GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Honorable Milton E. Potter
President
36th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands
Capitol Building
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

Re: Petition to Amend Official Zoning Map No. SJZ-1, Application No. CCZP0036-26

Good day Senate President Potter, members of the 36th Legislature, legislative staff, and members of the public. My name is Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner with the Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning (CCZP) within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR). I am here to present the Department's recommendation regarding Application No. CCZP0036-26, a request to amend the official zoning map for St. John.

This application was submitted by Peggy Yvonne Smith, through her authorized representative Roosevelt Saint Claire David, seeking to amend the zoning designation of Parcel No. 30 Estate Susannaberg, No. 17A Cruz Bay Quarter, St. John, consisting of approximately 2.935 acres, from R-1 (Residential-Low Density) to C (Commercial). The purpose of the request is to bring existing nonconforming commercial activities on the property into zoning conformity and to support future commercial development opportunities.

The subject property currently contains several established businesses, including a landscaping business, animal care and veterinary services, an automotive repair shop, a restaurant, a boating-related business, and a solar energy service business. The applicant has indicated that future development may include an additional commercial building to accommodate business rentals and storage uses. The property presently contains approximately 58 parking spaces, two cisterns with a combined capacity of 35,906 gallons, and two septic systems with a combined capacity of 4,000 gallons.

DPNR conducted a comprehensive review of the request, including an evaluation of the surrounding land uses, zoning history, existing infrastructure, public input, and consistency with the 2024 Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan. The surrounding area contains a mix of developed commercial, service-oriented, and undeveloped properties. The Department also noted that Estate Susannaberg has experienced multiple zoning amendments over the years, reflecting the area's gradual transition from predominantly residential zoning toward a more mixed-use and service-oriented corridor.

The Department's review resulted in the following key findings:

- The existing commercial uses on the property are generally consistent with uses permitted within the C (Commercial) zoning district, including veterinary services, restaurant

operations, automotive repair services, landscaping businesses, and solar energy-related enterprises.

- The property exceeds the minimum lot area requirements for the Commercial zoning district, complies with maximum lot occupancy standards, and conforms to maximum building height limitations.
- While the site currently provides 58 parking spaces, full verification of parking compliance under Title 29 Virgin Islands Code §230 will occur during future permitting processes when employee counts and floor area information become available. The Department notes that sufficient land area exists to accommodate additional parking if required.
- The boating-related storage and light maintenance activities associated with the Ocean Runner operation may require further zoning interpretation during future permit review; however, this issue does not materially affect the overall zoning analysis.
- During the DPNR-CCZP public hearing held on July 22, 2026, staff requested additional information regarding business operations, parking, building size, and infrastructure capacity. No public comments or testimony were received during or after the hearing.
- The 2024 Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan identifies the Susannaberg and Centerline Road corridor as an emerging mixed-use center and encourages land use policies that support community services, employment opportunities, commercial activity, housing, and improved connectivity. The Department finds that the existing commercial character of the property aligns with these objectives.

After evaluating the application, existing site conditions, zoning history, surrounding land uses, and the policies of the Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan, the Department finds that the proposed rezoning is consistent with the vision established for the Susannaberg and Centerline Road corridor. The request recognizes existing commercial activities already operating on the property, promotes economic opportunities for St. John residents, and supports the continued evolution of the area as a mixed-use service and employment center. Accordingly, the Department recommends approval of the requested zoning amendment from R-1 (Residential-Low Density) to C (Commercial).

Pursuant to Title 29 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 3, Section 238, the report of the Planning Office concerning this application, including the detailed reasons supporting the Department's recommendation, has been incorporated into the record submitted to this Committee of the Whole Hearing. We respectfully request that the PowerPoint presentation for CCZP0036-26 now be displayed.

This concludes the Department's testimony. We are available to answer any questions.