



# Local Food and Farm Council

## Meeting Minutes

### September 20, 2024

Location		Members Present	Guest Presenters	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		13	0	9:03 a.m.	10:08 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. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner (VIDE)</li> <li>• Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA)</li> <li>• Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School Agriculture (UVI)</li> <li>• VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction</li> <li>• VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz Farm</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm</li> <li>• Honorary Fisher Member: Mr. Winston Ledee</li> <li>• Director of Sustainability: Cydney Meadows (VIDE)</li> <li>• Director, Agriculture Business Center: Ms. Shanta Roberts</li> <li>• V.I. SBDC Associate State Director: Ms. Karen Jones</li> </ul>					
<b>Absent:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chair: Dr. Safiya George, – President (UVI)</li> <li>• Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR)</li> <li>• Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner</li> <li>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries</li> <li>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife</li> <li>• Honorary Fisher Member Ms. Mavel Maldonado</li> <li>• Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition</li> </ul>					

**I. Call to Order & Opening Remarks**

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Petersen at 9:03 a.m. Dr. Petersen welcomed all participants and thanked everyone who attended.

**II. Presentation I: Director Cydney Meadows**

- **Update on Future Farmers of America (FFA) Charter:**
  - Director Meadows provided an update on the progress of the FFA charter renewal. She shared that Attorney Ready will handle the legalities to ensure compliance with government regulations.
  - Collaborators include Jill Wagner, former Senator Whitaker, and Kirk Lewis.
  - This marks a significant milestone, as no new state charters have been issued since 1939.
- **Seeds of Security Program:**
  - The Seeds of Security (SOS) initiative is moving forward, with plans to involve board members from pilot schools.
  - The program will help with outreach and professional development and provide funding opportunities.

- **Procurement and Resources:**
  - Director Meadows announced that procurement for grow bags, aquaponics, and permaculture systems is underway, with students' tools and resources secured.
- **Sustainability and Agriculture Education:**
  - The goal is to revitalize agricultural education and provide students with hands-on experiences.
  - Director Meadows also mentioned the collaboration on a micro-site to enhance community outreach.
- **Questions/Comments:**
  - Dr. Adamu explained SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience) for unfamiliar members.
  - The board will have two representatives from each pilot school, focusing on science and agriculture.

### III. Presentation II: Mr. Winston Ledee

- **Issue with Farmers and Fishermen Markets on St. Thomas:**
  - Mr. Ledee highlighted the lack of fish and farmers' markets on St. Thomas, especially after fishermen were displaced from Fort Milana.
  - Suggested locations near Cost-U-Less for a central market.
  - Farmers and fishermen have faced challenges due to a lack of alternative selling spaces, exacerbated by government inaction.
  - Mr. Creque supported Mr. Ledee's concerns, emphasizing the need for a proper facility and better parking arrangements.
- **Questions/Comments:**
  - Dr. Petersen and Mr. Creque acknowledged the challenges and discussed possible solutions, including contact with local senators and exploring private land options.
  - Dr. Petersen committed to engaging with Senator Potter's office and exploring real estate options for a suitable location.

### IV. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes (September 6, 2024)

- The minutes were reviewed, and no corrections or modifications were observed.
- Director Biggs moved to approve the minutes as presented, and Dr. Adamu seconded the motion.
- The minutes were unanimously approved with no objections or abstentions.

### V. Open Discussion

- **Public Meeting for Farmers:**
  - Dr. Petersen announced that a public meeting is scheduled for October 15th to discuss infrastructure improvements for farmers in Bordeaux, including road and water access.
- **Funding Updates:**
  - Director Biggs provided an update on PPIF Grant distribution, stating that checks will be processed by Monday.
- **Agricultural Business Center:**
  - Director Roberts announced plans to launch a "My Harvest" section on the VIAB website, where farmers and fishers can showcase their upcoming harvests.
- **Upcoming Events:**
  - World Food Day event on October 20th at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) St. Croix campus.
  - Kallaloo and Seafood Festival on December 7th.
  - AgriFest 2025, scheduled for February 2025, was mentioned as an important event to promote the Council's mission.
- **Calendar Development:**
  - Members discussed the need for a comprehensive calendar of agricultural events to prevent scheduling conflicts. Ms. Sellassie volunteered to assist with the calendar, which will be posted on the VI Agricultural Business Center website.
- **Organic Webinar:**
  - Dr. Olive announced an organic webinar hosted by the Virgin Islands Farmers Alliance on October 11th.

### VI. Adjournment

Dr. Petersen motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was moved by Mr. Wickrema and seconded by Dr. Adamu.

The meeting was officially adjourned at 10:08 a.m.