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Senate Committee on Ethical Conduct Wrapping Up Blyden Covid-19 Matter in Hopes of Public Hearing During Thursday Session

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Senator Marvin Blyden By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Lawmakers who make up the Senate Committee on Ethical Conduct, formed by Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory to address allegations that Senator Marvin Blyden acted inappropriately after testing positive for the Covid-19 virus by failing to quarantine, is aiming to wrap up their investigation and bring the matter before the Senate publicly during a session scheduled for Thursday.

Members of the Committee on Ethical Conduct (CEC) include Senators Milton Potter, Kennet Gittens, Kurt Vialet, Carla Joseph, and Dwayne M. DeGraff. Mr. Potter, who is leading the

inquiry as CEC chairman, said in the Oct. 11 release announcing the charges that the allegations were being taken very seriously. Attempts to reach Mr. Potter for comment Thursday were unsuccessful.

Mr. Violet told the Consortium Thursday that an announcement by the Ethics Committee could come as early as Monday next week. He said the committee is scheduled to hold one more meeting on the matter before it is brought to the full body.

Part of the job of the ethics committee is determining a penalty for the charges brought against Mr. Blyden, then drafting a resolution which must be voted on by the full Senate. A Senate session is scheduled for Thursday, and lawmakers are hoping to have the matter up for debate at that time, the Consortium has learned.

The CEC has charged Mr. Blyden with breaking the Legislature's rules for decorum and ethical conduct, as well as with violating the oath of office, in which elected officials swear to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the Virgin Islands. See the charging document [here](#).

"After a preliminary examination of the evidence, to include reviewing witness testimony, the 34th Legislature's Committee on Ethical Conduct has determined that grounds exist to move forward with a formal disciplinary hearing regarding the complaint that Senator Marvin A. Blyden is in violation of at least two of the rules governing the comportment of members of the body and breaking his sworn Oath of Office," stated the CEC [in a release issued Oct. 11](#).

Mr. Blyden was served on Friday, October 8 with a letter outlining the charges against him, all of which are related to failing to quarantine after testing positive for Covid-19, the CEC release stated. Pursuant to Legislature rules, he was given up to 20 days to respond to the CEC's "Statement of Alleged Violations".

"Whether Senator Blyden chooses to formally answer to these charges or not, a disciplinary hearing will be held, and the Committee will make a final recommendation to the full body as to what punitive or corrective actions, if any, are most appropriate," CEC Chairman Potter said.

"As I have said before, as elected officials we must hold ourselves to a higher standard," CEC Vice Chairman Sen. Kenneth Gittens said. "We would like to address this matter as quickly as possible, but we must follow the procedural Rules of the 34th Legislature. The sooner Senator Blyden answers these charges, the sooner we can bring this matter to final resolution."

The Consortium [reported exclusively on Monday, Sept. 20 that Mr. Blyden had flouted Dept. of Health Covid-19 protocols](#) when he went to an event with scores of people in attendance two days after testing positive for Covid-19. Mr. Blyden said he was first tested at the Legislature on Tues., Sept. 14 and refused to believe he was positive, so he sought another test at the V.I. Dept. of Health, which also returned positive Wednesday, Sept. 15. The senator said he was advised by D.O.H. to quarantine for 10 days. However, instead of following the health department's protocols, Mr. Blyden said he tested at home several times after and those tests came back negative. That prompted the senator to attend the function at Tillet Gardens using a government-owned, Legislature-issued, LEG 5 vehicle on the night of Saturday, Sept. 18.

After the matter was exposed, separate investigations were launched by the V.I. Dept. of Justice and the V.I. Legislature. The V.I. D.O.J. charged Mr. Blyden with willfully exposing the public to a contagious disease after testing positive for Covid-19. The first court hearing [was held on Oct. 1](#), where more information was revealed, including allegations that the senator had parked the government vehicle he drove to the Tillet Gardens event in a handicapped parking space,

according to court documents. Court documents also state that the V.I. Dept. of Health imposed a no-fly order on Mr. Blyden following information that he intended to leave the territory on September 21st for a family vacation in Hawaii. Mr. Blyden [has disputed this claim](#).

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