USVI Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan

St. Thomas Working Group Kick Off Meeting – May 5, 2023 – 12 pm

The virtual kickoff meeting of the St. Thomas Working Group for the USVI Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan (CLWUP) was held via Zoom on Friday, 5/5/23 from 12:00 – 1:00 pm AST.

Present

Dez Wilkes, Laura Martin, Langley Shazor, Mik Morales, Noreen Michael, Meg Novacek, Sarah Haynes-Brin, Katina Coulianos, Sybille Sorrentino, Karen Williams, Jeff Davis (HW), Krista Moravec (HW), Nate Kelley (HW), Kellie King (HW), Hilary Lohmann (DPNR), Leia LaPlace (DPNR), Marlon Hibbert (DPNR)

Welcome

Krista Moravec (HW), **Hilary Lohmann (DPNR)**, and **Leia LaPlace (DPNR)** provided brief opening remarks.

Introductions

All individuals introduced themselves (name, residence, association).

Overview of the Working Groups' Role & Responsibilities

Jeff Davis (HW) provided an overview of the Working Groups' role and responsibilities, expected schedule and time commitment, and structure. The project team would like to work with the Working Groups to determine how best to meet, communicate, and use everyone's time effectively.

Key points related to the role of the Working Groups:

- Working Groups (one for each district) will not have any formal approval authority but are expected to provide important guidance.
- Working Groups will provide oral and written feedback on draft materials and advice and guidance regarding upcoming public engagement activities.
- The project team will rely on Working Groups to help promote public activities and events through their own local networks and provide access to materials that may assist with CLWUP development (e.g., photos).
- Working Groups can provide guidance on key issues important on a particular island and bring local knowledge and experience to the topics covered in the CLWUP.

Key points related to the expected schedule and time commitment:

- Meetings will be virtual (via Zoom or other platform) and Working Groups will meet prior to each major round of public engagement or release of major plan materials. This will likely amount to at least six meetings held approximately once every other month.
- Working Group members will often be given "homework" between meetings to help support development of the CLWUP.
- The draft near-term timeline is as follows:
  - Late May/Early June: Online public survey on Formative Issues
  - Week of June 26: Second Working Group meeting focused on public engagement for Guiding Principles and Policies

- o Week of July 17: Public engagement for Guiding Principles and Policies
- o August: Third Working Group meeting focused on Visioning Charrette
- o August/September: Visioning Charrette
- The draft long-term timeline is as follows (specific dates TBD):
  - o Fourth Working Group meeting to focus on reviewing policy framework and online public survey before they are released.
  - o Fifth Working Group meeting to focus on reviewing draft goals, policies, and strategies, and next round of in-person public engagement.
  - o Sixth Working Group meeting to focus on reviewing draft CLWUP and next round of in-person public engagement.

Key points related to Working Groups' structure:

- Meetings will be between 60-90 minutes and focus on items that would benefit from group discussion. Individual feedback (e.g., specific text edits) should be collected via "homework assignments."
- Communications platform is to-be-decided (e.g., email, Google Drive, password-protected page on project website).

Discussion

Sarah Haynes-Brin prefers Google Drive and is hoping to keep meetings closer to an hour. **Laura Martin** agrees that it the Working Group should aim for hour-long meetings and would prefer a Google Drive of password-protected page on the project website to reduce email. **Mik Morales** agreed that a platform that organizes documents and revisions would be better. Sybille Sorrentino agreed that Google Drive would be good.

Katina Coulianos asked for more information on how a password-protected page would work. **Jeff Davis (HW)** explained that Working Group members would have access to a password-protected page on the project website that would have all relevant documents and materials posted. However, a password-protected page would not have the same document revision functionality as Google Drive. **Katina Coulianos** would prefer the password-protected page. **Meg Novacek** proposed using a Google Drive for document edits and posting finalized materials to a password-protected page. **Laura Martin** suggested creating a guideline for how to manage document versions.

- **Jeff Davis (HW)** will set up a Google Drive and password-protected webpage on the project website. Comments will be managed in Google Drive by using the Suggestion Mode, and HW will be responsible for managing version control. The password-protected webpage will host finalized documents and other relevant materials.
- Note that feedback on the Working Group's first assignment (reviewing the Formative Issues document) should be sent via email to HW. The Working Group will switch to the above described method for future assignments.

