



# Meeting Minutes

## February 23, 2024

Location		No. of Presenters	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		2	9:06 a.m.	10:51 a.m.	Jacquette Maynard
<b>This Council is composed of the following agencies, farmers, and restaurateurs:</b>	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)
<b>Present:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chair: Dr. David Hall – President (UVI)</li> <li>• Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner Nominee (VIDE)</li> <li>• Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School Agriculture (UVI)</li> <li>• Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA)</li> <li>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife</li> <li>• Ms. Abeba Sellassie – We Grow Food, Inc.</li> <li>• Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm</li> <li>• Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition</li> </ul>				
<b>Absent:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR)</li> <li>• Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner</li> <li>• VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living</li> <li>• Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm</li> <li>• Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm</li> <li>• VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction</li> </ul>				
<b>Guest Presenter(s):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crucian Point, LLC (Web Developer)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mr. Shomari Moorehead, Owner</li> <li>- Ms. Kemia Frederick, Web Designer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				

### I. Welcome, Member Introductions, and Charge

- The meeting was called to order at 9:06 a.m. by Dr. Hall, Co-Chair of the Local Food and Farm Council.
- Dr. Hall warmly welcomed all members and expressed gratitude for their presence and engagement. He also welcomed back Dr. Angeli following her return from maternity leave.
- Acknowledgement was given to Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown for her presence, in anticipation for her role as the PT Local Food and Farm Coordinator.
- Dr. Hall recognized the guest presenters of Crucian Point, LLC.
- Dr. Hall reflected on the recent VI AgriFest in St. Croix. He highlighted the pivotal role of Dr. Petersen, the School of Agriculture, and the Council's impact on Agriculture in the territory. He also publicly expressed gratitude to Dr. Petersen and his spouse for the recognition and gifts bestowed upon him during the event.

### II. Meeting Minutes: January 26, 2024

- There were no corrections or changes observed to the Minutes.
- Dr. Adamu motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes as presented; seconded by Dr. Angeli.

### III. Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund (PPIF) Application Form

Dr. Hall addressed the agenda item regarding the PPIF and provided background information on the fund. He expressed that the next step should involve creating an application for the farming and fishing communities to apply for the available funds. He emphasized the need for collaboration in refining the application and discussed plans to distribute it along with a cover letter.

Dr. Hall also mentioned that the upcoming town hall meetings can be a channel to distribute the application. The application was reviewed and discussed in detail, and Dr. Hall requested feedback on the draft application, highlighting the need for additional information depending on the type of request.

**Discussion:**

- Dr. Angeli suggested adding space for business type and investment levels. She also discussed cooperatives' eligibility for larger investments compared to sole proprietorships. Further, Dr. Angeli mentioned lessons learned from the DPNR distribution of funds in assistance to the fishing community, emphasizing the importance of a self-certification risk assessment form for clean audits. She proposed sharing the Risk Assessment form as an appendix for review. **Dr. Hall confirmed that there were discussions on whether to use funds for cooperatives but kept it on the application for further consideration. He stated that he is open to incentivizing and encouraging farming entities to form cooperatives. He welcomed the opportunity to review the form and asked Dr. Angeli to forward it to all members.**
- Dr. Olive expressed gratitude for the work done and raised three points. First, he emphasized the importance of data management for tracking the effectiveness of the agricultural plan over time, suggesting the inclusion of units of measure as benchmarks for tracking progress. Second, he highlighted the need for clarity on how the endeavor promotes sustainability, productivity, and resiliency, suggesting specific questions to assess sustainability efforts. Third, Dr. Olive sought clarification on the term "cooperative" and its requirements, emphasizing the need for more information on its application. **Dr. Hall acknowledged the points made. He discussed the importance of sustainability but suggested not making it a condition for funding. Also, he agreed with Dr. Olive's emphasis on measuring productivity and suggested incorporating it into the evaluation process. Regarding cooperatives, Dr. Hall expressed support for funding initiatives for farming organizations that promote collaboration in agriculture.**
- Dr. Adamu expressed uncertainty about listing registered cooperatives but agreed it could encourage their creation. He suggested including farmer organizations or agencies similar to Dr. Olive's collaboration with farmers. In addition, Dr. Adamu recommended moving individual farmer and fisher funds back to section one as general information. He prefers that section 2 focuses on matching grants, cooperative investment funds, and equipment reimbursement. **Dr. Hall disagreed with some of the suggestions and expressed that the section may have to limit options. He suggested maintaining flexibility for individual farmers and fishers seeking capital for various purposes and broadening Section 2 to encompass diverse funding needs.**
- Director Biggs expressed satisfaction with the current placement of funds in the application. He suggested identifying farmers and fishers in Section One for clarity and emphasized the need to distinguish between them to ensure appropriate grant applications.
- Dr. Angeli highlighted the importance of considering aquaculture and mariculture in funding decisions. She stated that some fishing businesses are registered as farms.
- Dr. Petersen suggested specifying whether applicants are farmers or fishers in Section One and acknowledged the overlap between the two categories. He emphasized the need for more guidance in the application to address concerns about sustainability and investment types.
- Ms. Sellassie expressed concerns about the potential exclusion of individual farmers and emphasized the need for equitable funding opportunities. She raised issues regarding the accessibility of assistance for filling out the application forms and advocated for more support for small farmers. **Dr. Hall responded and assured her of the Council's commitment to supporting and assisting all farmers, especially small ones and ensuring fairness in funding distribution. He acknowledged the importance of accessible assistance for filling out application forms and emphasized the need for equitable support for individual farmers and cooperatives alike.**
- Ms. Sibilly-Brown suggested including sustainability checkboxes in the application to easily track projects' focus areas. She also raised concerns about the absence of NGOs in the application process and proposed a tiered approach to funding to accommodate farmers' different needs and readiness levels. **Dr. Hall responded and clarified that the intention was for farmers, not NGOs, to apply for funds. He acknowledged the suggestion for a tiered approach to funding and agreed to consider adjusting the funding categories to better accommodate smaller-scale projects.**
- Dr. Angeli expressed gratitude towards Abiba for her comments. She shared her concerns about the challenges faced by small-scale operations in accessing assistance from formal business organizations. She also highlighted the importance of working with cooperatives while acknowledging the need to support individual farmers and ensure inclusivity. **Dr. Hall acknowledged the need for revisions to the form based on the suggestions received. He emphasized the importance of clarity and the dissemination of the form to the ABC centers for assistance.**

