

GOVERNMENT OF
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF COMPREHENSIVE & COASTAL ZONE PLANNING

PUBLIC HEARING

TEAMS VIDEO/AUDIO CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY, January 28, 2026
10:15 a.m. to 10:52 a.m.

STAFF PRESENT

GAIL PAGAN, Planning Technician
KESHOI SAMUEL, Planning Technician
LEIA LaPLACE, Territorial Planner

PORTER'S COURT REPORTING, INC.
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I N D E X

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(Public Hearing Adjourned)

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1 the public hearing is complete, we have 30 days by law to
2 prepare a recommendation report which goes to the
3 Commissioner for signature. Once he has signed off on the
4 recommendation report, we forward a copy to the Legislature
5 and the applicant. The Legislature will call a Committee of
6 the Whole public hearing based on their schedule. DPNR has
7 to appear and read the report into the record of that
8 hearing. Following the Legislature's Committee of the Whole
9 hearing, the Legislature will then schedule a session to
10 vote on the request, if a senator has sponsored a bill.

11 Before we begin, I would like to review the
12 procedure that we will be following. First, the applicant
13 will present their request and intention to develop the
14 property. Upon completion of their presentation, staff will
15 then ask questions of the applicant.

16 Any letters on file in support of or in
17 opposition to the proposed zoning amendment will be read
18 into the record. The floor will then be opened to members
19 of the audience wishing to testify in support or opposition
20 of the petition. I ask that members of the audience limit
21 their statements to a maximum of three minutes. There will
22 be a public comment period following the public hearing and
23 it will end on Friday, February 6th. Finally, the applicant
24 will make a closing statement and respond to any statements
25 which may have been made.

1 On the agenda today is a use variance No.
2 CCZP0118-25 wherein CDP, LLC is requesting a use variance to
3 the B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood) zoned Plot No.
4 295-D-2 Estate Baron Spot, King Quarter, St. Croix. The
5 purpose of the request is to allow "Warehouse and Storage
6 Services (General)."

7 Does the applicant want to share pictures or a
8 presentation for this public hearing?

9 MR. RAMES: There will be one
10 picture. I believe that I have it on a separate screen here
11 and I believe that I can -- I believe I know how to share
12 it. But there will only be one picture.

13 MS. PAGAN: Understood, continue.
14 You may proceed.

15 MR. RAMES: Okay, excellent. Thank
16 you.

17 I'm noticing that there is a number of other
18 people who weren't identified in your initial statement on
19 the Microsoft Teams link here. I'd like to say that there
20 are a number of people who are interested in this
21 development, this prospective development, not only
22 representatives of CDP, but also representatives of the
23 developer, which is Four Rivers Acquisition, LLC.

24 If I may ask questions that are technical in
25 nature and require the input of others who may be on the

1 line, I'd like those persons to essentially engage with
2 respect to the answer to those questions if I indicate that
3 I would need some technical assistance to respond to a
4 particular question. And in that regard could anyone who is
5 representing the developer or the owner of the land identify
6 yourself by name and affiliation?

7 (No Response)

8 MR. RAMES: Am I by myself? Okay,
9 well, that's fine. If someone comes on line who is actually
10 a representative of the developer or a representative of the
11 owner of the property, please identify yourself. If not, I
12 will go ahead. Excellent.

13 So what we have here is this. CDP, LLC, which
14 I've represented for many years even since its initiation,
15 is the company that owns the land that is essentially the
16 land on which Home Depot was built. It's not only the land
17 on which Home Depot was built, but also the land between
18 Home Depot and the Melvin Evans Highway. That land has been
19 broken up into commercial subdivision lots.

20 Now as you know from either because it's,
21 obviously it's open, one of those lots, other than Home
22 Depot, has been developed. It's been developed into an Auto
23 Zone right there on the corner of the property at the Melvin
24 Evans Highway and the eastern entrance into the shopping
25 center.

1 There are also a couple of other developments
2 that are eminent to that property. The first one would be
3 immediately to the west of the Auto Zone, which is going to
4 be a family wellness center that will be owned and operated
5 by the Garcia family.

