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Former BVI Education Minister Charged With Breach of Trust In Connection With Controversial School Construction Project

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Former BVI Education Minister Myron Walwynn. By. PICTURE CREDIT: BVI NEWS

On Tuesday former Education Minister in the British Virgin Islands, Myron Walwynn was arrested and charged with breach of trust, in connection with the highly controversial project to build a perimeter wall around the Elmore Stoutt High School.

Walwynn is the third person to be charged — local businessman Kelvin Thomas was arrested in June of this year, and charged with obtaining property by deception, making a false statement to a public officer, and possession of the proceeds of criminal conduct. More recently, Lorna Stevens, assistant secretary within the Ministry of Education, was charged with breach of trust by a public

officer after she was arrested some weeks ago.

Now Walwynn faces a similar charge for his alleged role in the construction project that reportedly ran way over cost. Almost immediately after news of his arrest broke, the former minister issued a lengthy statement rubbishing the charge, saying it “does not enjoy the benefit of the facts.”

According to Walwynn, while he admitted that there were “procedural issues” with the project, he argues that none of these issues met the criteria for the offense of breach of trust. Walwynn says that his actions regarding the project were bound by the decision of Cabinet in the matter, to have the project completed differently to how the Ministry of Education had originally approached the issue. Neither the Attorney General nor the Governor, Walynn contends, objected to the decision of Cabinet in this regard.

Walwynn also questioned the genesis of these charges, given that police completed their investigation into the project in 2020, and handed over their findings to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution for a decision on whether or not to move forward with any prosecutions in the matter. No charges were forthcoming then, until the matter was revived by the Commission of Inquiry last year.

According to Walwynn, “It raises the question as to why a completed investigation by the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force that was sent to the DPP’s Office, could still find itself as a subject of the Commission of Inquiry as an open investigation. Again, it’s worth noting that the Commission of Inquiry recommended that the investigation should continue – the investigation which, according to Commissioner Matthew of the RVIPF, was concluded in early 2020.”

Reporting from local publication BVI News back in June, following Thomas’s arrest, is that according to the police, a “specialist investigative team” had been appointed in 2021 to review the 2020 police investigation into the project. “This was to ensure that all instructions and further actions requested were complied with and that there was a thorough, and fair investigation,” according to a police press release reportedly issued on June 27.

Walwyn has vowed to “vigorously” fight the charge against him, and says that he trusts the territory’s justice system to deal with the matter fairly.