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Historic Preservation Committee Addresses Perception of Being 'Anti-Approval,' Discusses Food Truck Impact on High-Rent Businesses

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Aerial view of Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The discussion [over plans](#) from the V.I. Department of Property and Procurement during the St. Thomas Historic Preservation Committee meeting last Thursday sparked a broader inquiry about the process by which mobile food vendors are given permission to operate in downtown Charlotte Amalie.

HPC Chair Akil Petersen, towards the end of the meeting, asked VI State Historical Preservation Society Acting Director Sean Krigger about the process for approvals for these food trucks. In the downtown area, “there has been established with previous administrators that there will be a

general moratorium on food vendor mobile locations,” Mr. Krigger responded. Therefore, food trucks would be limited to the Vendors Plaza area, in the new configuration proposed by Property & Procurement, and the daytime and nighttime locations already occupied by previously-approved applicants.

Anyone wanting to apply to set up a food truck business would first have to get general clearance from the Administrator’s Office for their requested location before seeking approval from the HPC in relation to signage, graphics, and other visual aspects of the business. Finally, a permit would need to be supplied by the police, as well as relevant licensing to offer consumable products for sale to the public.

Mention was made of a food truck currently operating in front of the SeaGrape restaurant. “That didn’t come before us at all,” Mr. Petersen noted. “We did inquire with that vendor and they informed us that they had gotten their approval directly from the Administrator’s Office,” Mr. Krigger informed.

Mr. Petersen argued that the truck’s signage, which “technically wouldn’t be allowed in the historic district,” was blocking a business “who’s paying probably quite a few dollars for rent for that property.” He wondered how the approvals process for food trucks could be standardized to ensure that all applicants would follow the same procedures.

Committee member Enrique Rodriguez suggested that a “friendly letter” be sent to St. Thomas Administrator Avery Lewis “reminding him of our role in the district and examples where he has failed to understand our role or circumvented our role in the district.”

Mr. Krigger noted that the Administrator’s Office has worked with the HPC in the past, and said that he wasn’t sure “what went wrong” in this particular instance. He also mentioned that HPC had issued an approval for an ice-cream vendor in that spot, but emphasized that it was temporary and never utilized.

Mr. Petersen expressed hope that the offending food truck could be moved, as it “shouldn’t be blocking a business on the main strip that’s paying a crazy amount of rent, and also taking up two parking spaces.”

Before the meeting came to an end, Mr. Rodriguez sought to stress that the HPC approved an overwhelming proportion – 99.5% – of the applications that came before it during that meeting. Taking exception to the idea that HPC was “the anti-approval committee,” Mr. Rodriguez argued that “we practically are always at that high percentile for approval of everything that comes before us.”