



Local Food and Farm Council

Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2024

Location		No. of Presenters	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		1	9:05 a.m.	10:17 a.m.	Jacquette Maynard
This Council is composed of the following agencies, farmers, and restaurateurs:	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)
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) • Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm • Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm • VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living • DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife • Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm • Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm • Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition 				
Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR) • Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner • DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries • VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction • Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – The B-Hive Farm Collective • Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm 				
Guest Presenter(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney Marie Thomas-Griffith, Elevate Law PLLC 				

I. Welcome, Member Introductions, and Charge

- The meeting was called to order at 9:07 a.m. by Dr. Hall, Co-Chair of the Local Food and Farm Council.
- Dr. Hall warmly welcomed all members and the guest presenter, Attorney Marie Thomas-Griffith. He expressed gratitude for their commitment and attendance.
- He emphasized the significance of this meeting as the Council prepares for the forthcoming Town Halls.

II. Meeting Minutes: April 19, 2024

- No corrections or modifications were observed in the minutes.
- Dr. Nicole Angeli moved to approve the Meeting Minutes as presented, which was seconded by Dr. Adamu.
- The minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Presentation by Attorney Thomas-Griffith: Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund

- **Conflict of Interest Policy:** Attorney Thomas-Griffith addressed the alignment of the Conflict of Interest Policy with local statutes and federal guidance. She underscored the policy's emphasis on conflict recognition, disclosure, and mitigation, particularly for council members engaged in financial interests tied to farming and fishing operations. Attorney Thomas-Griffith provided detailed insights into specific sections of the policy, stressing the significance of disclosure and effective management across different scenarios.

Discussion:

- Mr. Creque raised a question regarding the eligibility of non-voting members of the Council to apply for benefits.
 - **Attorney Thomas-Griffith clarified that voting and non-voting members, by virtue of their association with the Council, would generally not be eligible to apply for benefits unless they could demonstrate a**

lack of substantial conflict of interest. She proposed incorporating language allowing members to disclose conflicts and restrict their participation in discussions or decisions related to their PPP Funding applications.

- Dr. Hall expressed his understanding that members, even non-voting ones, could still submit applications under certain circumstances. However, he acknowledged the need to clarify and potentially amend the policy to avoid discouraging farmers from participating in the Council.
 - **Other members, including Mr. Wickrema and Dr. Louis, echoed Dr. Hall's sentiments, emphasizing the importance of ensuring farmers are not deterred from serving on the Council due to application eligibility restrictions.**
 - **Attorney Thomas-Griffith suggested adopting the policy with the proposed changes to accommodate farmer participation while addressing concerns about conflict of interest.**
- Dr. Hall called for a motion to approve the Conflict of Interest Policy, acknowledging the proposed changes.
 - **Mr. Creque motioned to vote on the Policy pending the proposed changes, and Mr. Wickrema seconded the motion. No objections were raised, and the motion to approve the Conflict of Interest Policy with the proposed changes was carried.**
- **PPPIF Agreement:** Attorney Thomas-Griffith presented an overview of the draft funding agreement for the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund (PPPIF), shedding light on the deliberate exclusion of loan transactions from the contract. Initially, the document featured provisions enabling the Council to extend loans to individuals engaged in farming or fishing activities. However, the revised version of the agreement now pivots toward individual farmer and fisher businesses, organizations, and cooperative arrangements between the Council and farmers and fishers.
 - **Key Terms and Objectives:** During the presentation, key terms of the agreement were discussed, confirming the amount of funds allocated to recipients and outlining the purpose for which the funds will be used. Additionally, there was an emphasis on the requirement for recipients to explain their operations and goals to scale farming and fishing activities for community benefits. A pivotal aspect of the discussion centered around the Cooperative Arrangements section of the agreement, which is designed to cater to the specific needs of farmers and fishers. This encompasses endeavors such as the adoption of cutting-edge technology or the procurement of specialized equipment aimed at bolstering farming and fishing operations.
 - **Representation and Warranty:** Attorney Thomas-Griffith delved into the significance of the Representations and Warranty Section, highlighting its role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and the effective evaluation of funding impacts on farming or fishing operations. To this end, it was suggested that the provision of financial reports or other relevant documentation would be essential in gauging the efficacy of the support provided.
 - **Legal Consideration and Compliance:** Attorney Thomas-Griffith concluded the presentation by drawing attention to the remaining sections of the agreement, which encompass legal provisions drafted to fortify enforceability and uphold compliance standards. These provisions are the bedrock for ensuring the integrity and legality of the contractual framework underpinning the PPPIF. She emphasized that the funding agreement shall underscore the Council's commitment to fostering sustainable agricultural and fishing practices through prudent financial support and rigorous oversight mechanisms.

