

DRAFT
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
of the
Grapetree Area Property Owner's Association, Inc.
January 18, 2020

Location: St. Croix Yacht Club

President John Morra opened the meeting at 4:40pm. Sixty properties were represented at the meeting, 42 by attendance and 18 by proxy, so the Secretary, Ona Alpert, verified that a quorum was met.

John began by asking for a motion to pass the 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes. Tom Rodenhaver made the first motion, Sara McCambridge seconded it and it passed unanimously.

Then, he asked that the Board members in attendance introduce themselves:

Greg Deegan, Vice President

Jim Pedrick, Treasurer;

Ona Alpert, Secretary and Beach Committee Chair;

GB Bucknell, Chair of the Roads Committee;

Isabel Brady, Architectural Review Chair;

Sara McCambridge

Tom Rodenhaver, Nominating Committee Chair

Marie Schofield

Attending late:

Win Thomas

Absent:

Emelyn Morris-Sayre, Chair of Communications Committee;

John then introduced Sweeney Touissant, past Board President, who had the honor of introducing special guest speaker, St. Croix Administrator and former Senator, Sammuel Sanes.

Mr. Sanes spoke on the topics of roads, crime and health care.

Regarding roads, Mr. Sanes said he is not a fan of patching and would rather re-pave instead. He said that there is a new asphalt company on island who will be recycling products such as tires to make paving material.

Regarding health care, he reported that a grant for \$68 million has been given for a new hospital, in addition to the private sector stepping up to the plate and opening an urgent care facility in Castle Coakley.

Mr. Sanes reported that crime has decreased since there are more law enforcement officers and different agencies more active on-island.

In other news, he said that economic development is on the rise, people are paying their taxes and the island's bonds are stable.

The Governor has been working with WAPA. WAPA has also been given \$1 billion to invest in infrastructure and solar energy, and the company will be replacing the cast iron pipes, first in Fredricksted, then mid-island, then Christiansted.

Sandals Resort Group looked at sights on St. Croix, left the island happy and said they liked St. Croix better than St. Thomas. Other businesses like The Fred and the racetrack are reopening or expanding and contribute to economic growth that is overall more stable.

Kathleen asked about health care and the homeless. Mr. Sanes said they have been working with the Dept. of Mental Health and have gotten five homeless people off the street, although there are new ones. He said these are not always single individuals, but also families. Sometimes the homelessness is caused because people can't afford rent anymore because of the demand for rentals due to Limetree opening.

Sara asked about education and Mr. Sanes responded that schools are starting younger teaching life skills. Isabel added that there are great ways to give back through a variety of programs, including Project Promise and My Brother's Workshop.

A question was asked if the hospital budget was for St. Croix and he answered that it was. A new hospital would be built and the money is for infrastructure, not staffing.

It was asked if there could be more police patrols at night. Mr. Sanes answered that the Police Commissioner will be increasing patrols in town, there will be more patrol cars as well as more ambulances.

A member asked, since reefs bring in tourist dollars, what are we doing to protect them and why aren't we promoting ecotourism. The Administrator answered that they recently met with a group of scientists and offered their full support. They also want to promote ecotourism and noted that our island has diverse landscapes.

Another question posed was what is the government doing about the derelict buildings in Christiansted. He answered that in some instances (ie: when there are safety concerns), the government is able to board up buildings but other times the government can not overstep onto personal property or private affairs (ie: when buildings may be stuck in probate).

Ellen Morra asked about individual health care policies and Mr. Sanes responded that it was being looked into along with other healthcare changes to be made.

Mr. Sanes also answered questions about taxes (they are being paid), the unemployment rate (it is low but there are young men who can't get jobs because of drugs) and said that DPNR has been told to cut back on red tape and even allow for permits to be obtained online.

GB asked why don't we have a technical college? Mr. Sanes said that the vocational education program is being revamped.

Lisa asked when the new hospital will break ground and he said July/August. She also asked about eldercare because The Herbert Grey facility is in disrepair. He said it will be fixed. Each room costs about \$1.3 to \$1.5 million.

Pooja asked what the government is doing to bring the cost of power down and he answered that there will be smaller generators and an investment in solar by WAPA, and added that the \$1 billion for WAPA was given by the Federal Government.

The last question was asked by Sweeney: does Mr. Sanes have a phone number he can share? Mr. Sanes gave his personal cell: 340-690-8861 and said that, while he may not call, he definitely will text back. Isabel added that she can attest to the efficiency of his office and his secretary, Christina.

At 5:30, John gave his President's Report.

President's Report

John said that it was a good year with no major storms and new composite electrical poles being placed island-wide.

Treasurer's Report

Jim said that GAPOA had a good year. The income was budgeted for \$143,445 but was higher, \$147,787. Past due assessments were collected on two property owners, as well as late fees. In addition, a paving contribution was made by member and so GAPOA shared in the cost of paving a road.

There was a unique decision made by the Board to rebate dues to a member who paid for years but found out she was not bound to GAPOA. Several Board members spent a lot of time researching the plot to determine that the homeowner was correct, and so money was refunded to her.

Expenses were budgeted at \$156,200 but \$96,700 was actually spent, the reason being that South Ridge Road was not paved. There were quotes received to engineer the road, one for \$23,300 and one for \$34,750, and that in combination with the cost to pave, about \$50,000, was just too much.

GAPOA's brush cutting expenses are lower than projected because we haven't received a November 2019 invoice yet from the brush-cutter.