6 And then a property that is immediately to the
7 west of that, again along the Melvin Evans Highway, which is
8 Miss Lalitha Igon's (phon) property, she is going to be
9 developing a children's play center there to the west of the
10 family wellness center. That would mean that there is a
11 road in between the family wellness center, the proposed
12 family wellness center and the proposed children play
13 center. That road is the western entrance into the, what we
14 call Island Crossings or the Home Depot location.

15 So if you go into the western, if you are
16 traveling west on -- east on the Melvin Evans Highway and
17 you turn left into the westerly road, you'll go past the
18 first lot on your left. And the second lot on your left is
19 a 2.71 acre lot that we are here to talk about today.

20 That 2.71 acre lot is about halfway down the
21 road. It starts about halfway down the road toward Home
22 Depot on your left. You can't miss it. It's an open field
23 now. It's a field that's recently been cleared and it was
24 cleared for the purposes of doing a topographical study.
25 There we are. Thank you so much. It was cleared for the

1 purpose of doing a topographical study and for the purpose
2 of trying to ensure -- there is a geo-technical study that's
3 going on there as well for the purpose of ensuring that the
4 land is appropriate for the development of a building of the
5 nature that we're speaking about today.

6 Okay, so what is intended here? What is intended
7 on Parcel No. 295-D-2, which has the little red mark on the
8 screen, is a self-storage facility. It's a two building,
9 self-storage facility. Even though the property is zoned
10 B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood), you are not allowed
11 to put a self-storage facility on that lot unless you get a
12 zoning change or a use variance. And since we know
13 specifically what we wish to do on that property and we know
14 specifically that the warehouse and storage services are an
15 option in the table of permitted use is what we require in
16 order to build that self-storage facility on that site
17 rather than go through a general B-3 (Business Scattered)
18 zoning destination, the preferable alternative was to limit
19 this application to a use variance which will allow
20 warehouse and storage services to be placed on that site.

21 Now this is sort of an interesting approach to
22 developing the property. The ultimate developer is going to
23 be a company called Four Rivers Acquisition, LLC, which is a
24 Georgia limited liability company which entered into a
25 contract for the purchase of the property from CDP, LLC.

1 And of course as I said, CDP, LLC is the overall developer
2 of that Island Crossings subdivision.

3 CDP, LLC in that contract agreed to undertake the
4 process of acquiring a use variance for the property working
5 with you, working with the Legislature, working with the
6 Office of the Governor to acquire a use variance for that
7 property. And also CDP, LLC agreed to undertake the process
8 necessary to get a building permit for that property as
9 well.

10 In doing so, we hired Antillean Engineers and Mr.
11 Raymond Berkeley, who owns that company, to undertake the
12 process of acquiring the building permit. And of course
13 since I am representing CDP in all its development work over
14 the past many years, I've been asked to essentially engage
15 with the CCZP, engage with the DPNR, engage with the
16 Legislature of the Virgin Islands and the Office of the
17 Governor to acquire a use variance for this property to
18 allow this development to move forward.

19 A couple of obvious questions come up as a result
20 of trying to undertake this application in trying to develop
21 on this property. I'll try to answer a couple of those
22 right now.

23 As you can see, there is a residential
24 subdivision to the west of this property. But as you know
25 if you are familiar with this property, there is a ridge, a

1 mountain ridge, sort of a hill ridge that is if you are
2 going down toward Home Depot and you look to your left,
3 you'll see flat land and you'll see a ridge going up to a
4 higher elevation.

5 Those houses that you see there are at that
6 higher elevation. They are not at the same elevation as the
7 area that has the red dot. So the closest house to the
8 development that is being proposed is about 190 feet away
9 and it is at a higher -- and the house would be a higher
10 elevation.

11 To the north -- obviously you know what the west
12 is because you know the west is toward Frederiksted town
13 there. So to the west it's sort of open land until you come
14 to that ridge top.

15 Directly to the east you'll see the Home Depot
16 parking lot and the Home Depot.

17 Also of course a little bit into the south you'll
18 see, which is way toward the water the below part of the
19 picture, to the south that would be the location for Miss
20 Igon's, Miss Lalitha Igon's children play center. And then
21 across the road from that would be the Garcia family
22 wellness center.

