

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Temporary Restraining Order Against Board Of Education Chair Mary Moorhead, Four Others Extended By Judge Brady

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ST. CROIX -- Superior Court Judge Douglas Brady on Friday extended a temporary restraining order against five Board of Education members -- Mary Moorhead, Winona Hendricks, Arah Lockhart, LaVerne Slack and Judy Gomez -- and ordered that a public meeting be held on March 18 where board members will move to decide who will replace Ms. Moorehead as chair, as well as to determine other structures of the board.

The lawsuit was brought against the five aforementioned board members by Nandi Sekou, former chair, Terrence Joseph, former vice chair and Martial Webster. These

members maintain in court that Ms. Sekou and Mr. Joseph were illegally removed from their positions, because the action was taken after a meeting was adjourned on January 16, and without public notice. Furthermore, the plaintiffs allege, the action did not appear on the agenda three days prior to the meeting, which is another board rule that must be adhered to.

The order by Judge Brady is the latest turn in an unfolding story at the Board of Education, which has gone under the radar for years as media outlets focused on the [Juan. F. Luis Hospital, Elections](#) and other boards. The contentious situation has brought to the fore damning accusations against board member Moorhead, alleging that Ms. Moorhead treated her colleagues between islands "disparately."

St. Thomas board members, the plaintiffs allege, were locked out of the board's office on January 18, forcing them to wait until Angeli Leerdam, the sister of defendant Gomez, arrived. According to the plaintiffs, the problems arose when Ms. Leerdam was not chosen as the board's Director of Business and Finance position. Since then, Ms. Gomez has conspired against those she felt were responsible for the outcome, and targeted Mr. Joseph, Ms. Williams-Brown and Patricia Shrader-Cooke for reprisals, the plaintiffs said. And since assuming the position of chairperson on January 29, Ms. Moorhead has hired a special advisor to oversee the board's financial dealings, costing taxpayers \$100 per hour.

The plaintiffs also allege that Ms. Moorhead, along with members Hendricks and Slack, have engaged in harassment and intimidation of employees. Ms. Moorhead also suspended members Williams-Brown and Shrader-Cooke on "bogus" charges and told them to turn in their keys, according to the complaint.

In a conversation after the brief proceedings, Mr. Joseph told The Consortium that Friday's speedy ruling went in their favor; as the agenda for the March 18 board meeting, ordered by Judge Brady, will include a vote on the removal of the chair and vice chair, and another vote for their replacement. The meeting will be prepared by Secretary Slack and will be held at the St. Croix office at 4:00 p.m. The chair position will remain vacant until then.

Feature Image: Mary Moorhead leaving the Superior Court on Friday.

Image Credit: VIC.