



LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Date:		Start Time	Location		Recorder
11/21/2023		9:05 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) Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School Agriculture (UVI) VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction VIDE Designee: Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Director of Fish and Wildlife 				
Voting Members Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner Nominee (VIDE) Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA) Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR) Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner (VIDE) 				

I. Welcome, Introduction of Members and Charge

- The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Dr. Hall, Co-Chair of the Local Food and Farm Council.
- Dr. Hall thanked members for their attendance and participation.
- Dr. Hall acknowledged and welcomed Dr. Habtes, DPNR.

II. Meeting Minutes: November 9, 2023

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

III. Annual List of Data Collection

- Dr. Hall stated that the annual data collection list was developed by the Agriculture Plan Task Force and assigned to the Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC), headed by Dr. Cummings. He stated that the purpose of discussing the list is to address concerns about the data points listed and gather recommendations for other data sources that would be used beyond the survey.

Discussion and Recommendations for Data Source:

- For data points 1-3, the Department of Agriculture should be added as the primary source for these points.
- It was emphasized that the ECC would conduct the annual survey of farmers on behalf of the council.
- The council needs to coordinate with ECC to consider using annual and periodic census data for comprehensive reporting.
- There was a suggestion to add a data point to track the percentage or amount of agricultural products imported annually.
- Given that agricultural produce primarily focuses on local production and consumption, it was proposed to include questions about exporting produce on the farmer's survey for future reference.
- Dr. Hall asked Ms. Maynard to share the recommendations and updates with Dr. Cummings.

IV. Subcommittee to reestablish the Future Farmers of America (FFA), Virgin Islands Chapter

- No updates.

V. Updates I. VIDE: Director of Sustainability job vacancy and Ag. in Schools

- Dr. Charleswell shared that funding for the Director of Sustainability position was initially revoked on September 30th, which caused a concern. However, the department has made progress with recruiting; there are now ten applicants for the role compared to the previous status in which there were few applicants. She said that despite the funding setback, the department is determined to proceed with the interview process, aiming to complete it by December. Further, Dr. Charleswell said that although it might not be feasible to have someone in the position by January, they hope to fill it by February. Regarding the funding, they are actively working with the Legislature to reinstate the necessary funding for the program.
- Dr. Charleswell explained their efforts to reintroduce agriculture into schools, primarily in the St. Croix district, for the initial phase; however, there may be some challenges concerning approval from the General Board of Education. The Department of Education aims to adopt the Georgia Agriculture, an existing curriculum. Some meetings had been scheduled with the Board to discuss the curriculum implementation, targeting the introduction of agriculture from pre-kindergarten onwards. Dr. Charleswell also mentioned ongoing collaboration with the S.T.E.M. Director and external organizations interested in expanding agricultural education. However, the respective education boards will make final decisions on curriculum adoption.

Discussion Points:

- Dr. Hall inquired about the funding status and offered to make additional outreach if necessary. ***Dr. Charleswell expressed confidence that the funding would be reinstated. She said she would contact Dr. Hall to intervene if needed but that the Deputy Commissioner and Senator Frett-Gregory's office were actively working on the funding efforts.***
- Regarding the Ag. in School, Mr. Wickrema expressed concerns about the choice of adopt the Georgia curriculum instead of the one identified in the Agricultural Plan. ***In response, Dr. Charleswell sought information about this curriculum and accessibility.***
- Dr. Hall suggested that Assistant Commissioner Diana Collingwood would be the right person to share the curriculum and encouraged Dr. Charleswell to collaborate with her. ***Mr. Wickrema confirmed that AC Collingwood would be willing to meet, and Dr. Adamu offered his availability and support.***

VI. Updates II. VIDA: Food and Farm Coordinator and the Farmer's vacancies

- No updates.

VII. Updates III. Letter to St. John Farmers

- No updates.

VIII. Other Business

Scheduling of upcoming general meetings:

- The council agreed that the upcoming meetings will be as follows:
 - The last meeting of 2023 will be held on December 8th.
 - The first meeting of 2024 will be held on January 12th.

Website Building:

- The council agreed to contract the services of Shomari Moorehead of Crucian Point Consulting.
 - Ms. Maynard reported that Mr. Moorehead provided a quote of \$6,000 to build the website and that it can be completed within 2-3 weeks.
 - A subcommittee was formed of Dr. Adamu, Mr. Wickrema, and Ms. Maynard to provide the initial content for the website.
 - It was agreed to contact Dr. Petersen seeking authorization to create an email address using the VIDA domain on behalf of the council.

IX. Next Meeting: The next virtual LFFC meeting will be held on Friday, December 8, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

X. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:13 a.m.