

Hawai'i County Charter Commission
Special Meeting 11 AM January 21, 2010 Kona

comments by

Cory Harden, PO Box 10265, Hilo, Occupied Hawaii 96721, 808-968-8965 mh@interpac.net

I support CA-7 RECALL PROCEDURES.

It addresses Rob Tucker's concern, stated in an earlier meeting, that we have some of the strictest recall procedures in the state, by

- dropping the residence address requirement, which has brought many problems with petitions when people got minor details wrong, like writing "place" instead of "street"
- reducing the number of signatures needed
- reducing the number of people who must vote in recall elections

It also makes things easier for County staff by allowing more time to review supplemental petitions.

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CA-15 LAND FUND

Please put this back up to 2%.

Priorities

How high a priority is preserving our land, water, and air? They say air isn't important till you don't have any. I think land and water are the same.

Ms. Kawauchi talked about how her family used open spaces to gather and fish for food during hard times. We could all face very hard times if disaster, or skyrocketing fuel prices, cuts off our just-in-time food supply pipeline.

Remember that many said creating national parks was crazy idea. Now we know it was brilliant.

Timing

Timing is important. If we don't save our land now, it may be too late.

These photos show you what you already know...how much land can be bulldozed and built in two or three generations.

.....**Photos**.....

Regarding timing, remember we can buy a lot more now, with real estate prices down.

Comparison with other islands

The other neighbor islands, Maui and Kaua'i, do 1%--higher than ½ %.

Our island has more land than all other islands combined, so we need a larger land fund.

We have a lot of unspoiled land compared to other islands, so we're a magnet for those who want to profit from land, raising home prices to where many can't afford to live here any more.

2% brings in, and saves, money

You need a reliable source of funding to get the most matching funds.

Land preservation can reduce County costs for infrastructure and services, and ease traffic, by preventing building in dangerous or hard-to-serve areas.

Land is infrastructure. Open spaces can protect watersheds that provide water for drinking and swimming. Agricultural land gives us food. Open spaces encourage positive activities for youth and adults.

Land preservation increases tax revenue by increasing property value.

Citizens support it

Thousands of citizens signed petitions and voted. Scores testified at Council to save the fund. Brenda Ford called it a mandate.

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Questions--please get answers to these--

1-The Finance Department says three-quarters of the budget is fixed costs. That sounds high, but perhaps these questions will clarify:

What is the definition of "fixed costs?"

What items are fixed costs?

Are special funds fixed costs? But aren't they kept separate from the rest of the budget?

For example, isn't the Highway Fund only used for highways, and funded entirely by fuel taxes?

Debt payments are included in fixed costs. But can't lower payments be negotiated?

Are payments into the Employee's Retirement Fund and Health Fund considered fixed costs? But don't these payments drop if the number of employees drops?

What percentage of other Counties' budgets are fixed costs?

2-What kinds of emergencies would allow the Mayor to temporarily suspend the Land Fund?

that was in the Charter

X 3-Will the Charter amendment replace the ordinance?

X 4-Will the percentage in the Charter be a floor or a ceiling?

5-If the land fund is at 2%, what percent of the total County budget is this?

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I support CA-17 REAPPORTIONMENT TO REDISTRICTING

There was great controversy over the last redistricting, so I support

- Saying "adhere" to criteria instead of just being "guided"
- Requiring a written report explaining how the commission adheres to the criteria
- Requiring public hearings
- Allowing more time for this very demanding task, that determines, for the following ten years, whether citizens are fairly represented

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I support the concept of CA-31 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY

We're ripe for a food disaster, with only a few days' supply of food in our markets, nearly all our food shipped in, shipping prices rising, bulldozing and building destroying agricultural land, and invasive species attacking food crops.

