



Council Member for District 4

GREGGOR ILAGAN

JANUARY 2015 REPORT
DISTRICT 4

(Hawaiian Paradise Park, Hawaiian Beaches, Makai of Pāhoa Town, Nanawale Estates, Leilani Estates, Pohoiki, Kapoho)

(808) 965-2712

greggor.ilagan@hawaiicounty.gov
www.hawaiicounty.gov/district4

“We can never tell what is in store for us.”

—Harry S. Truman

Under way on Hwy 130

Council Members Greggor Ilagan and Daniel Paleka Jr. met with Department of Transportation Director Ford Fuchigami in Honolulu on Jan. 20 to discuss the department’s plan to allow for a pedestrian bridge to be established on Highway 130 over the lava. As of late January, the department is in a “wait and see” mode.

Meanwhile, the shoulder lane conversion project on Highway 130 is expected to be finished in June, or sooner depending on the weather. The project will create two Kea’au-bound lanes and a shoulder to be used in the morning. Another shoulder will be added to the Pāhoa-bound lane for use in the afternoon.

The second phase of this project, to add a traffic signal light at the Shower Drive intersection, will go out to bid around the middle of this year. Construction should get under way in early 2016 and

take between a year and 18 months.

Current work is focused on the makai side of the highway to prepare for widening. “In general, they need to pave, finish extending the bridge, the guardrails and then the pavement markings, and then we’re done,” said Sterling Chow, the assistant district engineer for DOT-Highways, on Jan. 26.

DOT and the contractor have considered several options to relieve congestion at the bottleneck for the afternoon traffic, including a contraflow lane for the duration of the project with traffic cones. Chow says another option would be to “open the afternoon shoulder lane on a permanent basis from (for example) 3:30 to 5:30. That’s when the project is done. So if we could get the paving done on the makai side, we could stripe it and open it almost as soon as we could implement a contraflow.”



Council Members Daniel Paleka Jr. & Greggor Ilagan stand in front of the State Department of Transportation building before meeting with Director Ford Fuchigami.

Aloha!

Happy New Year! I am excited to begin 2015 by introducing you to our monthly report. Its purpose is to inform you on issues I’m working on, and provide you opportunities on how to be involved on those issues. From helping others affected by the lava flow, to working on solutions for infrastructure issues, the possibilities are endless. The results are rewarding.

The County system is not perfect and has much room for improvement. For 2015, my goal above all is to keep you in the loop with the most recent and all the available information. I will make sure to provide you a way to be part of this process, because it’s more fun addressing these issues together. Again — I wish you a happy and successful new year!

Sincerely,

Greggor Ilagan

Greggor Ilagan
Council Member

NACo 2015

The National Association of Counties Legislative Conference is held on an annual basis in Washington, DC. This meeting brings over 2,000 elected and appointed county officials from across the country to focus on legislative issues facing county government.

Attendees hear from key Administration officials and members of Congress and are offered a myriad of additional educational opportunities addressing current and hot topic issues. A day of lobbying on Capitol Hill the last day rounds out an information-packed conference.



On February 21-25, 2015, in Washington, D.C, Council Member Greggor Ilagan will attend in the NACo Legislative Conference.

NACo's Legislative Conference provides Hawai'i County with a seat at the table for our voice to be heard at the federal level. The dynamic educational sessions and networking opportunities add tremendous value to attending. The conference will help us work with federal officials and address local needs. It will support the county's efforts to reduce costs, increase efficiencies and deliver better services to our residents.

If there are any federal issues that you want Council Member Ilagan to address, please contact us by email or phone.

Tackle the albizia problem in our neighborhoods

Although albizia trees were known to be potential hazards for many years, Tropical Storm Iselle exposed just how vulnerable Puna is to future disruptions if the growth of this invasive species is allowed to grow unchecked.

As the focus shifted from the immediate disaster response to preparation for the next time, Council Member Greggor Ilagan took a number of steps to help constituents with their needs. Among them:

- Assisted people who called or visited the office by putting them in contact with the appropriate person in the Department of Public Works regarding the removal of trees from adjacent properties, or by researching and providing answers to their questions.



A canopy of albizia trees.

- Prepared form letters that people could use as templates to contact their neighbors regarding unsafe trees.

- Introduced a resolution transferring \$30,000 in District 4 contingency relief funds to the Big Island Invasive Species Committee. This and \$30,000 in matching funds from the state will



A county work crew removes albizia trees.

be used to hire an albizia coordinator who will direct field operations and public outreach, and work directly with community groups to mobilize them to tackle the albizia problem in their neighborhoods. With \$96,500 in federal funds to be spent directly on albizia control and related efforts, the hope is that this program, modeled after the Adopt-A-Highway program, will help to keep the albizia threat under control

- Working with Springer Kaye of the Big Island Invasive Species Council to address invasive species management in the General Plan. The General Plan is Hawaii County's policy document for long-range comprehensive development. Amending the plan to add a section about invasive species will reinforce the County's dedication to preserving the natural environment and discouraging the establishment of destructive plants and animals.



Councilman Ilagan removing albizia.

