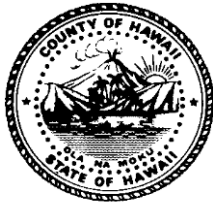


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County of Hawai'i
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE

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Wednesday, September 15, 2021
Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kurokawa called the Hāmākua Community Development Plan (HCDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 5:13 P.M. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held via the Zoom interactive video platform.

ROLL CALL

AC Members Present: Nicolette Hubbard, Carol Ignacio, Tawn Keeney, Crystal Kua, Brad Kurokawa (Chair), Jeff McKnight (Vice-chair), Robert Nishimoto, Rhonda Pollard

AC Members Absent-Excused: None

County Staff: Planners – Alexis Ching and Keiko Mercado

County Officials: Council Member Heather Kimball

5 members of the public observed the meeting via Zoom. The meeting was also available for synchronous viewing via the [COH Planning Department YouTube Live Stream](#). The live stream recording is available at: [Hāmākua CDP AC Meeting - September 15, 2021 - YouTube](#).

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. **Kolekole Bridge Capacity:** Council Member Kimball provided information from the Department of Transportation around the sudden closure of Kolekole Bridge to vehicles over 4 tons.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS: One (1) member of the public signed up to provide oral testimony.

Daniel Fujii, testifying on agenda item 3, lives next to the proposed Lehua Village 1. Mr. Fujii expressed concern over the influx of subdivided lots and its impact on roadway safety for Lehua Street, which is used as a bypass road when school is in session. He specifically asked that the one lane bridge be taken into consideration for safety reasons (walkers, traffic flow). Mr. Fujii referred to one of the major issues for the makai subdivision being heavy rain/flooding on the road. He does not oppose the development but wants to ensure it is good for everyone in that area. He believes they are currently unprepared to handle an influx of lots. Mr. Fujii also inquired about CCRs regarding height restrictions to maintain view planes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Committee Member Crystal Kua moved to accept the meeting minutes from July 1, 2021. Motion seconded by Committee Member Tawn Keeney. Motion to approve minutes passed with 7 votes aye, 0 votes nay.

Committee Member Nicolette Hubbard moved to accept the meeting minutes from August 12, 2021. Second by Committee Member Rhonda Pollard. Meeting minutes were unanimously approved with 7 votes aye, 0 votes nay.

BUSINESS:

1. **Update on Shoreline Setback Project:** Ms. Mercado updated the AC, stating that contracts had been signed with University of Hawai'i (UH) and Tetra Tech. UH will do the data collection and analysis, and Tetra Tech will synthesize the information to propose revised setbacks. UH is currently collecting images and LiDAR of coastline areas (one case study is along the Kona coast and one along the Hāmākua coast). Public hearings are anticipated for the summer of 2023.
2. **Presentation by Dennis Flemming, Hāmākua Institute:** Dennis Flemming, Executive Director of the Hāmākua Institute described their approach to sustainable rural development, which is focused on systems thinking to developing the economy, agriculture, and community. Their work prioritizes partnerships, collaborative programs, and helps to facilitate groups to work towards solutions. Their work has led them to the Hawai'i Island Agricultural Partnership (HIAP), a public/private partnership focused on island agricultural development. They conducted the Hawai'i Island Ag and Food System Study, mapping agrifood systems (needs/opportunities) and what actions people can take to improve it. They looked at: value chain functions, farm to consumer process, what info is available to agricultural businesses to make informed decisions, applicable policies, etc. HIAP action teams and committees were then formed to focus on three things: value-added growth, new employment pathways, and market opportunities. HIAP (a 501c6 entity) acts as a neutral platform, where various agricultural groups can form and team up to share projects, assets, contracts, or business opportunities. Mr. Flemming offered this space to the Hāmākua AC and looks forward to supporting the AC's work.

Click here for Comm. No. 2021-09 (Hāmākua Institute Presentation):

<http://records.hawaiicounty.gov/Weblink/1/doc/112614/Page1.aspx>

Committee Member Keeney and Committee Member Jeff McKnight serve on the Agricultural Committee of the Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, which reviews agriculture bills presented to the legislature each year. They would like to collaborate with Mr. Flemming on this type of work.

Committee Member Q+A:

- Q: Where does funding come from?
A: The establishment of the Institute was mostly self-funded by Mr. Flemming. They have also received funding through grants from Kamehameha Schools, UH Foundation, Ulupono Initiative, and a collection of funds from different organizations that are supporting this agriculture partnership.
- Q: Are there adequate lands devoted to agriculture farming projects?
A: Access to land was something few people mentioned in their study. More of a concern was access to labor recruitment/good labor and economic viability, i.e., cost of inputs and operational costs.

