



LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

| Date: | | Start Time | Location | | Recorder |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 10/27/2023 | | 7:03 a.m. | via Zoom Video Conferencing | | Jacquette Maynard |
| This Council is composed of the following agencies, farmers, and restauranters: | 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) Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School Agriculture (UVI) VIDE Designee: Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living | | | | |
| Voting Members Absent: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR) Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner (VIDE) DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction | | | | |
| Guest(s): | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Jenne Bougouneau – Owner, Jenné Dee Creative Dr. Lawanda Cummings - Director, Eastern Caribbean Center/ Social Sciences Research Institute | | | | |

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.
- Dr. Hall acknowledged guests Ms. Jenne Bougouneau – Owner of Jenné Dee Creative, and Dr. Lawanda Cummings - Director of Eastern Caribbean Center/ Social Sciences Research Institute.

II. Meeting Minutes: October 13, 2023

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

III. Presentation of Logo Design Revisions

- Ms. Bougouneau provided an overview of the logo design options and revisions. She highlighted that elements of any design can be mixed and matched, including fonts, imagery, colors, spacing, and outlines to meet everyone's preferences. Ms. Bougouneau discussed the previous three revisions; she then introduced logo variations as revisions 4-6 and shared details about the changes. Ms. Bougouneau explained the differences and similarities of each, including incorporating the full US Virgin Islands wording, the addition of the St. Croix Hair Sheep, parrot fish, and the placement of the mangos. She introduced an "Agritech" element in the designs, which she identified as a Wi-Fi symbol over a plant. Ms. Bougouneau expressed that revision 6 is a wild card option, featuring a more abstract background while retaining the colors from the previous designs.

Discussion Points:

- Dr. Hall expressed his appreciation to Ms. Bougouneau for her outstanding work in creating a diverse range of logo designs, incorporating the council's feedback to improve the logo, which will make the council's decision challenging to choose. He encouraged council members to share their reactions.

- Mr. Wickrema raised concerns about the parrot fish image, given that the territory has deemed that the parrot fish should not be harvested as it is considered ecologically dangerous. **There were no DPNR members present, so Dr. Hall suggested getting their input and revisiting this matter.**
- Director Biggs shared his preference for logo revision number 4. He stated that he also liked revision number 6, and he also mentioned concerns about using the parrot fish and suggested using the triggerfish instead. He emphasized using the full name “U.S. Virgin Islands” rather than USVI.
- Dr. Petersen agreed with all the positive feedback about the designs and supported logo revision number 4. He said there should be no reason to make one image more prominent, referencing the sheep and the need to balance all elements.
- Dr. Adamu supported logo revision number 5 but suggested adding the words “agricultural products” to the design.
- Dr. Cummings preferred revision number 6, citing its stylistic appeal, image placement, lines, and appearance.
- Ms. Bougouneau discussed possibly creating a third variation from all the feedback and putting the logo on mark-ups.
Voting Members Final Decision: Revision number 4 – two votes. Revisions 5 and 6 each – one vote. Therefore, revision number 4 was chosen as the logo design.

IV. Logo/Symbol Administration and Management

- Dr. Hall acknowledged Ms. Maynard’s questions regarding the logo access, distribution, cost, and usage of the logo/symbol. He raised the questions and asked the council members to give their input.
 - Dr. Hall emphasized that the council would distribute the logo and stickers as part of the outreach efforts. He stated that the council should bear the initial cost to promote the symbol rather than the vendors. He mentioned the need to build the distribution cost into the council’s budget. He suggested revisiting cost-sharing in the future if symbol usage becomes highly popular and the cost becomes prohibitive. He addressed the challenge of preventing improper usage and others putting the symbol on non-agriculture products. He stated that the council lacks an enforcement arm.
 - Director Biggs proposed creating a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Department of License and Consumer Affairs and suggested a potential collaboration with DLCA. He supported copyrighting the symbol to prevent unauthorized use. He advocated distributing the symbol at no cost in the early stages of the roll-out phase to build familiarity and potentially the symbol becoming revenue-generating in the future.
 - Mr. Wickrema agreed with Director Biggs' revenue-generation idea and emphasized the need for watermarking to prevent duplication. He questioned whether products produced in the Virgin Islands, such as rum, could be considered agricultural products and be eligible to use the symbol. He added that this could lead to more significant sales.
 - Dr. Hall emphasized that revenue generation should not be the initial focus but rather promoting the symbol. He urged consistency with the council’s agriculture mandate and potential expansion in the future and reiterated the importance of working on an MOA with the DLCA.