Discussion on Loan Provision:

- Mr. Creque queried the loan provision, initially assuming it was for matching grants or USDA grant recipients.
- Dr. Petersen noted EDA's existing formal loan programs and suggested avoiding duplication.
- Dr. Hall expressed concerns about including loans due to existing government loan programs and proposed revisiting the decision in the future. He suggested that the EDA Loan Program should be circulated to the members.
- Dr. Adamu and Dr. Angeli agreed to table the motion regarding short-term loans for future consideration.
- Attorney Thomas-Griffith recommended approving the document with loan provisions removed. She will amend the document and remove loan provisions.
- Dr. Adamu motioned to approve the Funding Agreement, seconded by Dr. Petersen. The Funding Agreement was approved with revisions.

IV. Funding Agreement Selection Sub-Committee Process

- Dr. Hall presented the proposal to establish a Selection Sub-Committee for the PPPIF Funding Agreement. This process will develop a review structure for the incoming funding applications. He asked Attorney Thomas-Griffith to review the proposal to ensure legal compliance. Dr. Hall outlined the purpose, membership, advisors, and guidelines for the selection process, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Discussion on Loan Provision:

- Dr. Petersen provided input on the fund distribution and selection process timeline. He supported a 30-day fund distribution policy and proposed a similar timeline for decision-making.
- Attorney Thomas Griffith suggested extending the decision timeline to 60 days to allow for thorough review and compliance. She also pointed out discrepancies in the document regarding her role as an advisor to the selection sub-committee and legal counsel to the Council that may pose a conflict. She asked for clarification.
- Dr. Hall acknowledged the suggestions. He clarified the role of the advisors and proposed adjustments to ensure the document was compliant.

V. Confidentiality Agreement:

- Dr. Hall emphasized the importance of confidentiality, especially when dealing with sensitive information from farmers and fishers. He highlighted the need to maintain the integrity of the process and ensure that the Council establishes a Confidentiality Agreement.
 - Attorney Thomas-Griffith confirmed the need for a Confidentiality Agreement and explained its purpose. She clarified her role as legal counsel and suggested revisions to ensure compliance, particularly regarding her involvement as a resource person rather than a member of the subcommittee.

VI. Scheduled Town Hall Meetings

- Dr. Hall emphasized that the venue and dates for the upcoming Town Hall Meetings focused on the progress of implementing the VI Agricultural Plan have been secured. He shared that flyers and the Press Release have been distributed to encourage participation. Dr. Hall expressed that the funding application will be one of the main topics of the meeting. He also stated that he would review the PowerPoint presentation for further enhancement.

Dates & Locations:

- St. Thomas: April 22, 2024
University of the Virgin Islands, Orville E. Kean Campus, LaVerne E. Ragster Administration & Conference Center, 1st Floor Conference Room, #2 John Brewers Bay
- St. John: April 23, 2024
The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Cleone H. Creque, Legislative Conference Room in St. John, USVI St. John Annex, 1d Great Cruz Bay Road, Cruz Bay
- St. Croix: May 1, 2024
University of the Virgin Islands, Albert A. Sheen Campus, North West Wing, The Great Hall, Golden Grove

Discussion:

- Ms. Maynard provided an update regarding the Town Hall Meeting and stated invitations were sent to government officials and support partners. She clarified the purpose of the pre-registration for in-person attendees due to limited seating.
- Dr. Hall emphasized the importance of promoting the Town Hall meetings and suggested involving the Department of Agriculture in outreach.
- Dr. Adamu suggested involving the Department of Agriculture in farmer outreach and inquired about travel arrangements for Council members attending the Town Hall meetings.
- Dr. Petersen offered to bring promotional materials like stickers and flyers to the Town Hall meetings.

VII. Rescheduling of the next LFFC General Meeting

Due to the upcoming carnival activities, Dr. Hall proposed rescheduling the next meeting to May 10th. There were no objections to this proposal.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

X. Next Meeting

The next virtual LFFC meeting will be held on Friday, May 17, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.