

**2011  
HAWAI‘I COUNTY  
REDISTRICTING COMMISSION**

**DISTRICT 2 – SOUTH HILO  
PUBLIC HEARING**

Thursday, October 6, 2011, 6:00 p.m.

Kamana Senior Center  
127 Kamana Street, Room 1  
Hilo, Hawai‘i. 96720

**CALL TO ORDER:**

CHR. SIRACUSA: Good evening everyone. Thank you for taking the time to attend. This is the public hearing for the Hawai‘i County Redistricting Commission for the district of South Hilo. The commission consists of nine volunteer members, one from each Council District

**ATTENDANCE:**

Present:	Mr. Joseph Carvalho, Commissioner Mr. Patrick Kahawaiola’a, Commissioner Mr. Craig “Bo” Kauhi Mr. Dru Mamo Kanuha, Commissioner Mr. Jeffrey Melrose, Commissioner Mr. Mike Middlesworth, Commissioner Ms. René Siracusa, Chair Ms. Linda Ugalde, Commissioner
Absent:	Ms. Valerie Poindexter, Commissioner
Also Present:	Michael Udovic, Deputy Corporation Counsel Jeanette Aiello, Committees Supervisor Stephanie Tsunezumi, Committees Staff Karen Eoff, Secretary

CHR. SIRACUSA: We have each shared our district's concerns with the other Commissioners, so that we are all on the same page. Based on that, plus your input, we will decide the geographic boundaries for each of the nine council districts based upon census data as well as the criteria found in the Hawai'i County Charter and Legislation passed by the Hawai'i County Council. Please note that we are only concerned here with County Council districts, and not State or Federal legislative districts.

Copies of the Hawai'i County Charter and the Laws relating to the Redistricting Commission are available for your review at the sign in table. Also on the table are the close-up insets so that you can see the actual boundary lines. The commission is first and foremost governed by the principal of one person one vote. We are required by law to adopt boundaries which make each of the districts approximately similar in resident population. Both case law and the laws applicable to the Redistricting Commission allow for a deviation of a maximum of 4.99% above or below the ideal resident population of 20,462 residents per council district. This is after extraction of non-resident military, dependants, and students. Therefore the maximum number of residents in any district can be no more than 21,483 and the minimum number of residents is no less than 19,441.

The Commission has reviewed approximately 40 suggested maps showing various configurations of the district boundaries. We have received and reviewed maps submitted by members of the public, staff at the elections office, and those produced at Commission meetings. The maps that remain suggest possible district configurations. Some of the maps contain deviations in resident population which are not acceptable because they are either slightly too high or too low, but the Commission decided to keep these maps for review because it appears that it will not be difficult to remedy the population imbalances. The Commission rejected many maps due to major population imbalances but did keep others which addressed many of the issues required to be considered by the law, such as road connectivity and communities of interest. Some of these maps are more 'friendly' to certain districts than to others. None of them are cast in stone. We may very well end up creating hybrids, combining the best of several.

We welcome your comments about the redistricting process and your suggestions about the adoption of district boundaries. We have 6 maps showing possible configurations. You are free to comment on any or all of these maps or make any other comments you wish relative to redistricting. If you wish to see boundary details not shown in these maps, they are on the table. You will be asked to keep your comments to no more than 5 minutes. The commissioners may or may not have questions to clarify your testimony at this public hearing, but please do not expect us to answer your questions or engage in dialogue, as our job today is strictly to listen to your mana'o. If you have not done so and wish to offer testimony to the Commission please fill out one of the sheets at the sign in table. Mahalo for coming out to learn about this process and to share your thoughts. I will now call the hearing to order, and call the first testifier.

## **STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

CHR. SIRACUSA: Our first testifier is Conrad Hokama. Please come forward and you have to keep close to these mics so that it can be recorded for the transcript.

CONRAD HOKAMA:

(At this time Conrad Hokama came forward to address members of the Commission.)

MR. HOKAMA Thank you Commissioners. My name is Conrad Hokama, and I'm the president of the Pi'ihonua Community Association. I also have our Vice President, Ms. Julie Tulang, and the other Vice President who is not here tonight is Mr. Jack Fujii. I do have a printed handout for you but let me just read this to enter it into the record please.