- Q: Are there any projects where people can be on site?
A: The Institute is not set up for that yet. Currently there is a small office and training space, but they have only held about four in person meetings since the pandemic began.
- Q: What are some of the goals of the action teams?
A: The action teams are finalizing the details for each objective in recommended plans, starting with identifying what everyone is already doing, and then determining where coordination or opportunities are for existing projects or planned projects.

Committee Member Carol Ignacio emphasized that making a living by farming is challenging, and she would like to see whether some of the plans are based on what the reality has been on the Hāmākua coast, when it comes to the success of local farmers.

Council Member Kimball stated that Committee Members Kua and Pollard are helping in the AC agriculture working group and encouraged them to continue a relationship with Mr. Flemming, stating that the AC is a great networking body that can help share out information with the community and herself, to continue advancing actions forward.

3. **Presentation by Lehua Village Partners, LLC – Proposed 40-Lot Subdivision in Honokaʻa:** Roger and Terri Meeker, and Jack Larson of Lehua Village Partners, LLC, along with planning consultants Sidney Fuke and Daryn Arai were in attendance to present and discuss their proposed affordable housing project in Honokaʻa. They first spoke to Council Member Kimball, who suggested they take an audience with the Hāmākua CDP AC.

Mr. Fuke began by providing a brief description of the land use history for this project area, beginning at the end of the sugar plantation era.

Mr. Meeker then provided the AC with a brief introduction to their proposed project. Utilizing Zoom’s screen sharing feature, Ms. Ching shared a location map as well as a detailed plan that had been provided by Lehua Village Partners, LLC. Mr. Meeker stated that their project conforms with both the General Plan and the Hāmākua CDP, which has the proposed area labeled medium to low density urban. He added that although County Code requires a project to be 20% affordable, they want to designate 50% of the units in their project to affordable housing, according to the County’s affordable housing guidelines. Lehua Village 1 will target first time local buyers, workforce housing, etc. to help satisfy that need. Mr. Meeker shared that once the project is approved, they would enter into an agreement with the County’s Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD). The process requires preference be given to first time, local buyers for the first seven months, after which, it could be open for other Hawaiʻi residents.

Lehua Village 2 may be a combination of lots and homes (uncertain at this point). The Planned Unit Development (PUD) allows for more flexibility. Mr. Meeker described the roads, and other aspects of the proposed project, such as a pedestrian path and native tree landscape. They intend to have minimal CC&Rs and would maintain an appropriate design aesthetic, referencing the historic plantation design of that area. They have met with OHCD and the Planning Department, and both agencies are supportive of their project’s vision. Mr. Meeker then opened the conversation for questions and feedback.

Concern over roads and the one lane bridge were expressed, and a discussion ensued about the roadway placement for Lehua Village 2. Chair Kurokawa advocated for smaller roads, and wasn’t sure if the County has adopted roadway standards which call for complete streets. Looking at the PUD aspect he recommended they consider natural drainage ways. Mr. Meeker explained the

engineers and PUD designer placed the location of the access road to meet adequate line of sight requirements and to avoid the area's flood zone.

Committee Member Keeney asked if the project would go before County Council for approval as an affordable housing project. Mr. Meeker replied that 201H was not applicable to this project because they are working within the existing zoning. Council Member Kimball added that the project would still go through the PUD process and go before the Planning Commission. The project would also go before County Council for review because they are applying for a rezone. She thanked Lehua Village Partners, LLC for coming out to the community early to begin this dialogue.

Francine Roby expressed concern for this area being labeled "high susceptibility" for landslides under the HCDP's community hazards profile on hazards. Ms. Roby also stated that cul-de-sacs are not a good idea because it only allows people with one exit route when a hazard occurs. Chair Kurokawa agreed that for higher density areas in town you want more connectivity for distribution of traffic.

Committee Member Carol Ignacio commented that the 2019 medium income in Hawai'i County was about \$63,000 and "affordable" for people is about 30% of that. She queried what affordable would look like for this project. Mr. Meeker stated that they did not have fixed pricing right now. The OHCD has affordable housing guidelines with numbers for 80%, but this project will be well under those numbers. They won't know for certain until they have fixed infrastructure costs.

Chair Kurokawa asked if they were planning on building homes or subdividing the land. Mr. Meeker stated that Lehua Village 1 would be finished lots for buyers to build their own homes on. They remain uncertain about Lehua Village 2. Chair Kurokawa noted there may be some extra costs for building because of the sloping terrain, versus a flat site. He also noted that affordable housing usually entails having smaller lots, so the developer can develop more, and the lots can be lowered in cost. Chair Kurokawa also shared concerns around maintaining visual screening from Hawai'i Belt Road, so the view does not become rooftops.

