



LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Date:		Start Time	Location		Recorder
10/13//2023		9:03 a.m.	via Zoom Video Conferencing		Jacquette Maynard
This Council is composed of the following agencies, farmers, and restauranteurs:	University of the Virgin Islands (UVI)	Department of Agriculture (VIDA)	Department of Education (VIDE)	Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR)	Economic Development Authority (USVI EDA)
	Farmer (TBA)	Farmer (TBA)	Farmer (TBA)	Restaurateur (TBA)	Restaurateur (TBA)
Voting Members/Designees Present:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-chair: Dr. David Hall – President (UVI) Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner Nominee (VIDE) Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA) UVI School of Agriculture - Dr. Thomas Zimmerman – Associate Dir. of AES 				
Voting Members Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR) Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner (VIDE) Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School Agriculture (UVI) DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife VIDE Designee: Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction 				
Guest(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown - Founder & Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition 				

I. Welcome, Introduction of Members and Charge

- The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Dr. Hall, Co-Chair of the Local Food and Farm Council.
- Dr. Hall welcomed and thanked members for their attendance and participation and acknowledged Dr. Thomas Zimmerman, representing the UVI School of Agriculture as a Designee.
- Dr. Hall also acknowledged guest Sommer Sibilly-Brown, Founder and Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition, as a guest at the meeting.
- Dr. Hall stated that some members had previously communicated their absence or intention to attend the meeting with limitations.

II. Meeting Minutes: September 29, 2023

- There were no corrections, amendments, or objections observed to the Minutes.
- Dr. Petersen motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes as presented, which was seconded by Dr. Hall.

III. Logo Design Revisions

- Dr. Hall updated members on the logo revision process and mentioned that the Council had chosen a design by Ms. Jenné Bougouneau. They contracted her to enhance the logo and create a versatile food symbol. Members would review and select from three revised logo designs submitted by Ms. Bougouneau, focusing on reaching a consensus. The discussion centered around logo variations, images, the Council's name, and food sustainability elements. Dr. Petersen and Director Biggs expressed concerns about the prominence of a dairy cow in one version, suggesting it should be more shadowed. Dr. Zimmerman questioned using a dairy cow due to the absence of dairy industry and recommended sheep or goats as alternatives, highlighting their economic feasibility.

- Director Biggs raised concerns about overcrowding the logo and stressed the need to symbolize the entire region rather than including too many elements. Dr. Petersen and Dr. Zimmerman supported featuring a local breed like the St. Croix Hair Sheep. Dr. Hall clarified the intention to replace the existing dairy cow with a local agricultural symbol.
- Ms. Sibilly provided feedback on the logo's visual appearance, suggesting that the animal element should blend into the background, creating a smoother look. She also questioned the clarity of the technology-related symbol in the logo.
- The members discussed the need to spell "Virgin Islands" in the logo for clarity; the wording should be U.S. Virgin Islands. There was a debate about the symbolism of the technology element, with a suggestion to explore other options representing technology in agriculture.
- Dr. Hall encouraged members to provide specific images or symbols for the logo. The discussion concluded with an understanding that the suggestions would be shared with the artist and that she would incorporate the feedback to create an improved and finalized logo that aligns with the Council's goals.

IV. Status of the Fishers Engagement Survey

- Dr. Hall inquired about the progress of the Fishers Engagement Survey and referred to Dr. Angeli's email update. Ms. Maynard stated that only six fishers responded to the survey and that Dr. Angeli previously stated that the liaisons on all three islands would be utilized to improve response rates.
- Dr. Hall stressed the importance of continued engagement and exploring alternative dissemination methods. He acknowledged the similarity with the challenges experienced in the previous farming survey. Dr. Hall encouraged members to provide suggestions to improve the survey process and gather more fishing industry data.

V. Public-Private Investment Fund (PPIF)

- Dr. Hall provided an update on defining the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund. He mentioned the development of guidelines and shared that Ms. Maynard had presented various examples of industries, companies, and governments utilizing such arrangements. Dr. Hall discussed the need for specific agreements and expressed his intention to meet with Director Biggs and share model agreements sometime next week. He also highlighted the search for legal counsel to assist in implementing these agreements. ***Director Biggs added that Dr. Hall had covered the topic well and awaited further developments.***

VI. Updates on Recruitment

- *Director of Sustainability, VIDE:* Dr. Hall summarized the previous comments by Dr. Charleswell regarding the challenges faced by VIDE in identifying a candidate for the Director of Sustainability vacancy. He asked members to review the job description and provide any necessary changes. Additionally, he requested assistance in identifying potential candidates for the role. Dr. Hall emphasized the importance of filling this position promptly.
- *Local Food and Farm Council, VIDA:* Dr. Petersen provided an update on the recruitment efforts for various positions, including the Director of Sustainability for the Pilot education program. He commended the efforts to connect with FFA but noted the challenges the Territory's Department of Agriculture faced. Dr. Petersen mentioned that they had prepared personal requisition forms for several positions but had to resubmit them to OMB due to timing issues. Once OMB approves the forms, they plan to advertise the positions with the Department of Labor. Dr. David Hall inquired how the Council could help identify or encourage potential applicants. Dr. Petersen suggested sharing job descriptions once OMB approves them, allowing Council members to promote the positions within their networks and institutions.