23 So ultimately over the next couple of years
24 you'll see a couple of new major developments on this
25 property that are going to attract, hopefully, attract

1 people and, hopefully, are going to be successful businesses
2 for these young local people who are developing on that
3 site.

4 But with respect to the site we're talking about
5 today, we're talking about two buildings, a two-story
6 storage facility and a one-story storage facility which are
7 going to be unlike any of the, as far as I know from my
8 personal experience, unlike any of the self-storage
9 facilities that we have here on St. Croix today. They are
10 going to be air conditioned units. They are going to be
11 fully enclosed buildings. So you have to go into a building
12 to find your unit. And they are going to be what they call
13 state-of-the-art self-storage facilities.

14 I laid out a couple of questions here. Let's
15 see. There is a question. Is there flooding or a gut on
16 the property?

17 Of course this was developed many years ago with
18 a flood control channel to the north of the Home Depot
19 store. So there won't be any flooding on the property.

20 There are no historical or cultural resources on
21 the property. There was some that was found to the north of
22 this property that has been isolated and has been fully
23 studied by the State Historic Preservation office and has
24 been properly preserved. But insofar as this particular lot
25 is concerned, there are no cultural or historical resources

1 on the property.

2 In addition, there are no endangered plants or
3 animals on the property. If you are familiar with the
4 property, the property has essentially been scoured of,
5 pretty much scoured of everything other than Tan-Tan on that
6 property.

7 There is no endangered plants or endangered
8 animals on the property. Of course there is no real trees
9 on the property. It's not a tree boa habitat.

10 Is this going to be a multi-phase development or
11 a single phase development? It's going to be single phase.
12 It's going to be built, both buildings are going to be built
13 contemporaneously and the development is going to be brought
14 on line as soon as it's ultimately constructed.

15 The timeline for the construction of the facility
16 from the issuance of the building permit is less than one
17 year, somewhere between 10 months and one year for the full
18 construction.

19 There are going to be two buildings. One of them
20 is going to be a two-story building. One of them is going
21 to be a one-story building. It's going to take about 100
22 people to actually build both buildings.

23 I don't believe that a construction company has
24 been chosen yet. But the projection is that it's going to
25 be employing 100 construction workers full-time for at least

1 a year to complete the construction of this property. And
2 when it is ultimately constructed, it will really only
3 require two people, one inside one building, one inside the
4 other to check people in and to check people out. So I
5 think there will be just two full-time employees because
6 essentially it's going to be a self-storage facility and
7 nothing other than that.

8 It's going to be open from 8:30 in the morning
9 until five o'clock in the evening Monday through Saturday.
10 And it's going to be opened by virtue of an access code.
11 That's going to be from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. So anyone who has
12 a storage unit in there is going to be afforded an access
13 code so they can get into the main building and ultimately
14 get into their own unit.

15 There will be buffering, plant buffering around
16 the property. But the property will essentially be two
17 buildings, 12 parking lots covering parking spaces, covering
18 at least 6,000, if my recollection is correct, square feet
19 of the entire 2.71 acre property.

20 That I believe, if I can, I'd like to share the
21 photograph if I can. Let me see if I can get that on here.
22 It is -- yes, there we go. That is the schematic of the
23 building as it's ultimately constructed, as it ultimately
24 will be constructed.

25 So you see on the top you see the main building,

1 the two-story building. It's an attractive -- as a
2 self-storage facility it's a relatively attractive building.
3 And as you can see there is going to be some plantings on
4 the property. Obviously asphalt, the drive, entering and
5 leaving.

6 And then the below picture you'll see the
7 one-story building. If you go to the top picture obviously
8 you'll see the one-story building on the right, two-story
9 building on the left and then the lower photograph you'll
10 see the one-story building on the right.

11 And again if you go in there you'll have an air
12 conditioned facility. You'll have multiple, I believe 491
13 total if my recollection is correct, storage units in both
14 buildings. And essentially we'll provide a storage
15 facility, which will be a different incline from that which
16 otherwise exist on St. Croix.

17 I can stop sharing now. I mean this is pretty
18 obvious what we see here. With that I can end this aspect
19 of my presentation. I believe that what we expect to do is
20 we expect to move forward with this development as quickly
21 as possible.

