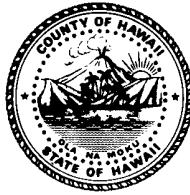


Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor

Lee E. Lord
Managing Director



Zendo Kern
Director

Jeffrey W. Darrow
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i PLANNING DEPARTMENT

HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE

Aupuni Center • 101 Pauahi Street, Suite 3 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

Phone (808) 961-8288 • Fax (808) 961-8742

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Brad Kurokawa called the Hāmākua Community Development Plan (HCDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 5:01 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: Brad Kurokawa (Chair), Nicolette Hubbard, Tawn Keeney, Jeff McKnight, Robert Nishimoto, Rhonda Pollard, Crystal Kua [arrived at 5:13 pm]

AC Members Absent-Excused: Carol Ignacio, Desiree Cruz

County Staff: Planners – Heather Bartlett, Keiko Mercado, Jaslyn Nathaniel

County Officials: Director of Parks & Recreation Maurice Messina; Council Member Heather Kimball

One (1) member of the public attended the meeting via Zoom. The meeting was also available for synchronous viewing via the [COH Planning Department YouTube Livestream](#). The Livestream is available at [Hāmākua CDP Action Committee Meeting - March 15, 2022](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice-Chair McKnight made a motion to approve the minutes for the November 16, 2021 meeting. Second by Committee Member Tawn Keeney. Motion passed with 6 votes aye, 0 votes nay. [Committee Member Kua was not present for the vote]

Vice-Chair McKnight made a motion to approve the minutes for the January 19, 2022 meeting. Second by Committee Member Rhonda Pollard. Motion passed with 6 votes aye, 0 votes nay. [Committee Member Kua was not present for the vote]

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS: One (1) member of the public provided oral testimony. At the Chair's discretion, the testifier chose to provide their comment when business item 2 was up for discussion.

Community Member Romel Dela Cruz, representing himself, testified on agenda item 2, Message from Parks & Recreation (P&R) Director Maurice Messina. Mr. Dela Cruz stated he was born and raised on the Hāmākua coast and shared some of his lived experiences in the area. Mr. Dela Cruz spoke fondly about different past activities and sporting events that took place in various gyms and on fields in the area. Mr. Dela Cruz expressed that the coastal parks such as Pāpa‘aloe, ‘Ō‘okala, Laupahoehoe, and Pa‘auilo are very special to the community, that they hold irreplaceable sentimental value, and should be preserved.

BUSINESS:

1. **Information Sharing:** Sharon Hirota, from the County Office of Housing and Community Development, presented an overview of several programs and centers that were launched in partnership with community-based organizations. She encouraged AC members to share these programs with their networks:

- Emergency Rent Assistance – Provides financial assistance to help residents ensure housing stability by helping them to get caught up on rent and utility payments.
- Landlord/Tenant Mediation Center – Provides landlord/tenant mediation services. After the lifting of the moratorium, there was a temporary modification to the landlord-tenant code that requires landlords and tenants to go through a mediation process before entering into the court system.
- Coordination Center – Provides a free centralized service that helps residents navigate critical financial, housing, and health-related issues. The Center’s objective is to ensure that lack of knowledge about available resources does not stand between residents and the help they need and is designed to help residents with one-on-one coaching and connectivity to community-based and government-supported services.
- Homeowner Assistance – Provides Hawai‘i homeowners who are experiencing financial hardship associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and have incomes at or below 150% of the area median income with the assistance that will lead to long-term mortgage resolution. The program grants up to \$30,000 to assist homeowners with paying past-due mortgages or reducing monthly payments.
- Financial Empowerment Centers – Provides free, one-on-one financial counseling as a public service to all residents. Centers are staffed with trained counselors to help residents manage money, decrease debt, improve credit, and access all other services offered by the centers to find financial stability.

