



Local Food and Farm Council

Meeting Minutes

November 21, 2025

Location		Present	Absent	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing/*-		7	13	9:06 a.m.	10:13 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 (VIDA) • Co-chair Designee: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School of Agriculture (UVI) • DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife • VIDE Designee: Ms. Cydney Meadows – Territorial Director of Sustainability & Agricultural Education • Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm • Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm • Director Shanta Roberts – Director, Agriculture Business Center (AgBC) 					
Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 – Commissioner, VI Department of Education • VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living • VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction • DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries • Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm • Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz Farm • Honorary Fisher Member: Mr. Winston Ledee • Honorary Fisher Member Ms. Mavel Maldonado • Dr. Rick Nader – Vice President for Research and Economic Development (UVI) • Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition Program 					

I. CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

- The meeting of the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council was called to order at 9:06 a.m. by Co-Chair Dr. Louis Petersen.
- Dr. Petersen welcomed the members and confirmed that a quorum was established.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Dr. Petersen presented the November 7, 2025, meeting minutes for approval.

Actions:

- **Motion:** To approve the November 7, 2025, meeting minutes as presented.
 - **Motion** to approve was made by Mr. Royce Creque.
 - **Second** provided by Dr. Usman Adamu.
- **Vote:** There were no objections or abstentions, and the motion carried unanimously, and the minutes were adopted as presented.

III. Legislative Hearing Debrief – November 10, 2025

Dr. Petersen invited a full discussion reflecting on the Council’s testimonies delivered during the Legislature’s Committee on Economic Development, Planning, and Agriculture hearing held on November 10, 2025.

Summary of Testimonies

Dr. Petersen noted that testimonies were presented by:

- **Dr. Safiya George**, on behalf of the Council
- **Dr. Louis Petersen**, on behalf of the Council and the Department of Agriculture
- **Mr. Harith Wickrama**, President of Island Green Living
- **Two farmers**, who were 2024 PPPIF recipients and provided impactful firsthand accounts

He emphasized that the **collective message** was well-received and meaningful.

Member Reflections

- **Director Roberts** highlighted that the presence of farmers strengthened the testimony’s credibility and personal impact. She also noted that unexpected questions were asked about the AgBC.
- **Mr. Creque** stated that the Council demonstrated seriousness and strong expertise, reinforcing the urgency of agricultural issues and signaling to legislators the Council’s commitment.
- **Dr. Petersen** shared that several senators engaged in detailed follow-up discussions afterward, expressing strong support and acknowledging the importance of the farmers’ testimonies. He noted that senators appreciated the Council’s emphasis on pursuing non-local funding sources, (Food and Farm Fund – 501(c)3) which improves the viability of future territorial funding requests.
- **Dr. Adamu** reinforced that senators expect the Council to proactively identify grant funding, and he emphasized the need for strategic organization to pursue external resources.
- **Director Roberts and Dr. Petersen** discussed a recent listening session held by Senator Frederick on St. Croix, noting that although attendance was small, the conversation was productive. Solutions were shared among farmers, and the interaction demonstrated community willingness to take initiative rather than rely solely on government assistance.
- **Dr. Olive** reported he was in Puerto Rico presenting at a Transition to Organic conference, where Virgin Islands agricultural initiatives, especially the Council’s institutionalization of organic agriculture support, were recognized as influential. He also shared that Puerto Rico officials expressed interest in learning from the Virgin Islands’ model.

Overall, the Council concluded that this hearing on November 10th, was an advanced legislative rapport and strengthened momentum for agricultural initiatives across the territory.

IV. Events & Activities Subcommittee Report

Director Roberts presented a detailed update on upcoming events and promotional materials. She displayed the full suite of proposed items, including, Farm and Fish coloring books, Seed packets, Stickers (promotional only), Tote bags, Keychains, Information cards, Retractable banner, and Branded notebooks.

Discussion Highlights

- **Dr. Olive** expressed strong support for the Farm Friends Coloring Book, noting that it is an excellent tool for youth engagement and shared his personal experience with utilizing the coloring book. can help the Council introduce agricultural concepts to younger audiences.
- **Dr. Adamu** emphasized support and suggested that the resources should play a strategic role in community outreach. He highlighted the importance of ensuring that materials reflect the Council’s mission and educational goals.
- **Dr. Angeli** requested to formally join the Local Food Symbol and Integrity Subcommittee. She explained that her division already manages certification stickers for fish and native plant programs and recommended that the Council develop a consistent, unified framework for all official labels to ensure clarity and prevent overlap across agencies.
- **Director Roberts** clarified that promotional stickers are distinct from any official “locally grown” or “locally produced” certification labels. She emphasized that official certification stickers must not be distributed until the Labeling Subcommittee finalizes standards and guidelines. She also confirmed that promotional inventory will be stored separately on St. Thomas and St. Croix to streamline event logistics and reduce delays.
- **Dr. Petersen** reiterated that while promotional materials can proceed, no official certification stickers shall be issued until the Council completes the formal development and approval process. He stressed the importance of proper sequencing to maintain credibility and ensure alignment with statutory requirements.

V. Branded Apparel for Council Members and Volunteers

Director Roberts presented options for t-shirts (for volunteers), polo shirts, and button-down shirts for Council members.

Key Decisions & Comments

- T-shirts will primarily be used for **volunteers** and as **incentive giveaways** at events.
- Council members preferred **polos or button-downs** for professional visibility.
- Members suggested:
 - Adding **darker green or navy** options.
 - Including **women's fitted cuts**.
 - Maintaining the **full-color Council logo** rather than a black-and-white version.
- Members will submit shirt sizes directly to Ms. Maynard, of which the members present submitted their sizes in the chat.
- Director Roberts and Ms. Maynard will return with final pricing and color options, at the next meeting.

VII. Adjournment

- With no further business raised, Dr. Petersen thanked all members for their participation, contributions, and collaborative engagement.
- The meeting was adjourned at 10:13 a.m.

VIII. Next Meeting

- The next LFFC General Meeting is scheduled for **Friday, December 12, 2025**, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.