22 And to understand what CDP, LLC is, CDP, LLC is a
23 TIF zoned property. It's the only TIF zone that is a tax
24 incentive financing development on St. Croix. So, in other
25 words, what this means is that the property taxes that

1 were -- that are generated as a result of the construction
2 on that property. So, in other words, all of the property
3 taxes that are developed as a result of the vertical
4 construction are put in an escrow account and that escrow
5 account is used to pay the loan that funded the
6 infrastructure for this property.

7 It had to be approved by the Legislature. And
8 then it has to be established by the Legislature as a TIF
9 zone so that the property taxes that are generated by the
10 Home Depot and now by Auto Zone and ultimately by this
11 self-storage development, the Garcia family wellness center
12 and, hopefully, the Igon children play center will all be
13 feeding property taxes into an escrow account.

14 I believe that it was FirstBank that came up with
15 \$15 million in a loan through the PFA, the Virgin Islands
16 Public Finance Authority to do the infrastructure for this
17 project. And then that loan is being paid off by the
18 property taxes that are generated as a result of the
19 development on the property.

20 So this was a way to afford a commercial
21 development on a property essentially establishing a
22 public/private partnership toward that end. And in that
23 regard obviously all of the physical infrastructure was
24 built in at that time, including all of the sewage
25 infrastructure, all of the electrical infrastructure and the

1 road infrastructure were all built in at that time to
2 facilitate the commercial development of the property.

3 So that's CDP in a nutshell and that is this
4 proposed development of the two storage units in a nutshell
5 as well. I'll take questions to the extent that you have
6 any.

7 MS. LaPLACE: Thank you, Attorney
8 Rames. So I do have some further questions.

9 So you mentioned that the sewer infrastructure is
10 already there. Water as well?

11 MR. RAMES: That is correct. Water
12 is as well.

13 Now when I say water, it means that there is
14 access to the, to WAPA water at the, that would be the
15 southwest corner of the property. And if you noticed, right
16 in the last couple of days a water line has been installed
17 on the property coming from Auto Zone and heading over to
18 the WAPA sand pipe. In fact within the last two or three
19 days that water line has been filled in.

20 So right now each one of the proposed development
21 parcels as well as the Auto Zone now has direct access to
22 that WAPA water access point and can use it not only for
23 safety purposes, i.e. their fire suppression, but also can
24 use it to provide wastewater. I'm not really sure if
25 potable water is there but I know wastewater and fire

1 suppression water were made available at that corner.

2 MS. LaPLACE: Okay, thank you. So
3 will there be any backup cisterns?

4 MR. RAMES: My understanding, no,
5 there is no cisterns on the property. They are going to be
6 depending on WAPA water.

7 MS. LaPLACE: So you mentioned the
8 building being an enclosed structure with AC. What other
9 amenities -- are they going to have like any solar panels,
10 any other amenities?

11 MR. RAMES: No. My understanding is
12 "no". My understanding is they are depending on not only
13 WAPA power but also -- WAPA water but also WAPA power.

14 There is going to be a generator facility there
15 but obviously that's going to require air permits and things
16 of that nature. That's all part of the building permit
17 process though the building permit application has not yet
18 been submitted. Because in order to submit a building
19 permit, you have to say that you are properly zoned or that
20 you have the variance.

21 So as soon as we get through this process, the
22 building permit will be submitted and that will tell us
23 whether or not there is going to be any backup electrical
24 generation. But I believe that there will be, yes.

25 MS. LaPLACE: Okay. So you mentioned

1 that the building, the two buildings their footprint would
2 come up to about 6,000 square feet, correct?

3 MR. RAMES: That's my recollection,
4 yes.

5 MS. LaPLACE: Do you have an idea like
6 inside these buildings like how many bays we're looking at?

7 MR. RAMES: My understanding is in
8 the one-story building and then the two stories, the other
9 building will have a total of 491 separate bays obviously of
10 multiple sizes.

