



Anna E. Richardson

Member of the Parliament of  
Sint Maarten

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December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

To: **Chairman of Parliament**  
Mr. William Marlin  
Wilhelminastraat #1  
Philipsburg,  
Sint Maarten

Re: **Proposal – Community Council - permanent Committee request**

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I hereby present to you and Members of Parliament the attached proposal to support the request for the establishment of a new permanent committee; namely the "Community Council Committee."

The proposal identifies among other points the purpose and rational to have said committee established in an effort to have Parliament/Government connect with the community at large and be of greater service in our capacities as elected officials.

Sincerely,

Anna E. Richardson  
Member of Parliament





# PROPOSAL

*To The Parliament of St. Maarten  
for  
District Community Councils  
&  
Neighbourhood  
Associations*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4TH, 2019

M.P ANNA E. RICHARDSON



Project Proposal for Permanent Committee Establishment

<p><b>Proposed title of the area/project</b></p>	<p>Permanent Committee of District Community Councils and Neighborhood Associations</p>
<p><b>Initiator</b></p>	<p>Member of Parliament Anna Richardson / Parliament of St. Maarten</p>
<p><b>Purpose and Rationale</b></p>	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>The purpose of establishing a Permanent Committee of District Community Councils within the Parliament of St. Maarten is to create a direct and effective line of communication between members of Parliament/Government and residents/other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>St. Maarten is a young, growing country with various issues that need to be addressed in an efficient manner. Through this proposed committee solely focused on the issues that affect the quality of life in all neighborhoods, community council representatives of each district can present formal submissions to Parliament that may lead to further inquiry with respective Ministries of Government.</p> <p><u>Rationale</u></p> <p>As stated in the Integrated Neighborhood Development Plan 2012-2014 (INDP), there is a reasonable level of involvement in the communities by residents of different nationalities however there is a need to promote more cohesion in the districts of St. Maarten and on St. Maarten in general.</p> <p>Especially following the 2017 hurricane season, it became very evident that in order for there to be successful recovery, there is a need to retain the sense of community at all times.</p> <p>A proven, effective way to promote social cohesion, development and active participation is through the establishment of community councils and neighborhood associations. Having a direct line of communication between the community and Parliament/Government gives residents a fair opportunity to actively participate in improving their neighborhoods.</p>

	<p>The St. Maarten Development Fund (SMDF) is one party that is working hard to structure and profile community associations and district councils to the point where in the very near future, members of these groups will have the opportunity to share their concerns with one another and hopefully with the establishment of the proposed committee, be heard by the Parliament of St. Maarten, which is tasked by the electorate to represent them and make inquiries on the behalf of their constituents.</p> <p><u>Alignment with goals/objectives</u></p> <p>In a democracy, the principle of accountability holds that government officials, whether elected or appointed by those elected, are responsible to citizens for their decisions and actions. So that officials are held accountable, the principle of transparency demands that the decisions and actions of those in government are open to public scrutiny and the public also has a right to access government information.</p> <p>Without those two principles, democracy is impossible.</p> <p>According to our Constitution, Members of Parliament have at their disposal, amongst others, the right to ask questions (article 62), the right of inquiry (article 64), and the right of initiative (article 85). The proposed Committee should facilitate the relaying of issues to Parliament who can then use the aforementioned rights/articles to enforce accountability of the executive branch of government (Ministries/Ministers). Furthermore, the relationship forged between the councils and Parliament/Government could also facilitate improved dissemination of information from government information services.</p>
<p><b>Scope</b></p>	<p>The general roles and responsibilities of the proposed Permanent Committee will honor and operate according to the Rules of Order. The following pertains to a proposed process around the interaction of community councils, Committee members (Parliamentarians), and Government (Ministers).</p> <p><u>Working Relationship between Councils &amp; Permanent Committee</u></p> <p>The proposed process for submissions by the district community councils to Parliament and Government as well as the follow up process, is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community councils will have time to prepare their</li> </ol>

reports for submission to the Committee and by extension Parliament and the Government of St. Maarten.

