

Deli, Freight Forwarding, Restaurants and Apartments: Virgin Islanders Starting New Businesses Win Praise From Senate

Business / **Published On December 19, 2021 06:32 AM /**

Linda Straker **December 19, 2021**

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Proposals that will bring economic development to the Virgin Islands through rezoning were the focus of a December 16 hearing of the Committee of the Whole when its members met in St. John at the Cleone A. Creque Legislation Conference Room.

The hearing, which lasted over four hours, heard requests for rezoning for the development of various businesses including a request to allow a restaurant and apartments, another allowing for ten dwelling units while another was a request to allow a convenience store and deli.

After listening to the business owners' appeal statements and the suggestions and recommendations from Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, commissioner of the Department of Planning and

Natural Resources, the senators sought further clarity which had some of the legislators openly announcing their support or concern.

Senator Carla Joseph expressed her excitement about the proposals but was concerned about the practicability of these projects becoming successful in the long term. "One of the things I really take interest in especially when we are having development and proposed businesses in certain areas is whether the proposed business owners have done some homework to see if their businesses are going to be actually feasible," she questioned.

Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, who chaired the hearing was also enthused that the entire discussions were around economic development for folks who are Virgin Islanders who have chosen to grow the businesses here and contribute significantly to the economic development of the territory.

"We continue to talk about growing small businesses and supporting our own businesses... I think it is so important that we give strong consideration to these recommendations that are before us," she told the committee.

"However, I would say that I am only inclined to support these measures based on the recommendations from DPNR," she added. "They are the professionals and ... in absent of a land and water use plan I think it's important for us to respect that. We have to consider not what is in front of us today but what will be in front of the U.S. Virgin Islands long after each of us are gone. It is very important for us to keep in the forefront of our mind," she said while praising all the applicants for their economic development initiatives.

No action was taken on the zoning measures on Dec. 16, but they are expected to be considered in upcoming hearings.

Testimonies were received on the following Zoning Map Amendment Applications:

Block I

ZAJ-21-1: Jennifer Blake and Jason Callwood (authorized agent Brian Turnbull)

Parcel No. 22-H-1 Estate Enighed, No. 1 Cruz Bay Quarter, St. John be rezoned from R-2 (Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood).

The purpose of the request is to allow business uses.

Invited Testifiers:

Jennifer Blake and Jason Callwood (authorized agent, Brian Turnbull), Applicants

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner, Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

ZAJ-21-2: Gwenda Dagou

Requesting Parcel No. 3-4 Estate Beverhoudtsberg, No. 7 Cruz Bay Quarter, St. John be rezoned from R-1 (Residential-Low Density) to B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood). The purpose of the request is to allow a restaurant and apartments.

Invited Testifiers:

Gwenda Dagou, Applicant

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner, Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

ZAT-21-6: Simra Y. James-Sydney (authorized agent Roosevelt David)

Parcel No. 11-16 Estate Contant, 7BA Southside Quarter, St. Thomas be rezoned from R-2 (Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to R-3 (Residential-Medium Density). The purpose of the request is to allow ten dwelling units.

Invited Testifiers:

Simra Y James-Sydney (authorized agent Roosevelt David), Applicant

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner, Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

Block II

ZAC-21-11: Genoveva M. Tirado (authorized agent, Lilliana Belardo de O'Neal)

Plot No. 96 Estate Profit, King Quarter, St. Croix be rezoned from R-4 (Residential-Medium Density) to B-3 (Business-Scattered). The purpose of the request is to allow a convenience store and deli.

Invited Testifiers:

Genoveva M. Tirado (authorized agent, Lilliana Belardo de O'Neal), Applicant

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner, Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

ZAC-21-4: Timothy and Marie Granderson

Plot Nos. 167 and 168 Estate Clifton Hill, King Quarter, St. Croix be rezoned from R-2 (Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood) or B-3 (Business-Scattered). The purpose of the request is to allow Freight Forwarding Services.

Invited Testifiers:

Timothy and Marie Granderson, Applicants

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner, Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

ZAC-21-10: Ali and Hamad Yusuf of New Foundation Company, LLC

Plot Nos. 174 and 175 Estate Peter's Rest, Queen Quarter, St. Croix be rezoned from R-2 (Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to B-1 (Business Central District) The purpose of the request is to allow business uses.

Invited Testifiers:

Ali and Hamad Yusuf, Applicants

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner, Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning, Department of Planning and Natural Resources

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