11 MS. LaPLACE: So 491 bays across the
12 two buildings?

13 MR. RAMES: Across the two buildings
14 and the three floors, that's correct.

15 MS. LaPLACE: And the height and feet
16 do you have that for the two buildings?

17 MR. RAMES: Do I have the height and
18 feet? So in the application, this application is, my gosh,
19 it's 14 megabytes. So that's a lot of pages.

20 MS. LaPLACE: Okay, I'm looking at the
21 application. Is it in the conceptual?

22 MR. RAMES: Yes, absolutely. I'm
23 looking for that myself.

24 MS. LaPLACE: Let me pull that up.

25 MR. RAMES: Okay, there is

1 elevations. Yes, it says schematic elevations. How do I
2 tell you how to get here?

3 It's toward the end, right toward the end. Yes,
4 it's all there. All of the cables are there.

5 MS. LaPLACE: I want to put it on the
6 record for those who are attending who may be neighbors --

7 MR. RAMES: Right.

8 MS. LaPLACE: -- that may have a
9 concern about how high it is. Maybe they might be concerned
10 with their view. Okay, let me see here.

11 So I've pulled up the conceptual. I see
12 twenty-seven feet four inches. Does that sound right?

13 MR. RAMES: That sounds about right.
14 That must be the two-story?

15 MS. LaPLACE: Yes. The maximum would
16 be twenty-four feet four inches.

17 MR. RAMES: Okay.

18 MS. LaPLACE: All right, so that's it
19 for my questions. Do we have any questions from any other
20 DPNR staff before we move on to the public?

21 Mr. Clarke, you can go ahead.

22 MR. CLARKE: Good morning, Miss
23 LaPlace and everyone else.

24 I just wanted to ask, Attorney Rames, so Four
25 Rivers St. Croix, LLC is actually leasing the property from

1 CDP, LLC or just building the facilities?

2 MR. RAMES: Okay, so what's
3 happening is this. Now obviously Four Rivers is from
4 elsewhere. It's a Georgia, LLC.

5 Rather than buy the property and sort of take
6 their chances on building permits and a use variance, they
7 said to CDP, listen, we will enter into a contract with you
8 to buy the property but we want you to do all of the
9 preliminary work. And if you are successful with the use
10 variance and the building permit application, we will buy
11 the property from you and then we will pay you for the work
12 that you did to get there.

13 So it's sort of like a hybrid situation. They
14 are going to absolutely own the property outright but we
15 can't close until this effort is successful.

16 Does that make sense?

17 MR. CLARKE: Oh, yes, a big total
18 sense.

19 So that means when everything is done and you are
20 doing all that preliminary work as you said on behalf of
21 CDP, then they would enter into negotiations for a contract
22 to purchase, correct?

23 MR. RAMES: Oh, no, no, no. The
24 contract is already entered into and already fully executed.
25 One of our conditions for closing, for consummating the

1 deal, finishing the deal is that I get this right.

2 MR. CLARKE: Got you. It makes
3 sense. Thank you.

4 MR. RAMES: Surely.

5 MS. LaPLACE: Thank you. Any other
6 questions, comments or concerns before we move on to the
7 public?

8 MR. MAYNARD: Yes, good morning. This
9 is Maynard here from DPNR.

10 Mr. Rames, thank you for the presentation. This
11 is not to derail the property by any means. It's just a
12 point of information.

13 The property is located within the flood plain
14 for one. The top part of the property is located at a 140
15 degree topography. Where the property is going to be
16 located it drops off to a 90. So it does poses some sheet
17 flow storm water issues, which eventually comes into a flood
18 plain issue.

19 To give you a better understanding, whoever is
20 doing your drawings, your panel map that the property is
21 located is between 0081G and 0081G (sic). So just be
22 mindful in terms of elevating the slab. It needs to be
23 elevated to keep some of that sheet flow coming on and into
24 the building envelope.

25 Could you please tell me what type of surfaces

1 are you going to be using for the parking lot? Is it going
2 to be gravel, concrete or asphalt? I wasn't clear on that
3 part.

4 MR. RAMES: My understanding that
5 it's going to be primarily asphalt. There is obviously
6 going to be some planted areas and some sidewalk areas. But
7 it's primarily going to be asphalt. It's obviously going to
8 be, expected to be a lot of, with that many bays, expected
9 to be a lot of auto traffic going in and out of there.

