



Local Food and Farm Council

Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2025

Location		No. of Attendees	No. of Presenter(s)	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		9	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">Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner (VIDE)Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School of Agriculture (UVI)DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and WildlifeHonorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef FarmHonorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry FarmHonorary Fisher Member: Mr. Winston LedeeState Sustainability Director: Cydney Meadows (VIDE)Director, Agriculture Business Center: Ms. Shanta Roberts (AgBC)Program Assistant to State Sustainability Director: Sumayah Milan Bryan					
Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner (VIDE)Co-chair: Dr. Safiya George – President (UVI)Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA)Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR)Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – CommissionerVIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and InstructionVIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green LivingDPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, FisheriesHonorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed FarmHonorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz FarmHonorary Fisher Member Ms. Mavel MaldonadoDr. Rick Nader, Vice President for Research and Economic DevelopmentLocal Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition					

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

- The meeting was called to order at 9:08 A.M. by Dr. Petersen, Co-chair.
- Dr. Petersen thanked Dr. Olive and Director Roberts for their leadership and service in chairing previous meetings in the absence of the Co-Chairs. He stated that the rotating acting chair arrangement will effectively maintain meeting continuity and expressed his appreciation for their commitment to keeping the Council's mission moving forward.

II. Approval of Minutes: June 13, 2025

- Dr. Petersen introduced the approval of the minutes from the June 13, 2025, meeting. However, it was confirmed that a quorum had not been met; therefore, the approval of the minutes would be deferred to the next meeting.

III. Council Status Updates & Discussion

Engagement with Senator Hubert Frederick:

Dr. Petersen shared that outreach had been made to Senator Hubert Frederick, Chair of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture. Ms. Maynard confirmed that the Senator's office expressed interest in attending a future Council meeting but had a scheduling conflict for this session. Dr. Petersen highlighted the Senator's continued support and engagement in advancing the Council's mission.

- **Consultation Proposal – Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Browne (Good Food Coalition):**

Dr. Petersen presented the draft proposal submitted by Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Browne for consultant services to conduct evaluation site visits for the 2024 grantees across St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John. The scope of work includes 11 visits to grant recipients, assessing progress, documenting deliverables, and providing feedback.

The proposal was shared in advance via email and reviewed during the meeting. Dr. Petersen informed members that the projected service cost range is based on whether ground transportation is included. The pricing reflected all travel and per diem expenses, deliverables, and consultation fees. He also confirmed that he would accompany Ms. Sibilly-Browne on the visits to offer institutional context and oversight, as needed.

- Director Roberts asked for clarification regarding whether this engagement indicated a shift away from the earlier plan to hire a full-time coordinator. She inquired whether the consultant's duties would replace those initially envisioned for a coordinator role. ***Dr. Petersen acknowledged the question and encouraged members to submit additional feedback or concerns following the meeting for further discussion.***
- Director Roberts emphasized the growing expectations placed on Council members and reiterated the pressing need for dedicated funding and administrative support. She noted that responsibilities such as external communications, stakeholder engagement, and reporting were increasing and unsustainable under a volunteer model. She encouraged the Council to continue advocating for the OMB's support to build capacity and institutionalize essential roles.
- In reviewing the draft subcommittee framework, Dr. Petersen identified a minor wording adjustment, changing "written documentation or recording" to "written documentation and/or recording" to ensure clarity. Director Meadows also remarked that the proposal appeared strong and cost-effective, noting that the projected value for services was well below \$10,000 and appeared to offer substantial benefit.
- Dr. Petersen informed all members to review the proposal further and submit final comments or concerns on the consultant's scope of work by Monday, July 1, 2025.

IV. Senate Budget Hearing & Testimony (FY 2025-2026)

- Dr. Petersen led the discussion regarding the Council's anticipated participation in the FY 2025–2026 budget hearings before the Senate. He emphasized the importance of presenting a clear and organized request and encouraged members to offer recommendations for key priorities and messaging.

As part of the discussion, Dr. Petersen informed the members that the request to release funds, including support for hiring a full-time Coordinator, had already been submitted to OMB. However, the funds were not yet received as of the meeting date. This delay has impacted the Council's ability to bring on a Coordinator, and he reinforced the need to include capacity-building and timely disbursement in the formal budget testimony.

