartening that somebody that represents the citizens of Covington would make those statements and also that an employer would threaten employees after losing a grievance hearing," Black said.

The rant followed a grievance hearing with Local 38 in which commissioners voted to approve promotions within the department. Black says the initial grievance was filed in September after positions were not filled following the retirement of department employees.

Frank also apologized to the citizens of Covington following his postings.

"You've entrusted me with a very responsible position and I let a lot of folks down, I blew it," he said.

According to Black, another grievance to fill the Assistant Fire Chief position was not approved Wednesday and will go to arbitration.