



# Local Food and Farm Council

## Meeting Minutes

May 30, 2025

Location		No. of Attendees	No. of Presenter(s)	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		8	0	9:08 a.m.	10:30 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"><li>• Co-chair: Dr. Safiya George – President (UVI)</li><li>• Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA)</li><li>• Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School of Agriculture (UVI)</li><li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm</li><li>• Honorary Fisher Member: Mr. Winston Ledee</li><li>• State Sustainability Director: Cydney Meadows (VIDE)</li><li>• Dr. Rick Nader, Vice President for Research and Economic Development</li><li>• Dr. Ali Mohamed – Consultant / Retired Director, Environmental Systems / National Institute of Agriculture (NIFA) USDA</li></ul>					
Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner (VIDE)</li><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>• 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>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries</li><li>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife</li><li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm</li><li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz Farm</li><li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm</li><li>• Honorary Fisher Member Ms. Mavel Maldonado</li><li>• Director, Agriculture Business Center: Ms. Shanta Roberts (AgBC)</li><li>• Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition</li></ul>					

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

- The meeting was called to order at 9:08 AM by Dr. Nate Olive, who served as Acting Chair in the absence of Co-Chairs Dr. Safiya George and Dr. Louis Petersen, Jr.
- Dr. Olive welcomed attendees and acknowledged support from the members. He highlighted the need to establish a continuity strategy to ensure meeting momentum during periods of leadership absence. Dr. Olive also emphasized the urgency of advancing the Council's responsibilities, particularly as they relate to supporting the implementation of the Territory's Agricultural Plan.

### II. Roll Call and Quorum

Dr. Olive inquired of the Council's quorum to proceed with the approval of the meeting minutes. Ms. Maynard noted that while formal bylaws outlining quorum requirements have not yet been adopted, the Council has historically approved meeting minutes with less than half of the total membership present. Considering this precedent, Dr. Olive affirmed that the Council may proceed with approving the minutes unless there were any objections. No objections were raised, and the Council moved forward accordingly.

### **III. Approval of Minutes: April 4, 2025, and April 25, 2025**

The minutes from the meetings held on Friday, April 4, and Friday, April 25, 2025, were presented for approval.

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

### **IV. Special Meeting Recap: Arizona State University Design Institute**

- Dr. Olive provided a recap of his participation in the recent special session held with the Arizona State University Design Institute and the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI). He shared that the session was productive in building dialogue around systems innovation, collaborative design thinking, and cross-sector approaches that align with the goals of the Territory's Agricultural Plan.
- Dr. George briefly joined the meeting and expanded on the summary. She emphasized the significance of the collaboration, stating that it facilitated the exchange of strategic ideas and frameworks to support agricultural development across the Territory. Dr. George noted that a formal summary report from Arizona State University is forthcoming and will be shared with the Council once it is available.
- Additionally, Dr. Adamu and Dr. Nader expressed support for expanding regional partnerships, particularly with institutions in the Eastern Caribbean.
- Overall, members collectively acknowledged the potential to leverage ASU's institutional expertise to inform and strengthen local agriculture, making strides toward implementing the Ag plan.

### **V. Funding and Grant Follow-Up**

Dr. Olive emphasized the importance of conducting follow-ups with the 2024 grant recipients to evaluate both project implementation and proper use of funds. He noted that such follow-ups are critical for maintaining transparency, measuring impact, and ensuring alignment with the Council's objectives.

Ms. Maynard informed the members that she is aware that the Council has received an allotment of \$274,500 for its operational needs. These funds may be used for contractor services, guest speakers, event logistics, vendors, and related Council activities.

The Council explored the idea of engaging Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Browne (Good Food Coalition), as an independent contractor to conduct follow-up activities with 2024 grantees. This would include contacting recipients, assessing project status, and compiling individual progress reports for review by the Council. Members expressed support for the concept, particularly given Ms. Sibilly-Browne's prior involvement in the grant review process and her familiarity with the program.