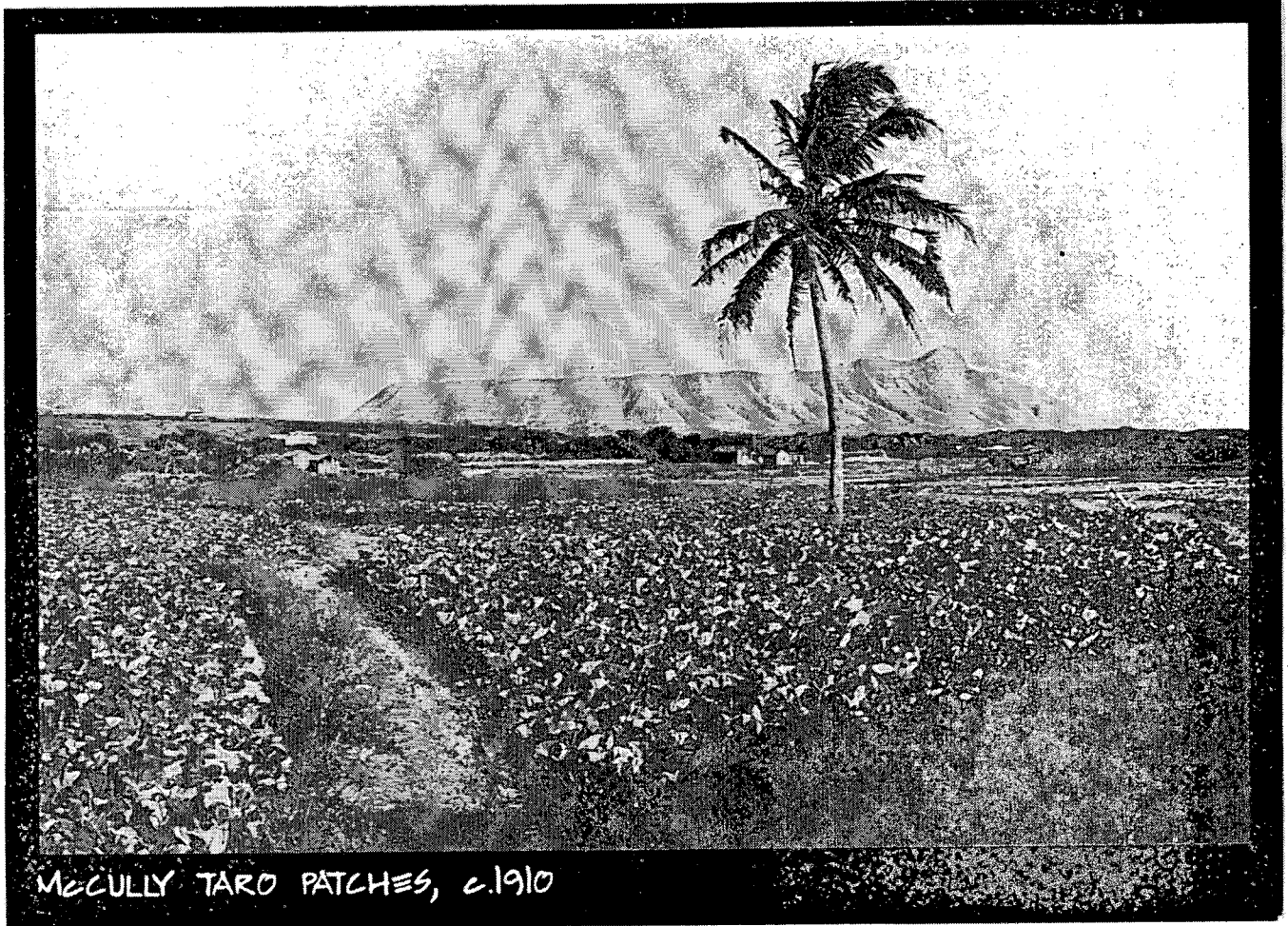
As you know, there's a County agriculture plan being developed, if I remember correctly, by Kohala Center and County Research and Development. A recent public meeting drew about 75 citizens who made detailed and knowledgeable comments on the plan. But one big concern at the meeting was there weren't enough people to implement it.

I support having the amendment require agriculture and energy specialists within the Research and Development Department, for the greatest benefit with the least cost. This would also make it easy to coordinate initiatives in various areas--agriculture, energy, economic health, etc.

I also suggest the amendment require a citizen advisory committee or commission, one each for agriculture and energy. The existing County energy commission might meet this requirement for energy.

The Federal government and the State do have a lot of control over agriculture and energy. But the County also has a lot of control through the Planning Commission, Planning Department, County Council, and Open Space Commission. Remember also that the County recently voted to ban genetically modified taro and coffee--another means of control.