V. ECC Territory-wide Agriculture Assessment Implementation - Update

- Dr. Cummings expressed enthusiasm for the important initiative, shared details regarding the progress, and presented ECC’s agenda to initiate the Assessment. The initiative's focus areas include conducting an Annual Farm Survey using the lab and in-person surveys at events like the Agrifest, examining local agricultural business trends and consumption patterns and assessing project progression and community awareness support. Dr. Cummings discussed proposed launch dates for the Assessment procedures. She highlighted the ECC’s work on data research, infrastructure development, and the use of GIS/GPS devices for data collection. The presentation also emphasized the importance of baseline data and their efforts to consolidate relevant information from various sources.

Discussion Points:

- Dr. Hall addressed Dr. Cummings' questions about project timelines and reporting requirements. He discussed the funding source for the project, mentioning that it was local funds allocated by the Legislature and Governor. He mentioned the importance of collecting data systematically to show progress. He explained that the reporting structure involves reporting to the Council and himself as President, and the timeline for reporting would align with a proposed presentation to the Legislature next June or July. Dr. Hall emphasized the importance of presenting the progress of the council and this assessment to the legislature, and having this project’s final report completed earlier than June will be beneficial.
- Dr. Petersen inquired about the potential number of enumerators needed for the project and how vacancies would be promoted. He expressed concerns about overwhelming the farmers with visitation and questions during a 5-year census preparation. He also suggested finding ways to incentivize farmers to participate in the survey.

- Dr. Cummings agreed with collecting data and mentioned her team’s effort to avoid duplicating work. She explained that they have a database of trained individuals for data collection. She discussed the importance of avoiding multiple parties collecting the same data. Dr. Cummings inquired about specific funding details, deadlines, and reporting requirements.
- Director Biggs emphasized the importance of farmers cooperating during the data collection and doing their part in providing data. He questioned some of the data points mentioned in the survey and suggested there may be better sources for specific information than the names and agencies listed.
- Dr. Adamu inquired about strategies to address low response rates during surveys.
- Dr. Cummings explained that they plan to establish buy-in through community outreach, leverage partnerships, and directly engage with farmers to encourage participation.
- Dr. Hall emphasized the experience of the ECC in conducting surveys and mentioned their ability to achieve higher response rates due to their expertise.

Voting Members Final Decision: To review the list of data collection points and provide input to Dr. Cummings on the person or agency that she will need to contact to collect the needed data.

VI. Fishers Engagement Survey

- Dr. Hall mentioned that the recent survey results increased to 18 respondents. However, further discussion of Fisher’s survey findings and strategy will be postponed until the next meeting, when Dr. Angeli will provide additional results.

VII. Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund (PPPIF)

- Dr. Hall explained that scheduling conflicts had hindered his and Director Biggs’ ability to meet and discuss the PPPIF framework. He said that although there have been a few models, the objective is to present a singular contract document model to the council for assessment. Dr. Hall asked the council to grant them a brief extension of a few more weeks and that there would be an update at the next meeting.

Voting Members Final Decision: The council members had no objections to the extension.

VIII. Proposed Outreach Activities

- Ms. Maynard presented the proposed activities as follows:
 1. **Unveiling of the Local Food Symbol Campaign (January 10th - 14th):** This activity will start with a press release and include radio show appearances. It will also involve roundtable sessions with farmers, fishers, and restaurant owners. Additionally, she suggested the Council’s participation in the 25th Annual Bordeaux Farmers Agricultural Fair and to include the youths from the Seed of Security Program.
 2. **3-Island Town Hall Meeting (January 25th – February 1st):** Three separate town hall meetings will be scheduled for St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. The focus areas for these meetings should include officially introducing the Council members, discussing available funding programs to the farmers and fishers, the PPPIF agreement, territory-wide assessment, the results of the fisher’s survey, and the seeds of security program.
 3. **VI Agricultural Food Fair (February 17th – 19th):** The Council will either have a booth or partner with another agency. The goal is to make a brief presentation, involve the youths from the Seeds of Security program, and distribute educational materials and promotional items.
 4. **Contractors:** There was a list of contractors presented for the council to consider for services such as press releases, media presence, and marketing materials. The suggested contractors include Lisa Herbst, Jenne Dee Creative, MLB Creative, Local caterers, and technicians.