VII. Consolidated Outreach Activities for the Future

- Ms. Maynard presented the member's ideas, recommendations, and suggestions as a consolidated outreach activities report to engage with various stakeholders in the community. The plan outlined objectives: local farming, fishery industries, sustainable food practices, and community awareness. The target audience included farmers, fishers, local businesses, schools, investors, and government bodies. Strategies included town hall meetings, digital engagement, communication channels, direct engagement through meetings, roundtables, media engagement, community activities, and collaborative outreach. The recommended action steps included research, planning, monitoring, evaluation of activities, and gathering feedback. Budget considerations and addressing potential challenges were also highlighted in the plan.

VIII. Presentation by Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown on farming and food participation possibilities

- Dr. Hall welcomed Ms. Sibilly-Brown to share her work and present her information on various programs and food sustainability to the Council. He acknowledged her previous partnership with the Task Force during the Plan development and her ongoing engagement in providing testimony to the Legislature.

- Ms. Sibilly-Brown expressed her appreciation for being invited to speak and commended the Council for their well-thought-out activities. She highlighted the alignment between their work and the Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition's mission to support food security, sovereignty, and sustainability. Ms. Sibilly-Brown emphasized the need for synergy between their organizations to address the challenge of farmer fatigue, as many farmers feel overwhelmed by information and meetings. She stressed the importance of clear messaging and timing when providing support and information to the farming community. She also discussed the Regional Food Business Center grant awarded to her organization by the USDA, which aims to create economic opportunities and resilient food systems in isolated regions, including the Virgin Islands. Ms. Sibilly-Brown described the responsibilities under the grant, including coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building. Ms. Sibilly-Brown proposed partnership opportunities with the Council to make the effort sustainable and leverage the funding effectively. She mentioned learning opportunities within the grant and emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in building a resilient food system. Finally, Ms. Sibilly-Brown mentioned her organization's plan to establish a Caribbean Regional Food System Council. She expressed her desire to have representation from the Council on the Caribbean steering committee. Overall, Ms. Sibilly-Brown's presentation highlighted the potential for collaboration and partnership between her organization and the Council to support the Virgin Islands' food system.
- Dr. Hall appreciated the presentation and emphasized the synergy between the Council's work and Ms. Sibilly-Brown's efforts in obtaining the grant. He agreed that information received through the grant project should feed into the agricultural business center. Dr. Hall noted the importance of connecting the project with the Small Business Development Center, where the Agricultural Business Center is being established to enhance effectiveness. Further, Dr. Hall discussed the significance of building capacity, particularly regarding the public-private investment fund. He mentioned the challenge of determining the balance between grants and loans within the fund. Dr. Hall mentioned the Credit Union for Farmers and acknowledged the challenge of farmers being loan averse. He suggested that there might be work needed in this area.
- Dr. Petersen pointed out the cooperative nature of credit unions and suggested a synergy between credit unions and promoting a cooperative business model as outlined in the Ag plan. He inquired about using funds to support infrastructure, particularly storage and coolers, to aid in the branding campaign for local products.
- Ms. Sibilly-Brown responded to the inquiries and provided additional information. She mentioned that some funds could potentially be used for storage capacity and infrastructure, specifically through the Regional Food System Infrastructure (RFSI) grant. Also, she stated that individual business owners could seek support for personal storage capacity, such as freezers and chill boxes. Ms. Sibilly-Brown emphasized the need for strategic conversations and cooperation among different organizations working in agriculture and food systems to make collective efforts successful. She offered to connect Dr. Hall and Dr. Petersen with key contacts who could provide insights and support for institutional lending and cooperative credit union initiatives.
- Dr. Hall extended an open invitation to Ms. Sibilly-Brown to participate in future meetings and activities by the Council.

IX. LFFC General Operational Matters

Upcoming meeting schedule:

- Dr. Hall noted that the next meeting is scheduled for October 27th. However, he pointed out that the next meeting is scheduled for October 27th. However, he pointed out that November 10th is Veterans Day, a holiday. He proposed moving the meeting to November 9th instead. **Dr. Petersen offered his support for moving the November meeting to the 9th, and Dr. Hall acknowledged that further communication would be sent to members regarding the date change.**
- Dr. Hall expressed discomfort with scheduling a meeting during Thanksgiving week and mentioned the need to provide an alternative meeting date for that week.

Status on Farmers Appointees:

- Dr. Hall inquired about the status of signed letters to farmer appointees, to which Dr. Petersen mentioned that there was some movement, but he has not received any recent updates.
- Dr. Petersen emphasized the importance of having farmers on board before finalizing the logo.

X. **Next Meeting:** The next virtual LFFC meeting will be held on Friday, October 27, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

XI. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m.