



Local Food and Farm Council

Meeting Minutes

February 21, 2025

Location		No. of Attendees	No. of Presenters	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		10	2	9:07 a.m.	10:08 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. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner (VIDE)• Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School Agriculture (UVI)• VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living• VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm• Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz Farm• Honorary Fisher Member: Mr. Winston Ledee• Director, Agriculture Business Center: Ms. Shanta Roberts (AgBC)• State Sustainability Director: Cydney Meadows (VIDE)• Program Assistant to State Sustainability Director: Sumayah Milan Bryan					
Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-chair: Dr. Safiya George – President (UVI)• Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA)• DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife• Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR)• Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner• DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries• Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm• Honorary Fisher Member Ms. Mavel Maldonado• Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition					

I. Call to Order, Opening Remarks, Attendance, and Agenda Overview

- Dr. Petersen called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. He welcomed all members and acknowledged the delayed start due to technical issues. Dr. Petersen also noted that Dr. George was absent with an excuse.

II. Meeting Minutes: February 7, 2025

- The review and approval of the February 7, 2025, meeting minutes were tabled, as members had not yet had the opportunity to review them. A motion for approval will be presented at the next council meeting.

III. Debriefing of Recent Events

A. Rooted in Community – Agricultural and Fisheries Public Forum

Date & Location: February 11, 2025, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

UVI 13D Research and Strategy Innovation Center, St. Thomas

- Dr. Petersen introduced the debriefing of the *Rooted in a Community* event, a town hall meeting focused on the farmer's and fishermen's market on St. Thomas.
- Mr. Wickrema and Mr. Creque shared their reflections, emphasizing the strong community passion and the strategic importance of the market's location.

- Ms. Roberts inquired about the perspectives of local fishers regarding the market location. **Mr. Creque responded, stressing the value of placing the market at a central island location to maximize accessibility and business potential.**
- Dr. Petersen noted the meeting was recorded and asked whether the recording had been shared. The Council agreed that the recording should be sent to the Senate President's Office.

B. St. Croix: Agriculture & Food Fair of the U.S. Virgin Islands

Date & Location: February 15–17, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

Agricultural Fairgrounds, St. Croix

- Dr. Petersen introduced the Agriculture and Food Fair debriefing, where the Council hosted an outreach table.
- Dr. Adamu suggested enhancements for future event presentations, including the need for a branded display banner and improved table coverings.
- Ms. Roberts and Ms. Sellassie shared their on-site experiences, emphasizing building brand awareness and incorporating more promotional giveaways.
- Dr. Petersen thanked all participants and noted the increased visibility and awareness the Council achieved during the event.

Action Items:

- Share the recording of the *Rooted in Community* forum with Council members and the Senate President's Office.
- Purchase a display banner and high-quality tablecloth for future Council event tables.
- Improve coordination and ensure secure handling of Council materials and supplies for upcoming events.
- Follow up with the Senate President's Office regarding the next steps following the *Rooted in Community* forum.

IV. Open Discussion

LFFC Funding Status

- Dr. Petersen provided an update on funding appropriations, noting that there has been no progress since the last meeting. He explained that a new process must now be followed to request funds through the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI).
- Ms. Roberts shared that she is working to schedule a meeting with the directors at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to discuss how the lack of funding affects the center's operations.
- Dr. Adamu inquired about the most effective approach for securing funding. Dr. Petersen responded by outlining the current process and the associated challenges.

V. New Business

1. Dr. Adamu informed the Council about the upcoming CARET (Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching) Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. He emphasized the importance of using this platform to advocate for research and extension funding at the national level.

VI. Meeting Adjournment

With no further business, Dr. Petersen called for a motion to adjourn.

- **Motion to adjourn:** Mr. Wickrema
- **Seconded by:** Dr. Adamu

The motion was carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

VII. Next Meeting

- The next virtual LFFC meeting will be held on Friday, March 7, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.