Presentation slides available here:

<https://records.hawaiicounty.gov/Weblink/1/edoc/115422/Communication%20No.%202022-07%20OHC%20Financial%20Empowerment%20Presentation%20by%20Sharon%20Hirota.pdf>

Additional information available here: <https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/departments/office-of-housing>

2. **Message from Parks & Recreation (P&R) Director Maurice Messina:**

Director Maurice Messina provided updates on upcoming maintenance projects for recreational facilities in Hāmākua. These projects will be ongoing for ADA compliance, safety, and overall improvements. Director Messina provided approximate timelines for each

project, identified barriers related to deferred maintenance, and outlined different approaches that could be utilized to properly address said issues.

Committee Member Nishimoto asked about possibilities for community emergency centers. He shared his affiliation with the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and recommended collaboration with Civil Defense to establish radio towers, emphasizing that coastal communication is fundamental during emergencies.

Committee Member Keeney shared concerns he had heard from vendors within Honoka'a and near the Waipi'o area about a significant decline of visitor activity and asked if the "lookout authority" had been experiencing something similar. He suggested that information be shared on the availability of the lookout area, despite the Waipi'o road closure. Director Messina shared that there has been an increased need to replenish supplies at the lookout due to an increase in visitor numbers.

Chair Kurokawa shared his hope about the possibility of a Visitor Center type facility and asked about the PONC (Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Preservation Commission) restrictions.

Vice-Chair McKnight shared his concern about emergency shelter capacity being able to withstand contemporary disasters. He questioned the probability of more facilities becoming available to accommodate the public and offered to donate a radio repeater to support safety. Director Messina assured him the concern is mutual and that Civil Defense, along with the State HIEMA (Hawaii Emergency Management Agency), is working specifically to address these types of issues. Director Messina will relay Vice-Chair McKnight's generous offer to Civil Defense.

Chair Kurowawa inquired on the whereabouts of existing programs that were previously being held in the Pāpa'aloa gym. Director Messina explained that although there is currently no facility in Pāpa'aloa, there has been an intense effort to continue offering recreational activities by collaborating with the Laupāhoehoe facilities. He shared that he remains open to creative solutions for bring the park up to adequate standards.

Committee Member Hubbard mentioned her affiliation to the steering committee for Pāpa'aloa Park. She requested support for [Bill 2477](#), an ongoing petition to raise ten (10) million dollars for match funding, and the need to raise additional financial support for the overall planning process. More information on the Friends of Pāpa'aloa Park can be found here:

- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/612044369939864>
- Email: friendsofpapaalopark@gmail.com

Committee Member Keeney inquired about the possibility of a Visitor Center being established on the PONC property (near Waipi'o lookout). Council Member Kimball recalled previous considerations for a visitor center, managed access, and tourist education. She described the unlikelihood of a visitor center due to PONC limitations and suggested exploring nearby parcels that might be amenable to the use. Council Member Kimball indicated that although the road closure was unexpected, it allows time to identify other

needs associated with access to the valley. Council Member Kimball also expressed appreciation for the community driven work being done regarding Pāpaʻaloha Gym.

Committee Member Kua asked whether Action Committee Members were able to use their AC titles when advocating for Pāpaʻaloha Gym. Ms. Mercado explained that; unless voted upon by the Board, each AC member would be representing themselves.

Vice-Chair McKnight brought up some complaints he had heard from the Waipīʻo rim community regarding trespassing. Council Member Kimball agreed to make it a priority to seek mitigative methods from the Senate to address illegal parking with ongoing House Bill 1448.

House Bill 1448 available here:

https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=HB&billnumber=1448&year=2022

3. **Action Committee Support of Hawaiʻi Ports-of Entry Biosecurity Program (Communication No. 2022-06)**

Committee Member Hubbard made a motion for Communication No. 2022-06 to be approved and sent to the Hawaiʻi Invasive Species Council. Second by Vice-Chair McKnight.

Chair Kurokawa opened the floor for discussion and requested minor adjustments to the letter. He requested to replace “addition” with “introduction” in the second paragraph, delete “worst of the worst” at the end of the second paragraph, replace “strains” with “burdens” in the last sentence of the letter, and insert “negatively” further in the same sentence.