- Director Roberts expressed concern about whether current expenditures, such as consultant services, are intended to replace the hiring of a Coordinator. Dr. Petersen clarified that the consultant engagement is a temporary solution to ensure progress with grant monitoring while awaiting funding for a permanent staff member. The consultant will function under the Council's Operating Fund, managed by the University under a separate funding stream.
- Members agreed that the need for sustained operational funding, administrative capacity, and timely fund access should be core elements of the Council's FY 2025–2026 budget request.

V. Proposed Subcommittee Reorganization

- Dr. Petersen reviewed the status of subcommittee participation. While several members had confirmed their areas of interest, some had not yet responded. Dr. Petersen emphasized the importance of finalizing subcommittee assignments and encouraged members to email their selections or adjustments as soon as possible.
- Dr. Olive and Dr. Angeli encouraged building upon the local integrity certification initiatives and integrating the "Reef Responsible" program into the subcommittee standards. They emphasized building existing community-based recognition programs to promote responsible practices among fishers, farmers, and food providers.
- Dr. Olive inquired whether Honorary Council members could be compensated for participating in subcommittee meetings. No decision was made, and the matter may be resolved.

VI. Open Discussion

6a. Feedback from VIDA Farmers' Meeting

- **Director Roberts** opened the discussion by sharing reflections from the recent VIDA Farmers Meeting. She emphasized that the Council must do more to be visible and connected with the farming community. She noted with concern that only a few Council members attended the meeting, and that the broader farming audience remains largely unaware of the Council's purpose and impact. She stated, "Farmers don't even know who we are," and suggested that increased engagement and physical presence from members are necessary moving forward.
- **Dr. Adamu** shared that he attended the meeting and had direct conversations with farmers, who responded positively to his presence. He expressed a strong desire to continue engaging directly with farmers to understand their concerns better. He clarified that his intent is to listen and build trust, not to speak officially on behalf of the Council unless aligned in advance.
- **Mr. Creque** initially raised concerns about maintaining consistency in public messaging. He emphasized that while individual member engagement is valuable, it is equally important that communication with the public reflect the collective position of the Council. He cautioned against any confusion that could arise if members are perceived as speaking independently on behalf of the full body.
 - In response, Dr. Adamu clarified that his intent was to support transparency and build trust, not to speak on behalf of the Council without coordination. His goal, he reiterated, was to deepen understanding through active listening and presence in the field.
- **Dr. Olive** voiced strong support for both perspectives. He emphasized that a sustained presence, not just occasional attendance, would help the Council build long-term credibility. He advocated for developing consistent outreach efforts led by subcommittees, with clear communication back to the full Council and regular updates to the community. Dr. Olive also highlighted the importance of listening as a leadership tool, particularly in ensuring that Council priorities align with the needs and concerns of those they serve.
- **Dr. Petersen** concluded the discussion by summarizing the collective agreement that community engagement is a shared responsibility. He supported the idea of leveraging subcommittees to help organize outreach opportunities and committed to helping structure a formal approach that would ensure visibility, consistency, and accountability.

6b. Maintaining Quorum and Member Outreach

- Dr. Petersen raised the ongoing concern about maintaining quorum during Council meetings, especially as participation varies from session to session. He emphasized an active and ongoing effort to reach out to inactive members to confirm their continued interest and improve meeting participation. Dr. Petersen noted that proactive outreach would help maintain quorum and support the Council's ongoing work.

IX. Adjournment

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

X. Next Meeting

- The next LFFC General Meeting is scheduled for **Friday, July 11, 2025**, at 9:00 AM via Zoom.

Minutes Correction Record

Meeting Date of Original Minutes:	June 27, 2025
Correction Noted By:	Director, Shanta Roberts
Correction:	While the summary in the June 27, 2025, minutes attributed to Director Roberts regarding “the growing expectations placed on Council members and the pressing need for dedicated funding and administrative support” was accurate, Director Roberts clarified that Dr. Olive had originally made the statement. She supported the message and acknowledged its importance but recommended that the attribution be corrected to Dr. Olive.
Motion:	Dr. Olive moved to approve the June 27, 2025, meeting minutes, with Director Roberts noting the correction.
Second:	Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown seconded the motion.
Vote:	Approved unanimously, with no objections or abstentions in
Final Action:	The June 27, 2025, minutes were approved as amended in the July 11, 2025, general meeting.