Mr. Meeker encouraged everyone to view the area firsthand and look at the gentle slope, especially Village 1, stating the topography does not present a challenge in this area. View planes will be protected by ensuring only one-story homes can be built on the makai side.

Committee Member McKnight asked to what extent outreach had been done with the surrounding community. Mr. Meeker acknowledged that this is the start of that process, and that they would be meeting with the Honoka'a Business Association in a couple weeks. He added that they have nothing currently scheduled in terms of meetings with residents, but they are open to do whatever is appropriate.

Click here for Comm. No. 2021-07.1 - Lehua Village Partners, LLC map and concept plan:
<http://records.hawaiicounty.gov/Weblink/1/doc/112472/Page1.aspx>

4. **Island-wide Action Committee Member Initiatives:** Chair Kurokawa incorporated this business agenda item with #5—Implementation Updates from Action Committee Members (read below).
5. **Implementation Updates from Action Committee Members:**
 - a. Emergency Preparedness & Hazard Mitigation—Francine Roby & Jeff McKnight: Ms. Roby has federal emergency planning experience and has adapted that planning process to a household model. She has looked at plans from various counties, including the COH Multi-hazard Mitigation Plan, and created a self-instructional document that helps households learn and think about the types of decisions they need to make for emergency preparedness. It includes

links to up-to-date online resources, guidance on home preparedness, and contains a vital records section, and emergency financial first aid kit. It is a fillable document that is customizable for each household. The idea is to have households work on this first, and then take it to a community level, connecting networks of communities together to enhance preparedness.

- b. Affordable Housing—Nicolette Hubbard & Rhonda Pollard: Committee Members Hubbard & Pollard will connect with one of the Action Committee members in Kohala that could be a valuable resource and will get back to the AC with this information.

Council Member Kimball offered to bring in a speaker from the Office of Housing and Community Development to talk about affordable housing with the Action Committee.

- c. Public Access & Trails—Jeff McKnight & Tawn Keeney: Committee Member Keeney has been attending meetings about Waipi'o Valley, focusing on the valley's rim area and public access. Committee Member Keeney spoke about a property below Pa'auhau.

Council Member Kimball shared that there is a collaborative working group comprised of various nonprofits that are working in the valley (taro farmers, Hā ola o Waipi'o, Pōhāhā i ka Lani) and they have received \$100,000 from Hawaii Tourism Authority (destination management program) to facilitate a discussion with the entire surrounding community on what they would like to see for the future of Waipi'o and management of that destination. They're in the process of selecting a vendor to provide the facilitation services, and some of the input received from the groups in the valley is the need for a facilitator that knows the history but has not been intimately involved.

Council Member Kimball also shared that there is a potential investor for Jack Wayne Hall (roadside building between Waipi'o and Honoka'a town). The investor is willing to make it an education gateway to the valley, and will expand parking, potentially provide shuttles, education services, etc.

- d. Recycling & Solid Waste—Jeff McKnight & Francine Roby: Committee Member McKnight received several calls about the transfer stations abrupt COVID-related closures and limited hours—which has since been temporarily resolved but seems to be a recurring issue. Council Member Kimball said she will connect him with solid waste contacts at the County.
- e. Roadway Network (bridges)—Brad Kurokawa & Nicolette Hubbard: Chair Kurokawa reached out to John Cross, formerly of C. Brewer & Co., and said there is quite a bit of information that the plantation has on old roadways. He believes there should be another data gathering effort so that they can identify some of these routes for emergency preparedness.
- f. Agriculture—Crystal Kua & Rhonda Pollard: Committee Member Kua said it was helpful seeing Mr. Flemming's presentation, and she will connect with Rhonda on the topic of agriculture.
- g. Protection of Coastal Resources—Robert Nishimoto: Committee Member Nishimoto is hoping to serve as a bridge between the AC and the agencies working on the shoreline setback study.

Committee Member Nishimoto asked about the new owners of the 'Ō'ōkala Dairy and recalled that the former owner had various land issues with others (dumping sewage off the cliff etc.). He requested that the new owners be asked to do a presentation to the AC about their plans. Council Member Kimball offered to arrange for the presentation with the new owners Stephanie and Chad Buck, as well as Charlene Nishida.

Other: Chair Kurokawa requested clarification and information on a recent director's memo regarding Farm Dwellings. Ms. Mercado will follow up with information on the memo.

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING: None

ADJOURNMENT:

Committee Member Keeney motioned to adjourn the meeting. Second by Committee Member Hubbard. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 P.M.

All Action Committee information can be viewed and downloaded from our website:

<https://www.hawaii-county-cdp.info/hamakua-cdp>