2. Once the Committee reviews the content of the reports, a meeting will be scheduled to meet with the district community council representatives.
3. Following the meeting with the district community councils, where necessary, Ministers will be invited in for further elucidation and discussion of the topics, considering that they will have received a copy of the report at the same time as Parliament.
4. Priority issues brought forth by the councils and passed on to Government should aim to be considered and/or reacted to within the quarterly (3 month) time frame. This ensures that communities are seeing first-hand the reaction and response of Government to their submissions.

#### Quarterly Meetings

It is proposed that the Committee meet with community council representatives on a quarterly basis to gain insight to the particular grievances, activities and/or needs of the residents.

It is important for the Permanent Committee to meet with the District Representatives on a quarterly basis in order to develop and maintain a systematic exchange of information. It is therefore significant for Government to operate within said time frame in order to follow-up with questions about items brought forth in the Community Council reports and offer answers or solutions.

Parliament, based on a quarterly report from the Committee of District Councils to the relevant Ministers, can question the Ministry/Ministers on the execution (or lack thereof) of projects and/or why particular problems are not being addressed or solved. Issues submitted by the council representatives are to be categorized by Ministry.

#### Follow through

The Committee would also be tasked with making in-person visits to the various neighborhoods to gain further, first-hand insight as to what is being shared with them during quarterly meetings, as is done with visits to schools, shelters, the prison et cetera.

While there currently exists a Permanent Committee of Public Health, Social Development and Labour, having a



	<p>committee solely focused on Social Development through input from the community councils is the purpose of establishing this particular Committee. Considering that there is still much to be desired in the areas of Labour and Health alone, having the Social Development aspect handled by this “focus group” district council committee, is an advantage in being able to acknowledge and address potential issues and have the already established VSA Committee focus more on agenda points related to labour and public health.</p> <p>Where there are legislative or legal limitations to Ministries being able to improve the quality of life of citizens, proposed legislation and/or draft ordinances should be presented to Parliament for voting.</p>
<p><b>General Work Plan and Timelines</b></p>	<p><u>First phase (0 to 3 months)</u></p> <p>Establish the Committee in Parliament followed by a scheduled meeting with the Sint Maarten Development Fund (SMDF) to gain further insight on their <i>Community Engagement and Disaster Risk Reduction</i> project. Since the project’s launch, SMDF has been working to develop the capacities of Community Councils so that the councils may be assets to the residents of communities and serve on their behalf to have key community issues resolved. (Start date dependent on Parliamentary approval)</p> <p>Discovery meetings to be held with SMDF and legal to identify the most conducive framework law to further support the community councils being profiled and for them to operate in the most effective uniform. (Once again, taking note that SMDF is currently working on an operational structure template for all community councils to operate by).</p> <p><u>Long lasting phase</u></p> <p>Depending on the support and approval of the requested Permanent Committee, a schedule will be developed and the Chairman of Parliament will receive written updates regarding the progress and when the first meeting will be scheduled etc.</p> <p>As part of the transparency policy, the councils’ leaders will be advised that a copy of the quarterly report must be sent to both Parliament and Government of Sint Maarten simultaneously. The report should be received at least seven (7) business days before the date of the scheduled quarterly meeting, giving both Parliament Committee members and</p>

	Government ample time to review
<b>Proposed Leader of the Committee/Project</b>	Identifying members for the committee will be followed in accordance with the Rules of Order
<b>Proposed sources of necessary expertise / Funding needs</b>	The St. Maarten Governing Program The Integrated Neighborhood Development Plan (INDP) Community Engagement and Disaster Risk Reduction Project (by SMDF) National Budget
<b>Relevant existing documents at national level</b>	The St. Maarten Governing Program The Integrated Neighborhood Development Plan (INDP) National Budget