

[EXTERNAL MAIL] Rezoning of 19-1-2-8 Smith Bay

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Thu 6/27/2024 10:26 AM

To: Leia LaPlace <leia.laplace@dpnr.vi.gov>

Dear Leia Laplace and members of the DPNR team,

I write to you today about the proposed rezoning of 19-128 Smith Bay from Agricultural to Business Development. I have been a resident of 19-1-2-2 Smith Bay as a 24 hr caretaker of a family of large animals intermittently since 2013. In the past Golden Age Ranch has housed horses, chickens, goats, pigs, dogs, cats, mongoose, iguanas, lizards, tree frogs, turtles, garden snakes, with regular visits from deer, egrets and a plethora of birds since 2010. This area was chosen after an exhausting search to find the promise of natural surroundings for the duration of our mission to provide a safe, non toxic, quiet, natural environment where not only the horses but also the people we welcome here are able to return to a state of being that can heal the unseen wounds that overexposure to unnatural elements inflict and underexposure to the interesting and beneficial land beyond the buildings, beaches and the main road that heals.

I am a Country Girl. I was born in St Thomas in 1978 and raised in New Tutu. There was a field across the street from me for a while growing up with cows and egrets and an amazingly fresh water well down the hill at Tillette Gardens. Most people even now remember the stream that ran through Nadir and along the highway or that beautiful pond that rested below the Humane Society. I can go any day to the Northside and catch water but on the East End of the Island and along main thoroughfares it seems that our waterways have been deemed unnecessary and have been dammed, diverted or polluted by the waste from ill positioned heavy machinery industrial parks, junk yards and gas stations. The area under discussion was used as a farm and grazing area for livestock. The soil is rich and deep and potent. There is a "gut" that borders the property on the south side and sloped land that reaches the bottom of the valley to the west in close proximity to the graveyard. On the North side they immediately border an animal and nature sanctuary that, when it rains, a raging river that flows through their property into mine then into the ocean. The road leading up to the property passes 11 other properties filled with the elderly, small children and pets and large grazing animals. The paved access road along most of these properties narrows and widens and cannot be widened any further at certain points. Long term residents would be unable to accommodate visitors with vehicles walk their pets in the morning or sleep peacefully at night. None of them ever dreaming upon settling down that 50+ vehicles would be routed through the neighborhood day and night because a heavy equipment company owner purchased 3 acres of farmland between a popular beach and a graveyard and has been using the area for storage and transport of trucks, trailers and bins. The water truck and other heavy machinery go in and out regularly. The garden was planted less than 2 years ago as a response to a land use inspection. Mr. Jones is presently renting out a trailer to a tour company. I believe that our natural resources are precious. I believe that the land on the island was zoned the way it was for a reason. I recognize the housing crisis as far as pricing on the island but then see elementary schools closed down and housing project structures empty and wonder if sacrificing one of the few areas in the country that is still unspoiled is the solution. I believe a change of this magnitude would have an even more drastic impact than most people realize and that I am not trying to dictate to anyone what they can or cannot do, as I have been told many times that I don't own any land out here but I live within it and surrounded by it. I just ask your help and understanding in, essentially, protecting the peace and purpose of this valley by visiting the site before coming to any decisions, see the potential for large traffic to and from the proposed site and talk to the other residents and homeowners who did not know anything about this.

The island is changing. Natural born, generational citizens of St Thomas are seeing the places that connected us to the true island, the places we would go to remind ourselves of our past, culture,

skills, energy, build memories with the thought of sharing these spaces with our children, to provide solitude, reflection, use our voices without being scrutinized or silenced. Most of these breathtaking spiritual sanctuaries have been, sold, fenced up, taken away from our children forever. Just a memory never to be experienced again. Most are trapped between work and home and losing our cultural identity to no moments of peace, no moments of free thought. We have to travel past No Trespassing signs and big black gates, park our cars and walk, go through the most and a lot of us have just given up having that time all together. I have let many chances slip by to let my voice be heard because Virgin Islanders generally feel a disconnect between the common population and the governing body but this proposal greatly impacts our way of life out here and is seeking to retool one of the few areas on the East End where food can be grown with great ease in over a hundred year old soil instead of, if the need somehow arises, having to then rezone a non hospitable area to grow food on later in plastic bins next to a tire shop or in a parking lot because that rich land in the perfect area to maintain and self water and replenish with is covered by 3 apartment structures, a laundromat, car rental, garage, water delivery, rental office, heavy equipment, trailer and bin storage, 3 story family home and a small area for the organic garden to supply the general store. You are invited to our area and we hope that we matter, our safety matters and the land matters as much as our newest resident Mr. Jones does.

Sincerely,
Krystal Todman
Golden Age Ranch
19-1-2-2 Smith Bay

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