Committee Member Hubbard made a motion to accept Chair Kurokawa’s amendments to Communication No. 2022-06. Second by Vice-Chair McKnight. Motion to amend the letter passed with 7 votes aye, 0 votes nay.

Motion to approve and send the letter as amended passed with 7 votes aye, 0 votes nay.

Final letter available here:

<https://records.hawaiicounty.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?dbid=1&id=115459&page=1&cr=1>

4. **Action Committee Priority Setting Exercise**

Chair Kurokawa introduced the objective of the AC Priority Exercise as a way to identify potential interests and create investigatory subcommittees and community liaison groups as needed that encourage the advancement of the Hāmākua Community Development Plan.

Ms. Bartlett suggested using the Community Action guide as reference and helped to facilitate the discussion through which the AC recognized the following:

- Given limited recreational resources, Shoreline/ Public Access should include open space and bike paths.
- Hāmākua recreational Facilities (top of mind is Pāpāʻaloha Gym) are a priority
- Shoreline, Public Access, Open Space, and Bike Paths.
- Waipīʻo wahi pana
- Community outreach and engagement

- Education around critical cultural significance of streams including indigenous terrestrial and aquatic fauna

Committee Member Keeney inquired about the labeling of the groups and questions arose around Sunshine Law requirements. Clarification was provided by Ms. Bartlett that with a majority vote by the Action Committee, smaller investigatory groups could be allowed up to a maximum of four (4) members per subcommittee to explore the subject item, then report back to the Action Committee with their findings.

Council Member Kimball offered to keep the AC informed on any opportunities for discussion in community meetings regarding Waipi'o.

Vice-Chair McKnight inquired if attendance at the Waipi'o meetings is limited to two members. Council Member Kimball confirmed that all members may attend informational meetings. Committee Member Kua inquired about requirements on Sunshine Law regarding participation. Council Member Kimball explained the differences between participation as a Board, as opposed to participation as an individual, and the likelihood that a subject matter could become a future agenda item. Council Member Kimball brought up recent legislation related to board leniencies while still ensuring transparency.

Additional information on HB 2026 available here:

https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=HB&billnumber=2026&year=2022

5. Framework for Action Committee Run Meetings

Ms. Mercado informed that some Action Committees have expressed interest in hosting their own official meetings. She explained the possibility of the ACs having the option to convene between the already scheduled quarterly meetings and provided high-level framework for running these meetings. Sunshine Law would need to be adhered to and Robert's Rules followed. Ms. Mercado assured that Planning staff would provide templates and resource packets and would continue to make connections as the AC needed. Staff would also continue to post the agenda and minutes to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Law.

Committee Member Keeney appreciated the support for AC hosted meetings. Committee Member Kua was interested in continuing the conversation. Vice-Chair McKnight said it provided more options for the AC especially when the AC was considering time-sensitive matters. Chair Kurokawa added that more frequent meetings would help keep community engaged.

Presentation slides are available here:

<https://records.hawaiiicounty.gov/Weblink/1/edoc/115460/Communication%20No.%202022-09%20AC%20Meeting%20Framework.pdf>

6. Election of Action Committee Officers

Committee Member Keeney made a motion to nominate Jeff McKnight as Chair of the Hāmākua CDP AC. Second by Chair Kurokawa. Motion passed with 7 votes aye, 0 votes nay.

Committee Member Kua made a motion to nominate Nicole Hubbard as Vice-Chair of the Hāmākua CDP AC. Second by Vice-Chair Jeff McKnight. Motion passed with 7 votes aye, 0 votes nay.

187 **PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING:**

- 188 1. Update on Shoreline Setback Project

189 **ADJOURNMENT:** *Vice-Chair McKnight made a motion to adjourn. Second by Committee Member*
190 *Hubbard. Motion passed with 7 votes aye, 0 votes nay.*

191 The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 pm.

192 These minutes and all related documents are available in the Planning Department's Hāmākua
193 Community Development Plan Action Committee folder via [the County of Hawai'i Public](#)
194 [Documents Repository](#). These documents may also be requested from the Planning Department
195 by calling (808) 961-8288 or emailing cdp@hawaiiicounty.gov.