



# Local Food and Farm Council

## Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2025

Location		No. of Attendees	No. of Presenter(s)	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		8	0	9:03 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>• <b>ACTING CO-CHAIR:</b> Director, Agriculture Business Center: Ms. Shanta Roberts (AgBC)</li><li>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife</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 Fisher Member: Mr. Winston Ledee</li><li>• Dr. Rick Nader, Vice President for Research and Economic Development</li><li>• State Sustainability Director: Cydney Meadows (VIDE)</li><li>• Program Assistant to State Sustainability Director: Sumayah Milan Bryan</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: 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>• 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>• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm</li><li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz Farm</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, and Agenda Overview

- The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM by Director Shanta Roberts, who served as Acting Chair in the absence of Co-Chairs Dr. Safiya George and Dr. Louis Petersen, Jr.
- Director Roberts opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and acknowledging the upcoming Father's Day holiday. A quorum was confirmed with at least six members present.

### II. Approval of Minutes: May 30, 2025

- The minutes were reviewed, and no corrections or modifications were observed.
- Dr. Olive moved to approve the meeting minutes as presented, with Mr. Creque seconding the motion.
- The minutes were unanimously approved with no objections or abstentions.

### III. Legislative Engagement and Updates

Dr. Roberts provided updates to the members on the continued engagement with respective legislatures.

- **Senator Milton Potter:** The Senator's office shared that they are actively working on a proposed East End Market Building project and are consulting stakeholders, including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Tourism, and the University of the Virgin Islands.
- **Senator Hubert Frederick,** Chair of the Agriculture Committee, will be invited to attend a future LFFC meeting. His attendance will be coordinated when either co-chair (Dr. George or Dr. Petersen) is present to represent the Council.

#### IV. Budget Subcommittee Report

Presented by Dr. Angeli, with contributions by Dr. Olive.

The Budget Subcommittee met on June 6, 2025. Key topics included administrative planning to initiate the release of appropriated funds.

- Dr. Petersen to submit a formal request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
  - Ms. Maynard to follow up with Dr. George and Dr. Vanterpool regarding fund release status.
  - Discussion around potentially contracting Ms. Sommer Sibilly Browne as a consultant due to the delay in appointing a full-time coordinator.
  - A 3-month consultancy proposal was outlined, with scope including outreach to 2024 grantees, collection of data, and impact reporting.
  - Discussion on whether compensation should be structured per grantee or as a fixed project fee. Travel reimbursement guidelines are pending from UVI.
  - The committee also discussed revising the job description for a full-time coordinator position.
- Dr. Olive noted that the Council continues to face bureaucratic hurdles even with allocated funds and stressed the importance of continued advocacy with the Legislature.

#### V. PPPIF 2024 Grantee Follow-up: Consultant Engagement Discussion

Director Roberts presented a proposed consultant agreement for review. The members discussed a proposal to engage Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Browne as a consultant to conduct follow-up assessments and impact documentation for the 2024 grant cycle. The draft engagement proposal outlined deliverables of a 3-month recurring term and compensation options.

Key discussion points included:

- Consideration of hiring Ms. Sibilly-Browne individually vs. through the Good Food Coalition (GFC), her affiliated organization.
- Concern over potential conflicts of interest, GFC was to apply for future LFFC grants.
- Recommendation to extend the contract period to 6 months for better continuity and outcomes.
- Suggestion to include a conflict of interest clause in the contract to ensure clarity.
- There was consensus that either Dr. George or Dr. Petersen would follow up directly with Ms. Sibilly-Browne to confirm her interest, preferred contracting method, and clarify limitations.

The final decision was deferred to the next meeting pending this follow-up.