If the County has staff and resources dedicated to agriculture and energy, that will help us research, apply for, and attract Federal, State, and private funds for those concerns.

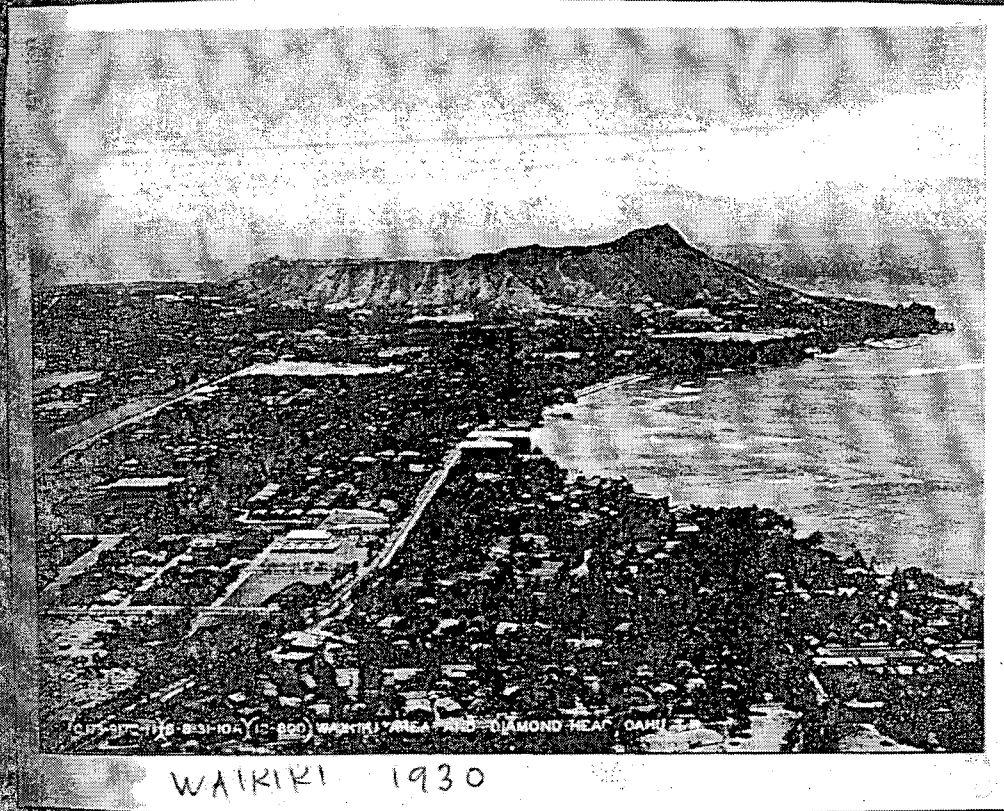


MCCULLY TARO PATCHES, c.1910

pace of development
