

Image not found or type unknown

From Religious to Business and Residential: Three Zoning Requests Set for June 14 Approval

Development / **Published On June 10, 2023 06:21 AM /**

Janeka Simon **June 10, 2023**

Image not found or type unknown



Zoning request maps. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

In a Senate Committee of the Whole hearing on Friday, lawmakers were presented with proposals for three significant zoning changes on St. Croix spanning residential, religious, and business sectors.

Junia John-Straker, CEO of Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands Inc. (LSSVI), made a compelling case for the rezoning of plot number 71, Estate Concordia West. The proposed shift from R2 – Residential Low Density to R3 – Residential Medium Density would enable the construction of a new structure to replace the current "Sister Emma Cottage." The cottage, a part of the Queen Louise Home for Children campus, suffered severe damages during the 2017

hurricanes. The new building aims to mitigate flood risks by being situated on safer ground.



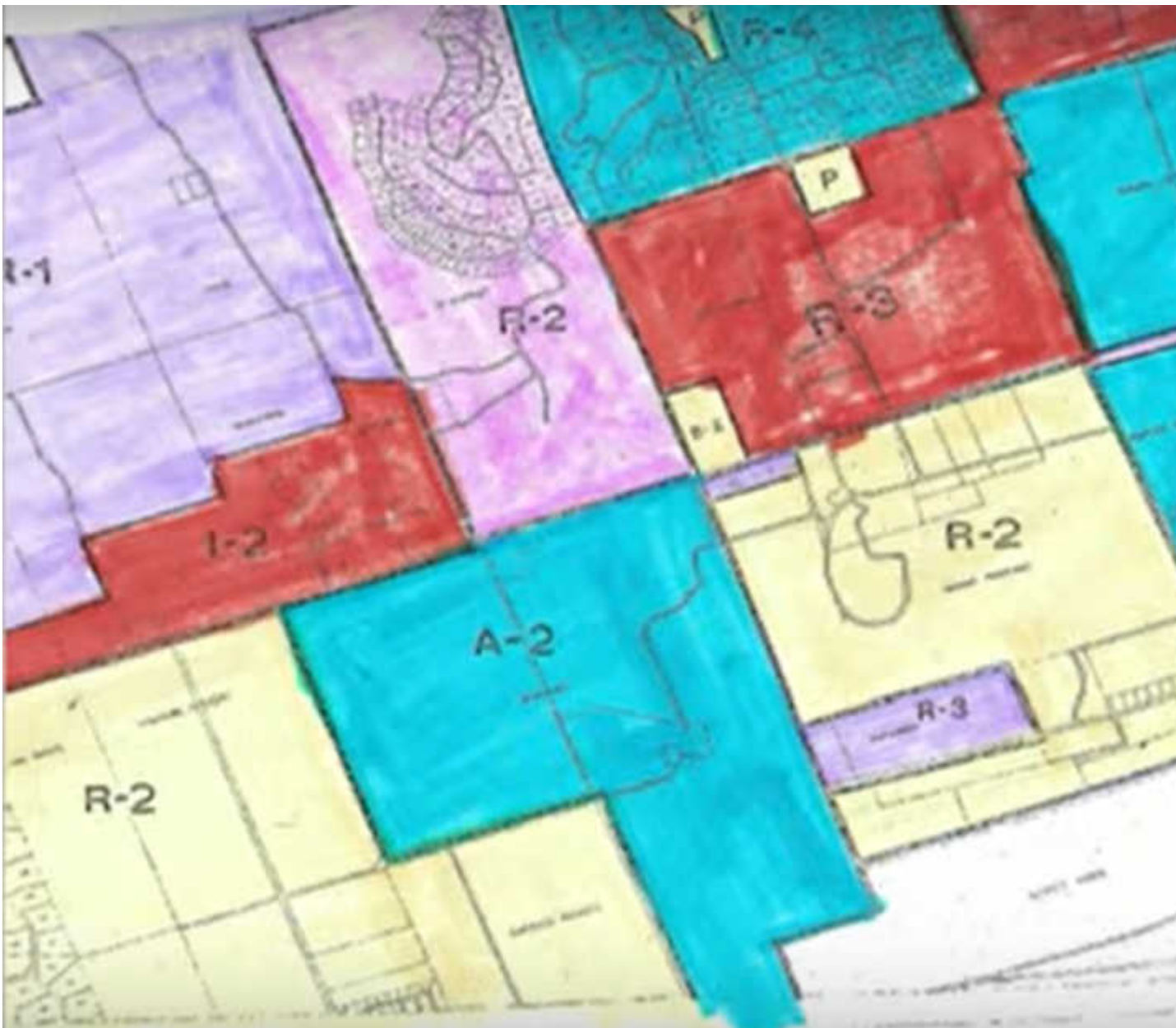
Straker underscored the critical role LSSVI plays in the Virgin Islands, supporting over 300 individuals daily across 11 programs. She asserted that the proposed new Sister Emma Cottage is vital to provide residential foster care to children and young adults with developmental and physical challenges.

Meanwhile, a representative from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) testified on a variance request for the Church of God Seven Days' property at plot 52-B Estate Hannah's Rest.



The request seeks to align the current use of the property, a trailer serving as a church, with zoning regulations and permit the construction of a permanent building for use as a church, residence, and other public uses. DPNR supports rezoning the property from C – Commercial to B3 – Business Scattered to accommodate the church's diverse intended uses.

Elsewhere, a rezoning request was made for plot 140 Estate St. George, Prince's Quarter, a property owned by Larry Offred currently used for livestock farming. The proposed change from R2 Residential Low Density to B3 Business Scattered corresponds to a mixed-use development plan. The proposal envisions a two-story building, with a business on the lower floor and a residence on the upper floor.



(Middle area shaded in red is the plot for which a zoning change is being requested)

According to Leia LaPlace-Matthew, DPNR Territorial Planner, the proposal aligns with nationwide zoning reforms aimed at addressing housing shortfall and creating a gradual transition

from commercial areas to low-density residential zones. The proposal did not face public opposition.

Clarence Brown, representing the property owner in this request, expressed confidence that the proposed amendment is congruent with the area's established character and will contribute positively to the community.

Lawmakers raised minor questions about practical matters such as parking accommodations, staff-to-child ratios at the children's home, and the congregation size for the church. However, they expressed broad support for the applications and commended DPNR's recommendation to approve all three requests.

Senate President Novelle Francis noted at the beginning of the session that the applications would not come up for a vote in this session, but rather during the next legislative session scheduled for June 14.