#### VI. Subcommittee Formation and Participation

Director Roberts led a discussion on the importance of formalizing and activating key subcommittees to support the Council's ongoing work. She emphasized that while the Budget Subcommittee is fully formed and functioning, several other subcommittees still require volunteers to begin their work. Members were encouraged to reflect on where their skills and interests align and to join a subcommittee to support the Council's mandates. Committees mentioned include:

1. **Budget Subcommittee (Active)**
2. **Product Labeling & Integrity Standards:** Tasked with addressing the use of the LLFC-branded product stickers and ensuring only verified local products carry the Council's label. There was substantial concern from members about non-local products being sold as local, which misleads consumers and harms the reputation of local farmers.
  - a. Dr. Olive suggested that the subcommittee define what qualifies as "locally grown" and develop enforcement and education strategies. He also proposed that this could become a program coordinated under a future staff member, but could be scoped out in the meantime by volunteers.
  - b. **Dr. Angeli** proposed integrating this effort with the **"Reef Responsible" program**, a long-standing community initiative promoting sustainable fishing practices and consumer awareness. She suggested expanding the model to include local agriculture, especially since many farmers are also fishers. Dr. Angeli noted that her agency has been stewarding the program since 2019 but lacks the capacity to scale it. She offered to transfer stewardship and modest funding to LLFC or Good Food VI to expand the program's reach to farm goods and restaurants. The members recognized this as a valuable opportunity to establish brand trust and enhance outreach infrastructure.
3. **Grant Review and Selection Subcommittee:** To maintain the current members. Members stressed the importance of transparent and timely grant review and reporting.
4. **Outreach and Communications:** To guide Council messaging, public awareness, and press coordination.

5. **Events and Activities Planning:** Will coordinate Council-hosted events, workshops, and community engagement efforts.
6. **Website and Digital Presence (Social Media):** Assist in overseeing the operations of the Council's website and enhance social media presence.
7. **Future Farmers of America (FFA) Youth Engagement:** This area is currently being led by Director Cydney Meadows in her professional capacity under the Department of Education. The Council acknowledged her leadership and expressed a willingness to support her if additional help is needed, though no formal subcommittee is being formed at this time.

**Next Steps:** Members were asked to send an email to Ms. Maynard to indicate interest in joining a subcommittee.

Director Roberts reminded the members that while time is limited, forming these teams is essential for long-term impact, and even informal gatherings can help keep the Council's work moving forward.

## **VII. Open Discussion**

### **7A. Meeting Continuity – Acting Chairperson**

Director Roberts raised the topic of meeting continuity. The members discussed the need for a process to ensure leadership coverage during meetings when both Co-Chairs are unavailable. During the discussion, Director Roberts, Dr. Olive, and Director Meadows voluntarily agreed to serve as Acting Chairpersons on a rotating basis. The members agreed upon this approach. The rotation will be determined based on availability among the three members, allowing the Council to continue conducting official business and meetings without interruption in the absence of the Co-Chairs.

### **7B. Establishing a Quorum**

Director Roberts emphasized the importance of defining a quorum to ensure the Council can conduct its official business appropriately. The members discussed the need for clarity regarding the minimum number of members required to validate decisions made during meetings. It was agreed that the quorum should be based on the number of active, participating members, rather than the total number of members listed on the roster.

Furthermore, Director Roberts suggested that voting members consider designating a representative who could attend meetings on their behalf if they are unable to do so. The purpose will be an additional measure to support meeting continuity and maintain quorum. There was a consensus to move forward with asking voting members to consider whether to appoint a designee formally or to identify individuals who frequently attend and are familiar with the Council's work to serve in that capacity when needed.

## **VIII. New Business**

Director Roberts led the discussion under New Business. There were no new formal agenda items that were introduced; however, the members recognized that the following items require continued focus:

- Finalizing the consultant engagement with Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Browne, including determining whether the contract should be executed with her as an individual or through the Good Food Coalition, while carefully considering potential conflict of interest implications.
- Extending the consultant engagement period from the initially proposed three (3) months to six (6) months, as discussed, to ensure adequate time for deliverables and meaningful outcomes.
- Drafting and adopting a formal quorum policy to ensure clarity in governance and the validity of decisions made during Council meetings.
- Completing the formation of outstanding subcommittees, with members assigned according to areas of interest, expertise, and Council priorities.

Director Roberts emphasized that these items remain critical to the Council's progress and can be carried forward to the next meeting for further discussion and resolution.

## **IX. Adjournment**

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

## **X. Next Meeting**

- The next LFFC General Meeting is scheduled for **Friday, June 27, 2025**, at 9:00 AM via Zoom.