

Testimony before the County Charter Commission
18 December, 2009
Daniel Taylor, Puna CDP Action Committee

RE: Charter Amendment CA-25

It is an honor for me to serve on the Action Committee for the Puna Community Development Plan. I understand this plan to be driven by participants from the local community, of which I am a member. Proudly, I now represent the community as the PCDP enters an implementation era.

I am particularly attracted to service on the Action Committee because the PCDP is the product of intense community input, and the result is a good, conceptual document. One wonders what result would have happened if the input had come primarily from professional planners and County officials. One would imagine an emphasis on engineered infrastructure and sterile industrial development, rather than a plan that emphasizes cultural diversity, protection of natural and cultural resources, and decentralized economic development. It is well known that centralized, top-down planning would produce outcomes that might be significantly different from the desires of those most affected by the result.

The participatory plan that is now the Puna Community Development Plan provides County officials with important advantages, namely access to a wealth of experience and creativity from the local community. By utilizing this resource, County government (the Dept of Planning, particularly) is able to transfer "ownership" of the planning and implementation process from the bureaucracy to the citizens. The result of this might be a groundswell of support for government officials and actions, in lieu of cynicism and anger.

On your agenda are modest amendments to CA-25, proposed by a grass-roots community organization, the Friends of Puna's Future. These amendments would embed community development plans into the County Charter, and would obligate communities to link with County Planning Department in a way not previously known. This would avail officials in the Planning Dept of the creativity and resourcefulness inherent in an active and supportive community, and would establish a healthy dialog between the people and their government.

Specifically, the proposed amendments would enable the Planning Department to reveal development proposals to local interests, especially the Action Committee of the CDP. This provides a critical review opportunity for review of proposals to those who would be most affected, and would enable the CDP Action Committee to be proactive. This would serve to keep proposals for developments from different levels of government on a common track, and might help to avoid duplication and conflict.

Whether or not the Charter Commission accepts the specific wording of the FoPF, it is important to me, as a member of the Action Committee, to know that you will respect the work of the committee I serve and the cause of the participatory planning process that has so energized the local community.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide this comment to you.