- Councilman Ilagan will be tracking and supporting bills to fund invasive species control efforts in the session of the Legislature that opened recently. For example, Senate Bill 97 appropriates \$6 million for projects to be awarded by the Hawaii Invasive Species Council in a competitive grant process.

Community Meetings

Council Members Greggor Ilagan and Danny Paleka Jr. hosted four community meetings throughout Puna during the week of Jan. 12-16 to listen to constituents and to get a sense of what's on the district's mind. The meetings were held at Mountain View Elementary School, the Ainaloa Longhouse, Pāhoia Community Center, and the Neighborhood Place of Puna near Kea'au.

Attendance varied widely at each meeting site, as did the discussion topics. The council members are grateful for the presence of the community policing officers, Ann Ebesuno from Sen. Hirono's office and members of the Puna Community Development Plan Action Committee, all of whom were able to answer some questions.

Community members' questions and comments were duly noted and everything that people said in the meeting will be given serious consideration.



Council Members Daniel Paleka Jr. and Greggor Ilagan speak at a forum in Pāhoia.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Puna EMS Ambulance

Although last year's push for a new ambulance in Puna makai fell short in the Legislature, Council Member Greggor Ilagan will be trying again to get funding.

The need for an ambulance in Puna has always been dire. In the 2014 session, Sen. Josh Green and Rep. Nicole Lowen introduced legislation to augment the County's Emergency Medical Services section by funding one ambulance each at the Puna and Makalei fire stations. However, despite a lobbying effort that included a supportive resolution, introduced



EMS Ambulance.

by Ilagan and passed by the County Council, the bills did not pass.

Chances for passage this year may be better because of the ongoing lava disaster. The EMS section is administered by the Hawai'i County Fire Department, but it is funded through the state Department of Health with an annual budget of \$14.3 million.

In November, Hawaii County needed to activate its substation in Pahoia Village (the former Pahoia Senior Center) and could not wait for the Legislature to act. The County on its own has established a second ambulance in Puna by pressing a spare one into service.

Still, the need for a new ambulance remains. The bills to fund operations of ambulances at the Makalei and Pahoia stations will be introduced



Parked EMS and Fire vehicles in Pāhoia.

separately in the Hawaii State Legislature. For the Puna ambulance, Sen. Ruderman is introducing a bill in the Senate and Rep. Richard Onishi is introducing a bill in the House.

Ilagan will be tracking the progress of these bills and providing supportive testimony as needed. This will be a top priority for the Puna, as it is a matter of life and death.

Geothermal night drilling

During January's public forums in Puna, one of the biggest issues was in regards to the drilling of geothermal production well KS-16 by Puna Geothermal Venture. The County in 2012 passed Ordinance No. 12-151, which prohibited drilling between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. by any geothermal plant located within a mile of residences.

PGV has stated that the ordinance will not apply to its operations until it reaches its permitted limit of 60 megawatts. PGV also believes that stopping the drill during the night will compromise the safety of the well, increase the risk of blowouts, add to the cost to rate-payers and add months to the drilling.



Councilman Ilagan addressing a question in a forum.

After hearing from the public, Council Member Greggor Ilagan is introducing two resolutions for the February

.....
"The community wants to find out if PGV is following the law, and I want to know too."

—Councilman Ilagan

4 Council meeting in Hilo which he hopes will bring clarity to the issue.

Resolution 58-15 respectfully asks PGV to comply voluntarily with the nighttime drilling ban in the spirit of being a good neighbor to the residents of Puna makai who live near the geothermal plant.

Resolution 59-15 requests the Office of the Corporation Counsel to have a judge decide what the law says. In the words of the resolution: "Corporation Counsel ... is requested to initiate a declaratory judgment action against PGV to determine whether Ordinance No. 12-151 is applicable to its drilling operations under Geothermal Resource Permit No. 2, as amended," and to seek injunctive relief.

"With all due respect to the County Council that approved this bill in 2012, and the statements made then and now by PGV," Ilagan said, "I would like Corporation Counsel to look into whether the ordinance applies to PGV and the appropriate venue for that is in



Sign-up

Hawai'i County Civil Defense Alerts and Notifications Self Enrollment.

Go to the following website:
www.hawaiicounty.gov/civil-defense/

808-935-0031
civil_defense@hawaiicounty.gov

a court of law."

There are several reasons why this ordinance could apply to PGV. For one thing, legislative intent would normally only be relevant in a judicial review where the language is ambiguous, but that is not the case here.

Second, the geothermal permit is silent on whether 24-hour drilling is allowed. An ordinance to prohibit 24-hour drilling, then, does not take away any specific right for night drilling that was given by the permit.

"The Puna community wants to find out if PGV is following the law, and I want to know too," Ilagan said.

Arthur Varady, Life Saver

Mr. Varady is commended for his heroism and life-saving actions on June 20, 2014. On that day he steadfastly provided cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to a County employee for fifteen minutes prior to Emergency Medical Services arriving at the Pahoia Senior Center.

The Council of the County of Hawai'i extends its deep appreciation to Mr. Varady.

Council Member Greggor Ilagan
25 Aupuni Street
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

Phone: 1-808-965-2712
greggor.ilagan@hawaiicounty.gov
www.hawaiicounty.gov/district4



The Council presents Arthur Varady on Sept. 5 with a certificate for saving a life.