Discussion Points:

- Dr. Adamu suggested combining the unveiling symbol campaign with introducing the Council in a joint press release. He also recommended working with other youth groups, including the 4-H and the undergraduate students in the SoAg, to involve them in the Council’s activities.
- Dr. Hall agreed with the recommendations to include other youth programs as volunteers in the council’s activities and emphasized the importance of having students from the SoAg as volunteers to assist with outreach efforts.
- Mr. Wickrema suggested contacting Future Farmers of America (FFA) clubs. He clarified and confirmed that his staff from Island Green Living can provide support to the various activities.
- Dr. Petersen shared that the FFA is no longer operational in the territory and acknowledged the need for potential efforts to reinstate it.
- Dr. Hall expressed concern regarding a lack of an FFA presence and recommended that the VIDE and VIDA should work together to revive the FFA.

- Mr. Wickrema expressed his commitment to working on reinstating the FFA. He mentioned plans to discuss reviving the FFA with Dr. Adamu, Dr. Petersen, and Assistant Commissioner Diana Collingswood.
 - Dr. Adamu was surprised that the FFA was non-operational and stressed its importance of reestablishing the FFA on a high school level, in order to incorporate a college-level chapter, which will serve as a pipeline for the SoAg.
 - Dr. Hall proposed creating a subcommittee to discuss plans for relaunching the FFA in the territory and requested a report on what is needed from the Council to make it happen.
 - Dr. Hall stressed the importance of ensuring that all promoted programs are operational or close to it by January to avoid potential issues during the outreach campaigns. He mentioned scheduling regular status reports from the involved entities and continued refinement of the outreach plan.
 - Overall, members identified other youth organizations that can be contacted as volunteers to assist with LFFC activities: (1) undergraduate students of the SoAg; (2) Ag in the classroom; (3) 4-H program; (4) Seeds of Security program
- Voting Members Final Decision: The council members will establish a subcommittee to reincorporate the FFA Chapter in the territory. Further, the council committed to ensuring that all promoted programs will be operational before the outreach campaign in January.**

IX. Other Business

Upcoming meeting schedule:

- Dr. Hall addressed changing the meeting dates in November due to holiday conflicts. The proposed date is November 9th instead of November 10th. The other meeting date of November 24th will be changed to November 21st.
- Dr. Hall inquired about concerns regarding these date changes, and there were no objections by any of the council members.

Recruitment of farmers to the council

- Dr. Petersen shared two reports:
 - First, the professional requisition forms related to hiring are being submitted, and some have started coming back from OMB. He expects more to come soon.
 - Second, there was uncertainty about the approval of candidates submitted to the Governor for council positions and the challenge of identifying a St. John farmer.
- Dr. Hall discussed the challenges of submitting candidates to join the council. He mentioned a question about considering public promotion of vacancies on the Council for people to respond to.
- Mr. Wickrema suggested expanding the definition of “farmer” to include individuals from the agriculture and gardening communities potentially.
- Dr. Adamu questioned whether it is within the Council’s role to engage in public outreach or if it should be done through the Governor’s authority.
- Director Biggs supported sending a letter to all farmers to gauge interest and collect potential names.
- Dr. Hall emphasized the need to follow the existing law, which specifies the representation of the farming community.
- Mr. Wickrema suggested opening the Council meetings to non-voting members.

Voting Members' Final Decision: The council members decided to draft a simple letter to solicit names from the farming community in St. John and include information about the Council meeting schedule and honorarium. It was agreed that the letter would not be released to the public and would be sent directly to the farming community.

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

XI. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.