

Revised

April 14, 2024

Mr. Novelle E. Francis;
President of the 35th Legislature,
Capitol Building,
St. Thomas, V.I.00802

Good afternoon Mr. President/Chairman and all other distinguished Senators and legislative staff, present here this afternoon.

My name is Roosevelt St. C. David, long time licensed consultant and realtor, here in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

I have been engaged by Mr. Ari Goldschneider, principal of Gift hill lands, to present this request for a rezoning/variance of 9-3 Glucksberg, St. John, from R2- low density to R4- medium density-Repeat. However, the gentleman has since then changed his request to a use Variance, in the spirit of compromise.

The purpose of this ask, is specifically to build some long- term housing units for the St. John community, recognizing that the housing stock for locals, is non- existent; as a matter of fact, this housing issue has reached crisis mode, and I believe the private sector can help. The government has been doing its best over the years, but has had its

challenges. I have lived on St. John, as far back as 1967 for many years, where I have developed tremendous relationships with numerous families, and also becoming their trusted banker. My deep roots have been established there. I like to boast that almost every good thing that has happened to me, which sheds a positive light, started right there on St. John. My family was created there, my banking career, my political career, my business investments, and more importantly, my children were reared and raised right there on that little beautiful Island.

I think it was important to place this on the record, because it grieves me greatly, when I see indigenous St. Johnians having to leave their native land to seek housing on St. Thomas and St. Croix, and even as far as the mainland, because of a lack of housing opportunities in their home-land.

It is also very painful for some, because families had to be left behind, as well as their childhood friends; even their ingrained culture was left behind too. How sad!

I am equally amazed that there are many, who live right there, on St. John, who have become successful, and possess the resources to assist with this housing crisis, but have declined to do anything to help. I am willing to gamble that if you check the petitions of the past, when unnecessary opposition was staged against the George Simmonds Terrace for locals, their names would be prominently displayed.

This action was repeated against the Belvue development on St. John, when housing was being created for locals. The well-orchestrated networking opposition to the Calabash Boom housing stock, was even fiercer. It took the courage of a fearless former majority leader from this august body, Senator Celestino A. White, Sr., who said enough is

enough, put on his whole political amour, and went to battle for the people of St. John. As a result of his action, Calabash Boom has become a beautiful community in Coral Bay.

I am not advocating that Mr. Goldschneider's project will solve all the housing issues on St. John, neither do I suggest that the development is going to be perfect. However, I am convinced that there is little or no risk to the environment, which would impair healthy living. To the contrary, I believe it will definitely bring some relief to the housing crisis on that island. Eagerly, I look forward to some healthy discussions, with much objectivity; and, I am hopeful that once the facts have been crystalized here this afternoon, that there would be a change of hearts of at least some of the opponents.

I sincerely commend Mr. Ari Goldschneider for his vision and his willingness to risk his investments in this worthy venture. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the time, while my team and I stand ready to participate in the debate process. With much enthusiasm and humility, I ask this deliberative- body for its support of this variance.

I thank you, honorable chairman.