However, members agreed that formal guidance from the Co-chairs is needed to confirm whether such an engagement is permissible under the existing budget structure. Additionally, clarification is required regarding whether the Council operates under a lump sum or line-item appropriation, which will determine the flexibility of how funds can be allocated.

### **VI. Open Discussion**

#### **6A. Economic Summit Planning**

Director Biggs informed Council members of the upcoming Territorial Economic Summit, tentatively scheduled for early to mid-October 2025. The summit will serve as a strategic platform to convene public- and private-sector leaders to discuss long-term economic resilience, diversification, and sustainable development across the Territory.

Director Biggs emphasized that one of the key themes under consideration is the integration of agriculture and food systems into broader economic development frameworks. He noted that the summit aligns with the goals outlined in Vision 2040, which explicitly identifies food security and local food production as priority focus areas for territorial transformation.

Members were formally invited to contribute by:

- Proposing panel topics that highlight the intersection of agriculture, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and economic impact;
- Recommending qualified speakers, including local producers, regional experts, academic leaders, and youth voices in agriculture;
- Identifying emerging issues or innovative models relevant to the Virgin Islands' agri-sector that warrant public discussion.

Director. Biggs also encouraged the members to consider how participation in the Summit could amplify the Council's efforts, create pathways for policy influence, and elevate the visibility of farmers' and fishers' needs at the territorial level.

In response, members expressed interest in shaping an agriculture-focused panel that reflects the Council's ongoing work to support grantees, promote food sovereignty, and align with the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.

**Recommendation:** Members may submit their recommendations to Ms. Maynard, and she will compile and submit them to Director Biggs.

#### **6B. Agricultural Business Center Collaboration**

Dr. Olive provided an update on collaborative efforts with the University of Puerto Rico and the Agricultural Business Center. Plans are underway to launch bilingual workshops in the Virgin Islands by late summer. These sessions will offer technical and business support to local farmers. Concerns were raised about low farmer engagement with the Center's current services.

Director Biggs suggested hosting programming during off-hours to better accommodate farmers' schedules. Members agreed that strengthening the Center's role in grant readiness and compliance is a priority.

### **VII. New Business**

#### **7A. Subcommittee Activation**

The members reviewed the status of standing and ad hoc subcommittees and reaffirmed the importance of their activation:

- **Budget Committee:** Members expressed interest in meeting prior to the next general meeting on June 13. Participation from UVI's Administration and Finance team was requested to provide context on fund allocation and documentation procedures.
- **Food Product Stickers & Integrity Standards Subcommittee**
- **Website Committee**
- **Grant Review Subcommittee**
- **Events and Activities Planning Subcommittee**

#### **VII. Meeting Continuity Planning**

The members addressed the need for a contingency leadership model to ensure meetings continue when Co-Chairs are unavailable.

Dr. Olive proposed the creation of a rotating pool of Acting Chairs selected from Council members. Dr. Usman Adamu supported the proposal and recommended that such provisions be incorporated into the Council's bylaws. Dr. Olive confirmed that a draft Meeting Policy and Bylaws document is in progress.

### **IX. Recommendations and Assignments**

1. Ms. Maynard will present the recommendations to Dr. George and Dr. Petersen regarding the engagement of Ms. Sibilly-Browne, and they will confirm the appropriate use of the budget.
2. The Budget Committee meeting will be scheduled prior to the next general meeting.
3. Members will submit agricultural topics and names for the Economic Summit.
4. Governance policies will be drafted to address quorum, guest chairpersons, and meeting continuity.

### **X. Next Meeting**

- The next LFFC General Meeting is scheduled for **Friday, June 13, 2025**, at 9:00 AM via Zoom.
- If both Co-Chairs are unavailable, and in alignment with the Council's commitment to meeting continuity, members will be polled in advance to identify a volunteer to serve as Acting Chairperson.

### **XI. Adjournment**

- With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.
- Dr. Olive thanked members for their participation and commitment.