LAND FUND
1922. CA-15

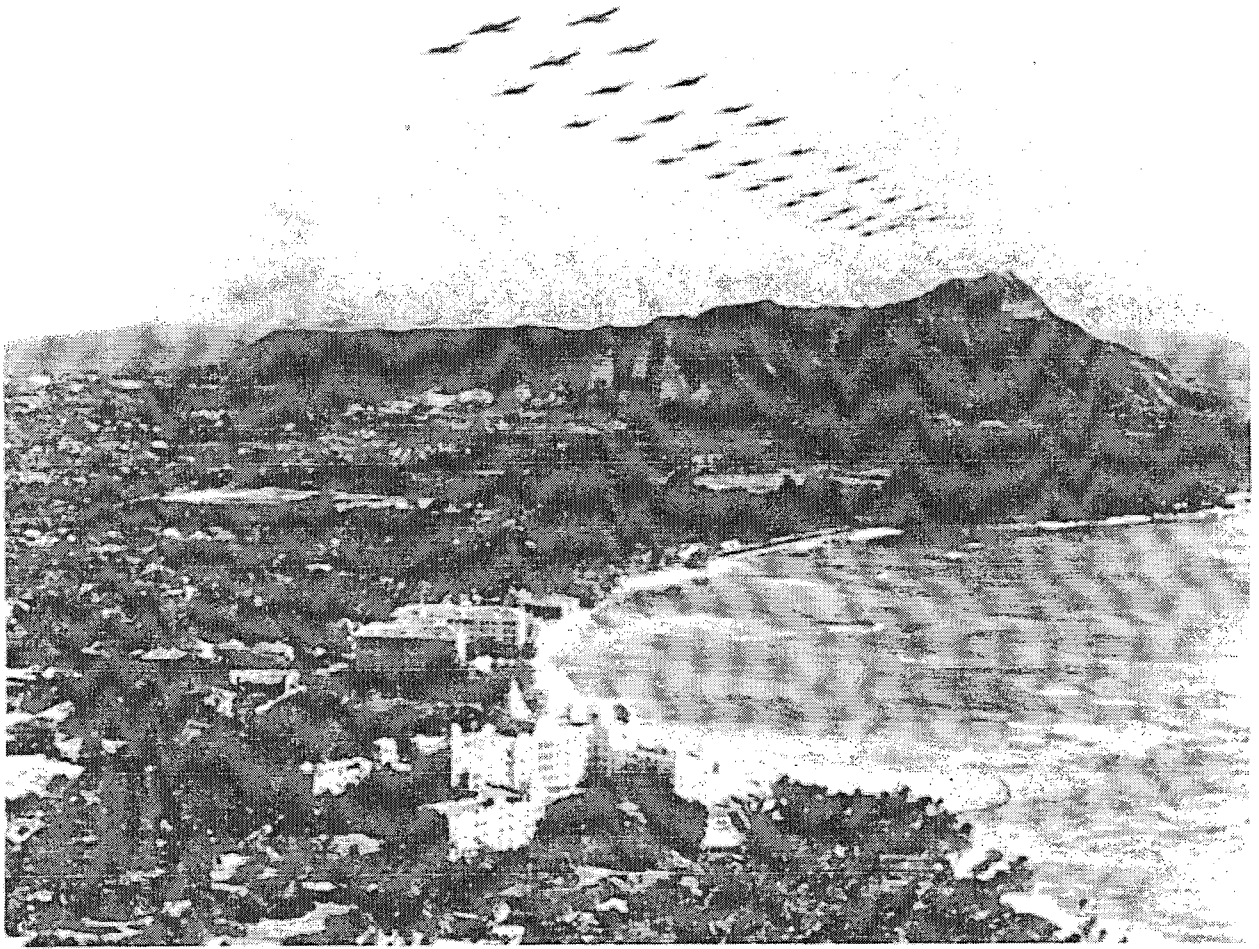


RICE FIELD c 1920

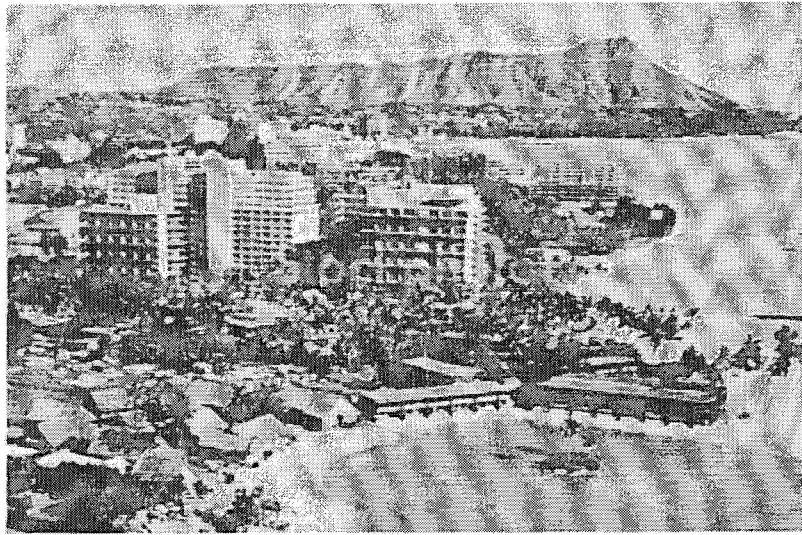


107-37-116 8-31-104 (12-850) WAIKIKI AREA AND DIAMOND HEAD OAHU HAWAII

WAIKIKI 1930



WAIKIKI 1940



WAIKIKI c. 1960



WAIKIKI 1970