GAPOA spent \$5000 more on paving than projected to address a couple of issues on Hummingbird and Pelican Way.

GAPOA ended 2019 with a net profit of \$51,407.

GAPOA mailed 2020 assessment invoices in November, 2019 and has collected \$49,500 as of 12-31-19 so the total available cash at the end of period 12-31-19 is \$100,907.

Collection Report

Jim also gave the Collection Committee report. There are sixteen lien properties, which amounts to ten members who are seriously overdue and have been overdue for years.

Aside from those, only four members did not pay in 2019.

John thanked Debra Tryon, GAPOA's bookkeeper, for her work and noted that she prepares a lot behind the scenes.

Road Report

G.B. began by recognizing his committee volunteers who he said carried him while he was off island: Don Gray, Wayne Huddleston and Eldon Lambert.

He said that GAPOA competes with the VI government for road paving so that has been a challenge this year.

CZM made permitting for paving South Ridge Road difficult.

As far as roads go, when the Board meets, all roads come under review and decisions are made to top those that need it.

The first bid to replace signs was \$10,000, which was too high. GAPOA wound up paying \$5000.

Communication Report

In Emelyn's absence John said that there are documents on GAPOA's website that are useful to members.

Architectural Committee Report

Isabel introduced her committee: GB Bucknell, Steve Crane and Tom Rodenhaver.

Three properties were reviewed and approved in 2019: 35 SS, 85 D SGB and 110 SGB. There is a new submission for 71 SGB in review.

The Architecture Committee makes sure that HOA criteria is met for set-backs, height and size of building.

Beach Report

Ona reintroduced herself and said that she is both the Secretary and Beach Chair. As Secretary, she uploads documents to the Google Drive as part of GAPOA's Document Retentions program as well as writes and emails the newsletter. She also said that she is the out-going Secretary as she has served her 3 year term and thanked those who she worked with.

As Beach Chair, she organized a beach cleanup held in January 2019 where about 1500 lbs of trash was removed from our beaches. The cleanup volunteers clean three beaches, Turner Hole, Smugglers and Grapetree Bay, which is about 2 miles of shoreline. The committee continues to inform residents about sea turtle etiquette and the dangers of plastic waste.

She emphasized that property owners need permits to cut vegetation and move sand on or near the beach. She explained that the East End Marine Park has a turtle monitoring program that marks turtle nests by GPS. Any homeowner who disturbs or harms a sea turtle can face fines or jail time. In one instance, a homeowner received tens of thousands of dollars in fines. You can disturb turtles with your lighting, noise and pets, also.

Ona also reported that the water quality in our area is considered impaired by the EPA and that the best way to address poor water quality is to pump out and maintain your septic tanks. If you haven't had your septic pumped or inspected recently, just do it.

She also invited everyone to the next Beach Cleanup scheduled for Saturday, January 25. She said that she and her husband have removed trash from the beach themselves, and so has Win Thomas and Gerge and Marie Schofield, but many hands make light the work. In addition to collecting the usual beach litter, volunteers will also be filtering for microplastics. She showed samples of microplastics and said that they are especially deadly to marine life because they are easily consumed and they attract hydrophobic chemicals like DDT and PCBs. A question was asked how long does the cleanup last and she said that any time a volunteer can give is fine, but we usually stay until it's done which is about noon.

Isabel reminded everyone that the Cotton Valley dump is for household trash only and it is important to throw rubbish away in the correct places. She said that Plaza Extra West recycles clear plastic on Saturdays. Ona added that 25% of beach trash is from within the waste management system so it is important to find ways to reduce overall trash production.

GB asked if our community can have a bulk pickup service and Win asked about the 5 cent return system on bottles and cans. Ona said she'd look into it.

Legal Report

John reported that the Board is seeking a lawyer to volunteer. Jim added that the Board seeks to avoid legal matters that involve lawyers. Two legal issues were dealt with by the Board in 2019: GAPOA now owns part of Mooring Road. Additionally an exception was made to accommodate a homeowner who requested to be able to sub-divide her property. Her request was accommodated because she had nearly enough acreage necessary to do so (1.8 acres instead of 2) and there were two existing, conforming houses on the lot.

Nominating Report

Tom Rodenhaver introduced the new Secretary, Pooja Vachani. John asked for a motion to approve the Slate. Tom made the motion, it was seconded by Meg and it passed unanimously.

Old Business

John said that he hasn't heard complaints about barking dogs recently but please be respectful of your neighbors. Jim added that GAPOA's C&Rs say that you can't disturb your neighbors.

New Business

Meg invited everyone to a fundraiser for scholarships. Sweeney asked for an update on the former Grapetree Hotel construction. Isabel said she invited one of the owner's, Josh Sayre, but he did not attend the Annual Meeting. Approximately eighteen rooms are being renovated.

Sara asked if members would like to gather for a beach party as in year's past. Jim said that for several years there was great attendance and it was fun, then last year attendance was down. If members were interested, by a show of hands, then GAPOA will organize another beach party. Since there was enough interest, a beach party was scheduled for Sunday, March 1, twelve noon, at Smuggler's Beach.

New members introduced themselves:

Harold Deloach, 73 TH

Sara Brown, 55 TH

Pooja and Vidor Vachani, 84 SS, who moved from New York and have been on St. Croix for one year. Pooja is happy to help members with computer issues and Vidor loves the islands, having been born in Guyana, and is a DJ.

John introduced his wife, Ellen, who is now on-island.

A motion to adjourn was made by Greg Deegan and seconded and so the meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ona Alpert