10 Insofar as the flood plain issue is concerned,
11 I'm not a scientist but I rely on Amanda Jackson Acosta to
12 tell us what we need to do. And then I rely on my friend,
13 Ramond Berkeley over at Antillean Engineers to actually do
14 it.

15 So I think that you'll probably be seeing this
16 building permit application, yourself in your office, will
17 probably be seeing and passing on this building permit
18 application before we can bring my contractual issues to a
19 close. We are going to have to satisfy you in order to do
20 that. But, yes, that's how we're going to approach the
21 flood plain issue.

22 And insofar as the coverage is concerned, I think
23 what they want they are going for the long-term. So I'm
24 pretty sure that -- and they have advised me that it's going
25 to be primarily asphalted.

1 MR. MAYNARD: Okay, thank you.

2 MR. RAMES: Surely.

3 MS. LaPLACE: Thank you.

4 Okay, Mr. Clarke, I see your hand again. Go
5 ahead.

6 MR. CLARKE: Yes, just a quick
7 question for Mr. Maynard. I'd like him to repeat just one
8 thing.

9 He said the property is located on 140 degree
10 topography. Where the actual construction is going to take
11 place, what did you say is the degree for that?

12 MS. LaPLACE: You are muted, Mr.
13 Maynard.

14 MR. MAYNARD: Sorry. The top portion
15 of the property starts at 150 degree Topo and it drops off
16 right at the road at 90. So it's a big drop-off there,
17 which would create some sheet flow and storm water
18 characteristics posing where either Home Depot or Auto Zone.
19 So it's just being mindful.

20 I would definitely pay attention to the design
21 when it comes forward. It usually hits flood plain first
22 and then move on for review.

23 So again this is not to derail or talk down on
24 the project's development. It's just giving you technical
25 guidance of what needs to be followed as it pertains to the

1 identification of the property, which are located by the
2 FEMA firm maps.

3 MR. CLARKE: Understood. Understood.
4 Thank you.

5 MR. MAYNARD: Thanks.

6 MS. LaPLACE: Thank you.

7 So now we'll move on to the public comment
8 portion. As a reminder, the public comment period ends
9 February 6th.

10 Do we have anyone from the public?

11 (No Response)

12 MS. LaPLACE: Seeing none, just a
13 reminder, the public can submit their written comments by
14 the deadline of February 6th.

15 We'll now move on and ask the applicant to make a
16 closing.

17 MR. RAMES: Well, this is my 41st
18 year practicing law in St. Croix. I don't think I've ever
19 had a noncontroversial project. Thank you very much.
20 Normally I have people from the general public who have
21 expressed their concern.

22 You know any development has a, any development
23 has an impact. All developments have impact. And for this
24 development for the people of St. Croix I think Island
25 Crossings has been a boom, a godsend to a certain extent

1 because of the work of Mr. Jim Watson. He brought Home
2 Depot here and he also made a number of the properties
3 available to some local people who are going to do some
4 really very interesting and very, I hope, wonderful
5 developments on that property.

6 Unfortunately three months ago we lost Jim Watson
7 to a brain tumor and the people that he left behind to
8 advance his dream are doing so and this is part of that. I
9 consider it for the benefit of his family and for the people
10 he worked with I consider this to be a bit of a mission for
11 me to get this entire Island Crossings development fully
12 functional with multiple businesses owned by local people,
13 hopefully, to a great extent. And insofar as this
14 particular one is concerned, I think this will be a positive
15 addition to the business community and to the availability
16 of this particular resource on St. Croix.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. PAGAN: Thank you.

19 We will have a public comment period until
20 Friday, February 6th. Please send all comments to the
21 e-mail shown on screen. The recommendation report will then
22 be prepared based on the received comments and evaluation of
23 the proposal. As a reminder, the recommendation report
24 could state approval, modification or denial of the
25 applicant's request.

1 The public hearing is now at an end. Thank you.

2
3 (Public Hearing Adjourned)

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7 CERTIFICATE

8
9
10 This is hereby certified to be
11 a true and accurate transcript
12 of the foregoing proceedings.

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16
17
18 _____
19 Verdell Porter
20 Shorthand Reporter