Recap: What We Heard From the Town Hall Meetings

Jeff Davis (HW) provided a review of the feedback collected from the in-person and online February and March public engagement events on St. Thomas. Working Group members were emailed the Summary Report of the February 28th – March 8th Town Hall Meetings and Open Houses (all summary materials are also available on the project website).

Draft Formative Issues

Nate Kelly (HW) reviewed the draft summary of Formative Issues. Working Group members will be provided with a more detailed Formative Issues document after the meeting for their review and feedback. The Formative Issues document is based on the project team's research of existing data, plans, and past planning initiatives; interviews with territorial agencies and staff; and the public engagement sessions. The Formative Issues will translate into Guiding Principles, which will inform the policies that the CLWUP advocates for. At this point, the Working Group members can help the project team confirm whether the Formative Issues are aligned with the needs of the community.

Discussion

Sybille Sorrentino asked about using Survey Monkey to solicit feedback from major stakeholders or the Working Group.

- **Jeff Davis (HW)** noted that the project team will release a survey in Survey Monkey to the general public on the Formative Issues (after the Working Group reviews the document). The use of surveys with the Working Group can be explored if members are interested.

Katina Coulianos wanted to confirm how Working Group members will be notified when documents are available for their review.

- **Jeff Davis (HW)** said he would email to notify Working Group members.

Katina Coulianos asked how broader comments, thoughts, and ideas should be communicated to the Working Group and project team if not specific to a document being reviewed.

- **Jeff Davis (HW)** said Working Group members should use their discretion on whether it merits a larger discussion with other members (via email or during meetings) or can be communicated directly to the project team (via email). The project team could also set up a survey for Working Group members if the topic demands.

Karen Williams commented in the chat, asking what could be done to encourage people to give up their cars. Karen also expressed doubt that the stigma around taking VITRAN could be overcome.

- **Meg Novacek** responded in the chat, saying VITRAN could be marketed as clean, safe, and convenient if it has amenities like Wi-Fi and a more reliable schedule. VITRAN could be useful in areas with limited parking.
- **Sybille Sorrentino** commented in the chat, saying that increasing VITRAN's efficiency, reducing wait times, and making it clearer how to use the bus, what the bus routes are, and how much it costs would help.
- **Karen Williams** responded in the chat, saying that she sent a YouTube video she watched recently to Jeff Davis (HW) for distribution and was still doubtful about how VITRAN ridership could be increased.

Langley Shavor noted that there are many other recent plans (e.g., Vision 2040, Agricultural Plan) or planning initiatives in the work by other agencies. Langley wanted to know how other agencies are being engaged in the CLWUP process and if they are already actively engaged.

- **Jeff Davis (HW)** acknowledged the importance of engaging other agencies, saying that the project team kicked off the CLWUP process by connecting with and interviewing other agencies. The CLWUP should be the umbrella plan and work well with existing adopted plans. Jeff emphasized that the project team is also aware of other great work that has not been adopted (e.g., zoning, ideas from previous CLWUP attempts) and wants the CLWUP to reflect those ideas. Jeff also emphasized that the CLWUP is the overarching plan that guides regulations, zoning, etc., but it will not itself be zoning regulations. The project team hopes to package the CLWUP in such a way that regulatory reform will happen soon after the CLWUP is adopted.

Mik Morales asked whether existing plans will be posted anywhere for the Working Group members to review.

- **Jeff Davis (HW)** said that background materials of the project website has several current regulations and recently adopted plans.

Closing

Jeff Davis (HW) reiterated that all Working Group members will be sent the draft Formative Issues document, presentation slides from the kickoff meeting, and a contact list of Working Group members via email. Additional materials and meeting minutes will be sent later this week. Jeff asked the Working Group members to be strategic about sharing draft materials as they may need adjustments and finetuning before being officially released to the general public and media.

Marlon Hibbert (DPNR) thanked the Working Group members for attending the meeting and said that the hard work begins now—Marlon hopes that everyone will sign up and turn up to "full-ticipate" (not just participate!). Marlon reiterated that the CLWUP is not a DPNR plan but is the community's plan. DPNR and HW is facilitating the process of making this plan, and it should be clear when the plan is ready for the Legislature to review that it reflects the community's wants and needs.