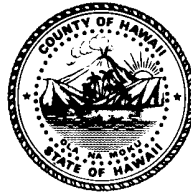


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County of Hawai'i PLANNING DEPARTMENT

HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE

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Wednesday, April 12, 2023

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Tawn Keeney started the Hāmākua Community Development Plan (HCDP) Action Committee (AC) meeting at 5:09 P.M. This meeting was held online via Zoom, and in-person at the Honoka'a People's Theatre. Quorum was not established at this meeting; thus, only presentations were heard and committee business was not addressed and there were no votes.

ROLL CALL

AC Members Present: Tawn Keeney, Nicolette (Niki) Hubbard, Brad Kurokawa,

AC Members Absent-Excused: Desiree Cruz, Carol Ignacio, Crystal Kua, and Robert Nishimoto

County Officials: Deputy Corporation Counsel, Suzanna Tiapula

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Chair Keeney announced that the Planning Department is currently seeking applicants for the Hāmākua Action Committee. He noted the department's efforts to find interested community members and the notice in the Hāmākua Times asking for interest in membership.
- Chair Keeney announced that the Action Committee is seeking a volunteer secretary to take meeting notes and collaborate with the Planning Department accordingly.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

This item was deferred as quorum was not established.

BUSINESS:

1. Council Member Kimball Updates:

- Impact of Kona Low storms on community resulted in working sessions with Hawaiian Electric and Hawaiian Telcom to find ways to improve responses and response times to this type of event. Council Member Kimball noted that Hawaiian Electric reinforced

27 telephone systems to resolve reporting issues. If clients need to report an issue, they
28 may now call and record a message or speak with an actual person.

- 29 • Council Member Kimball encouraged the use of Civil Defense’s website link to report
30 property damage. If ever the threshold for FEMA funding is met, those who submitted
31 claims in advance may get reimbursed. She noted the incident where the Hāmākua
32 ditch got blocked and members of community had to pay for water. Those situations
33 would be the type to report on the Civil Defense website.
- 34 • The Department of Environmental Management’s new Vehicle Tow Program will allow
35 property owners to request for one (1) car towed off their property, per year, to be
36 disposed at the Hilo vehicle disposal site. Currently the County pays for disposal, but
37 not towing. The program will resolve that towing barrier and is estimated to start in 6
38 months. Applications may be submitted on the Environmental Management website.
- 39 • Animal Control is now a separate agency and no longer under the Hawai’i Police
40 Department. While under the police department, animal control positions were short
41 term contracts, which limited the people who wanted to apply. Now, with the new
42 agency, the animal control positions are civil service positions. Council Member
43 Kimball hoped this change would improve staffing and animal control issues.
- 44 • For updates regarding Waipi’o, status quo with Emergency order will remain for now.
45 Residents can go down with four-wheel drive and no pedestrians or visitors are
46 allowed to drive down in the valley. Tree trimming and rock fall work is ongoing. The
47 Steering Committee continues to meet.
- 48 • Bills underway:
 - 49 ○ Property owners in the Homeowner class get the home exemption on value,
50 homeowner rate on tax and 3%-year cap on assessed value. People in the
51 dedicated agriculture program or non-dedicated agriculture program, do not
52 have the cap protection, and home value increases affected many. Council
53 Member Kimball informed that they are trying to add the cap to primary
54 residents of farmers agriculture land. They are also working on requiring
55 documentation to get the agriculture exemption as they have seen many who
56 claim they are doing ag but are not.
 - 57 ○ Council is in the process of developing Draft 4 of the Short-Term Vacation
58 Rental bill. See <https://www.hawaiicountytar.com/> for a copy of the current
59 draft and FAQ page.
 - 60 ○ Bill 194 was vetoed by the mayor. Council will revisit since it was vetoed.
 - 61 ○ Council has put funding towards homelessness and homelessness services. 7.5
62 million budgeted for homeless services and development of housing. The
63 Office of Housing will be tasked with most of this and addressing these
64 challenges.

65 **PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:**

66 Two (2) members of the public provided comments on Agenda Item #1:

- 67 1. Community member Cory Harden, shared that she appreciated Council Member
68 Kimball’s update on Bill 194 as she thought it was very important for members of the

69 public to have a say on how long developers have to complete their development. She
70 confirmed with Council Member Kimball that this would be revisited on April 19th and
71 encouraged everyone to contact their Council members to support this bill as it would
72 take 6 council votes out of 9 to override the mayor's veto.

- 73 2. Community Member Phaeton Keeney, requested recommendations on strategies to
74 form a community group to work on PONC purchases in Hāmākua area. She would like
75 to find the best way or structure for community to interact and work with the CDP
76 Action Committee for these types of purchases.

77 Council Member Kimball shared that the AC, as a County Committee, are guided by
78 Sunshine Law. She provided several options to engage in any kind of project. The first
79 option, to form an informal working group with members of community and only two
80 members of the AC at most. Another option would be to form a Permitted Interaction
81 Group (PIG) where up to four AC members could participate. The benefit of this option
82 is that you may include more AC members. A disadvantage would be that your work is
83 not discussed by the AC as a whole until the work is done. Council Member Kimball
84 informed that Deborah Change was District 1's representative on the PONC
85 Commission. She encouraged the AC to reach out and have Ms. Chang present on the
86 PONC application process. Nominations for PONC properties already happened for this
87 year.

88 **2. Presentation from Indy Singh related to Community Healing Gardens:**

89 Indy asked to acknowledge the land that we are on and those who have cultivated it
90 before us and acknowledge all the different types of people who have come to cultivate
91 the land in the past and presently. He thanked County staff, AC members, and all the
92 guests and expressed gratitude for the conversation going forward.