Our Pi'ihonua Community Association would like to express our desire to be kept together as a community within the Hilo proper district as you do your deliberations in determining the future council districts. Our community has a long history; we're composed of the former Pi'ihonua Camp 3, Camp 4, and Camp 5. Pi'ihonua is an old sugar plantation area so you know we've gone through that history and for those of you who are not really familiar with Pi'ihonua, if you take Waiānuenu Avenue, go past Hilo High School, go past the hospital, you go past Boiling Pots and you'll come up to Akolea Road. Akolea Road is our community boundary and from there you continue on up and there and that will be Camp 3, it goes up and if you're familiar with the Head Start program after the Head Start program there's a large bridge that will be the boundary for Camp 3, it crosses the Wailuku River goes up and transitions into the Pi'ihonua Road and above, if you continue up Pi'ihonua Road you will continue into Camp 4 and Camp 5.

The reason we'd like to offer or at least share our past experiences of our community is, in the past, for House Representative District, at one time they did use Waianuenu Avenue to divide the House districts, and so within our community we were split in half. So, we're trying to avoid that situation so we can remain together and intact as a community. We would hope that you would be sensitive to that issue and try to keep our community together. It might be easy to say, oh, we can use the river as the dividing line, but I just want to offer a caution that although it sounds pretty simple if you have someone who is drawing the line who is not familiar with the community, the river just does cross over the road, so if you take the literal translation of using the river as the boundary, it will split Camp 3 being below the river and then Camp 4 and Camp 5 being above the river. So, we want to be cautious about how you do your explanation of drawing boundaries if you using the river, if you using Waiānuenu Avenue or some other landmark to designate the boundaries.

So, we're a small community, but we have a lot of history. Our community is very not high profile, but we do have a very close knit community and we'd like to maintain that flavor. I think it's consistent with as other parts of our county goes through their Community Development Plans like Puna and Hāmākua. You know people are working to develop that sense of community and you know I think we've been fortunate to come from that perspective already and so we'd like to continue maintaining that flavor. So, if you're open to a visitation we'd be more than welcomed to have you come on up. We have a KaiCon, which is like our

community clubhouse which our community association owns and so that's where we hold our community gatherings, we have our Shininkai which is like a New Years party where we honor our elders. We do have a community picnic and our cookout event which is like after Thanksgiving. But it is a place where we have our own community facilities to keep our people intact and to have things contained so that they don't have to drive into downtown Hilo and to be out of the traffic. So you know, if you need that opportunity to come and visit, the invitation is open to come and we'd be more than happy to show you around. Any questions?

CHR. SIRACUSA: I have one, and it's just to understand clearly the boundaries. When you head mauka does it end anywhere? Are you a cul-de-sac or is there a connection elsewhere that goes out to somewhere else.

MR. HOKAMA: As you go up Waiānue Avenue, and it transitions into Pi'ihonua Road, they will come to a dead end. Beyond, at Camp 5 it transitions into the former cane field lands. Lot of the lands now is Hawaiian Home Lands. There is no exit beyond that so we all have to come down Pi'ihonua Road, down Waiānue Avenue and from there we can either go to Akolea Road to go onto Kaūmana or come down Lahi Street and onto Ainakou Avenue to come down to the Mohouli Extension. Or we can head down Waiānue go past the hospital to come into town. But basically it's Puna side of Wailuku River as far as our access getting to and exiting from the community.

CHR. SIRACUSA: Thank you for clarifying that for us because road connectivity is one of the issues that we're supposed to look at. Thank you very much.

MR. KAHUI: Thank you again Conrad for being here. I think that anytime the community can come out and assist us in figuring out what's in their best interest, obviously you've taken the time to be here today and I think what I have a question about is what is the demographics of your community. There is obviously a, it's a small community. First question, how many homes are up there between all the camps?