#### **IV. Update of Vacancies**

- Dr. Hall provided an update on the Local Food and Farm Coordinator vacancy. He acknowledged that an agreement was reached regarding the appointment of Ms. Sommer Sibley Brown to the role on a part-time basis.
  - Dr. Petersen provided additional updates on the due diligence process for Ms. Sibley Brown's appointment, ensuring that funds are available and discussing the challenge of office space.
  - Dr. Hall responded to Dr. Olive's question regarding the role's workload and the potential for hiring additional staff. Dr. Hall stated that the role and tasks must be assessed before considering further staffing options. He emphasized the importance of clarity and monitoring progress.
- Dr. Hall noted the absence of representatives from the Department of Education to provide an update on the Director of Sustainability position. He recalled previous reports indicating 11 candidates had applied for the position and mentioned the hope for a selection by now. Dr. Hall requested Ms. Maynard to contact Dr. Charleswell for an update after the meeting and share the information with all members via email.

#### **V. Debriefing: The Agriculture and Food Fair/Festival Agrifest – St. Croix: February 17-19, 2024**

- Dr. Petersen provided a concise update on the Agriculture Fair. He noted the positive aspects of the event, including its location and presentation. However, he expressed concerns about the lack of volunteers and said that the volunteers should be more aware of the council. He said there is a need for improved outreach in the future.
- Dr. Hall agreed with Dr. Petersen's assessment and emphasized the importance of consistent representation at such events. He acknowledged the presence of brochures from the ECC at the event but highlighted the absence of a dedicated representative. Dr. Hall emphasized the need for better representation moving forward and mentioned plans for promoting the Council through the upcoming Town Hall Meetings.

#### **VI. Website Development Presentation**

- Mr. Moorehead began by introducing the topic of the website they had put together for the Council. He mentioned that Kemia Frederick is the Web Designer and would lead the discussion, given that she had created the design.
- Ms. Frederick shared her screen to walk through the developed site and discussed various features and sections, including quick links, welcome messages, a gallery of local food, and community initiatives. She presented the homepage, explaining its components and mentioning the need for feedback on the layout and content. W
- Mr. Moorehead mentioned that the welcome messages could possibly be a pop-up versus a separate page due to some messages being long.
- Director Biggs expressed concern about the website's dominance of pictures of officials. He suggested that the focus should be on the content rather than political-like images.
- Dr. Petersen agreed with Director Biggs's comment and suggested highlighting locally developed cattle breeds for livestock.
- Ms. Frederick acknowledged the feedback and suggested adjustments could be made based on the discussion.
- Dr. Olive stated that he has a trove of farm pictures that he can share.
- Dr. Adamu suggested displaying the status of the Agricultural Plan in text form rather than a scale.
- Mr. Moorehead emphasized the importance of receiving content for the site, project timeline, late payment, and the possibility of an additional cost due to the project extension.
- Dr. Hall concluded the discussion by encouraging further feedback and suggesting a more leisurely review of the website.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

#### **VIII. Next Meeting**

The next virtual LFFC meeting will be held on Friday, March 8, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.