MR. HOKAMA: Close to, it's under a hundred families up in the camps, Camp 3, Camp 4 and Camp 5. But we have a lot of history in the area. Now as far as the demographics we have a lot of elders and residents of the area because that's where we all grew up. I mean I'm born and raised there so we have a lot of families there. But we're also a community in transition. Like other communities throughout our island is that as people you know pass on or you know young ones are away, so there is a transition of people moving in but we still maintaining as far as the quantity of families, that part is pretty stable. We don't really have much room for growth because the lands around us are not fee simple, where people can come and buy. So that part limits our growth capacity. But we are a community working at maintaining the community we have now, as far as the flavor and the families. And as new people come in we're trying blend them into our community so that we can evolve like any other community throughout the island and move forward.

MR. KAHUI: Is it fair to say that, because I've been up that camp road and been up Pi'ihonua and I do know the surrounding lands surrounding the all the camps are Hawaiian Homesteads.

You know it's a huge track coming from mauka to makai and but, those families were largely from the plantation here. Is that correct?

MR. HOKAMA: Correct. The Pi'ihonua area were formerly independent growers.

MR. KAHUI: Thank you.

CHR. SIRACUSA: Thank you, Mr. Hokama. Our next testifier is Betty Jo Thompson from Waiānuenu.

MS. THOMPSON: I'm Betty Jo Hubbard Thompson and I work for the Extension Service for years and I was the home service director for Hilo Electric Light when they first started their Home Service Department. And, Tom and I rented and lived at about six different locations before we finally bought the Crackle House on the corner of Waiānuenu and Waiau and my children are now over fifty and most of their life has been spent on that corner. And um, Waiānuenu is a terrible road to have to drive on because there's no shoulders and people run off into the ditch across the street from our house quite frequently. And, having the hospital below us is a plus, however, when the loonies get out of the loonie bin and come wandering up Waiānuenu they knock on your door or climb through your window. But we like our way of life and every neighbor, everybody that lives there, knows their neighbors very well and know about three blocks up and about three blocks down. Anytime there's something going on we call each other and we have a community association and we spend a lot of time making sure we stay safe and in line. The only thing that is really bad about it is there's no way that you can widen Waiānuenu. There's too many ditches and too much water along the way, so our road is rather narrow. So, when people come swooshing up Waiānuenu we've had a lot of them run into the ditch but that's not ever gonna stop.

And I think probably the thing that I'd like to say more than anything else and not everybody will probably agree with me, is that we know almost everybody within a mile area extremely well because we have the association and we meet sometimes as much as twice a year and get together and eat and have a good time and get to know the new ones in the community. So, I worked in the public for many years as I said with Home Service Department, at HELCo and I was an Extension Agent for over twenty-five years so, I got to know the Hāmākua coast, I got to know going through Volcano and out to Nā'ālehu and Pāhala. I just think that there's new building going on on Waiānuenu now--old houses being knocked down and new houses are being put up--so I think we're growing as far as the communities' concerned. I'm here because I wanted to hear what everybody else had to say. And, if there was something I really didn't like I'd be saying "I don't like that" okay? So that's the way I operate. Thank you.

CHR. SIRACUSA: Thank you. The third testifier is Julie Tulang from the Pi'ihonua Community.

MS. TULANG: Thank you for the opportunity, Commissioners, to share my thoughts and I just want to build on what Conrad has already said for the Pi'ihonua community. It's kind of a wonderful community in that everyone has been there for a long, long time. We lived there almost twenty years and we're newcomers. So that kind of gives you an idea of how long this

community has existed. What I do want to comment on, you know Conrad's really said everything, is like you know, keep us together and we really identify with South Hilo and if however you draw your lines, don't forget us. We're kind of the appendix, you know. We don't fit anywhere and there's only one road in and one road out and that's Pi'ihonua. You know when the plantation was up and running you got all the plantation roads to get the short cuts. But that's no longer an option. So, in looking at everything that you have, it seems that the map that comes closest to identifying where we are is Map 40. But still it kind of leaves us off. When I say us, because I'm in the Camp 4 and Camp 5 across from the Wailuku River and Conrad is off of Waiānuenu. So that would split our community. So if I were to identify, you know a starting point, where to look at to help us out to keep us together it seems Map 40 comes closest and that's all I want to bring to your attention. Thank you very much.

CHR. SIRACUSA: Thank you. Are any other people here who would like to testify now that you've heard what's been said already? Okay, we have a question.

MR. KAHUI: Is the current Council District split your community?

MS. TULANG: No. We're in District 2. Councilman Ikeda is our councilman.

MR. KAHUI: When looking at the district boundaries as we see them proposed on the map, obviously District 2, you've been in that district, what's your comment, if you were to move to District 1?

MS. TULANG: It would not, well. First off you know, we're people, we can get used to anything. You know, change is hard but you know we have to live with it. So let me just clear that. If you're saying do you have a choice what would your recommendation be? The choice is that we identify with South Hilo, our entry and exit to our community is through South Hilo, and you know our voting has been, for the last twenty years, as part of the south Hilo area. And so, I'd say that we are most comfortable in that conversation area cause our problems, our issues are more common to this area as opposed to Hāmākua or to District one.

MR. KAHUI: I would imagine that because the Hāmākua district is primarily an ag community that that would have been your preference which is why I've asked.

MS. TULANG: Yes. Although all around us is agriculture but our community, they used to be the independent cane growers, however now, it's a residential community. It no longer is a farm community perhaps except for Tulangs.

CHR. SIRACUSA: Thank you. Has anyone else been inspired to come up to the microphone and say something? No? Okay, I want to ask the Commissioners if they want to have anything, or if they have anything to say before I call for a motion to adjourn. No. Okay.

MR. MELROSE: I'm just speaking as a representative for the District 2. I thank you for coming tonight. I know this is a stacked house, this is Mike Udovic's legal class. I hope you're not as quiet in class as you are today because that would be a long class. I mean really this is just the process of public engagement going on and I welcome you guys coming to it and I hope you find

your voice in your own communities at your own time and at the right time. And I appreciate Conrad and Julie and Betty Jo coming and speaking for the issues along the Waiānue side. So thank you very much.

CHAIR SIRACUSA: So before I call for that motion I do want to let you know that if you go home tonight and suddenly you sit up in bed in the middle of the night and say “Oh my God, I forgot to ask about that.” It’s not too late. You can write a letter or you can send an email and voice any concern that you have and we will put them into the record and take them into consideration. So this isn’t the end of it. We have a bunch of meetings going on around the island and you can go to any other meeting and testify there to. It’s not only that you have to testify in your own district. And we’re not closing testimony for you. So you can still have more to say if you think of something else you may want to share with us.

MR. KAHUI: This is my first time on this Commission and there are members here that have been here before. I’ve learned a lot. I certainly appreciate the community coming out because it’s going to take your engagement and our understanding in order to draw these district boundaries that suits your interest. I hope that the questions that I posed wasn’t, was supposed to be helpful in order for us to get a better understanding what your community is about. I’m from District 8, I’m from Kona, but I used to live in Hilo for ten years. So I used to go to Waiānue and I know exactly where the camps are. So I totally understand where you’re coming from. Fortunately for me, I’ve had that experience in this district where the boundaries lie and I appreciate the comments from the three of you because it really, as I said, helps us to define these boundaries in the best interest of the community. We all represent out communities but we’re representing our island as a whole. Thank you.

CHAIR SIRACUSA: Commissioners, anyone else? In that case, I’ll entertain a motion to adjourn. If any of you would like to talk to us off the record, we’re going to be here for a few minutes while we’re taking down the maps and things like that. So we’re approachable, so do approach us.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 6:29 p.m.,  
Ms. Ugalde moved to adjourn the meeting.  
Seconded by Mr. Kanuha and carried by  
the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Carvalho, Kahawaiola‘a,  
Melrose, Middlesworth, Kanuha, Ugalde  
and Chair Siracusa.

Noes: None.

Absent: Commissioner Poindexter

CHR. SIRACUSA: Motion carries. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Eoff, Secretary

Approved on November 3, 2011:

Ms. René Siracusa, Chair  
Hawai'i County Redistricting Commission