93 Mr. Singh started his presentation by encouraging everyone to think about which
94 community members needed support the most for the whole community to thrive.
95 Nurses, local farmers, teachers, elders, and students were mentioned. Mr. Singh noted
96 that food directly affects our health and soil health affects our food health and community
97 health. He encouraged cultivating discussions for actions to be taken soon to create
98 centralized places where healthcare, education, and food can be supported through
99 community gardens.

100 Mr. Singh shared that he hosted a civic action rally in Puna to address farming, healing,
101 different ideas and solutions, and relationship with the Hawaiian culture. He also did a
102 civic action rally at the Hakalau Farmers Market and attended a Kohala Ag Vision
103 Committee meeting. Mr. Singh shared that his takeaway from all of those meetings was
104 that it comes down to having accessible Hawai'i County supported community gardens
105 that are education and well-being hubs. He expressed that these should be at schools and
106 senior centers. Mr. Singh shared that he learned of seniors getting reprimanded for
107 growing food in their units and how the County issued them eviction notices. He
108 expressed that the County should be providing public money to senior housings facilities
109 that support gardening, and not reprimand seniors for gardening.

Mr. Singh shared his experience with the East Hawai'i Organics Facility in Hilo, which was started by a small group and is now a full-blown operation supported by the County. They create and distribute mulch throughout the island to local and new farmers.

Mr. Singh encouraged everyone to think about and share their ideas on how the County of Hawai'i can support community healing gardens, where nurses, educators, and farmers can be supported.

Mr. Singh shared a recent article, covered by KHON2 News, about the food insecurity rising in Hawai'i for keiki and kupuna. He expressed the severity of this situation and how it will not improve unless willful actions are taken. He noted the importance of finding places to bring back the cultural and traditional ways of sharing and giving food. Mr. Singh shared several suggestions from audience. The first, to audit vacant County owned lands and see if the community can use them for gardens. Mr. Singh shared that something similar to this did happen in California. Another suggestion was for the County to support people providing advice on how to grow food.

Mr. Singh informed that he would continue to meet on farms and outside of this rigid format to make progress towards this effort. He encouraged everyone to show up to his meetings and to share their email with him for more information and meeting notices.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Two (2) members of the public provided comments on Agenda Item #2:

1. Community Member Phaeton Keeney asked who 'we' in Indy's group is, and if he was in a certain community group or represented an organization.

Mr. Singh stated that he is just a member of the general public at the moment. He understood the value of non- and for-profit organizations and noted that he also had those types of relationships with different organizations, but for now they are just calling in community for this initiative. He informed that they would gather again in May.

2. Community Member Diana Cantu-Reyna shared her disappointment that Council Member Kimball left this meeting early and wondered if there was a better way to engage council members and hold their attention to be present. She noted other meetings that Council Member Kimball had left early and felt that there was lack of engagement with community members. Ms. Cantu-Reyna also shared that her nonprofit, Cultivating Self, supports Indy's initiatives and would be grateful to have the County support their work. She encouraged everyone to visit their site and hoped more would get involved to support these initiatives <https://www.cultivatingself.org/>.

Chair Keeney shared that he would like to support the visions presented. He noted that AC would pass on their concerns to Council Member Kimball. He encouraged communicating directly with Council Member Kimball as well as he knows she is very receptive to communications from the community even though she is very busy.

3. Permitted Interaction Groups Updates to AC:

This item was deferred as quorum was not established.

150 **4. Public Access, Open Space, & Natural Resources (PONC):**

151 Community Member Phaeton Keeney shared that Tony Whittington, of North Kohala,
152 came to Honoka'a at the end of March to present their community's success with PONCs.
153 She explained that the presentation inspired them to do the same for the Hāmākua
154 district. She learned that there are properties that are already proposed for PONCs in
155 Hāmākua.

156 See Communication No. 2023-09 PONC Past Project List here:

157 <https://records.hawaiicounty.gov/WebLink/1/edoc/122705/Communication%20No.%202023-09%20PONC%20Past%20Project%20List.pdf>
158

159 Ms. Keeney informed that not much has happened since 2006-2007, other than the
160 purchase of the Rice property in Waipi'o, which is now reserved for public open space and
161 is being stewarded by a community group in the area. She also informed that there is a
162 South Hilo community group, which is working on two areas in Pepe'ekeo near the Hu
163 Honua project site. Ms. Keeney would like to connect with them and gather more
164 community engagement on thinking about going forward to submit next year's list in
165 January 2024. She would also like to use Ms. Whittington's advice on non-profit formation
166 for this purpose to connect and prioritize efforts. She informed that there was no formal
167 name to their group but they are looking to connect with more people, as the group
168 currently consists of those who were at the presentation in March. She noted that they
169 have also connected with Blake McNaughton, who is leading the Pepe'ekeo PONC
170 purchases, and Jackson Bauer of the Na Ala Hele trails group.

171 Chair Keeney shared that Council Member Kimball encouraged the AC to share
172 suggestions for connections to people in their areas who are interested in access and trail
173 preservation.

174 Committee Member Kurokawa advised that the first place to start with PONCs would be
175 with an owner who is willing to sell their parcel.

176 **5. Action Committee Meetings:**

177 *This item was deferred as quorum was not established.*

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

- 179 1. Permitted Interaction Groups Updates to AC
180 2. Format of Future AC Meetings
181 3. Honoka'a Business Association presentation
182 4. Presentation from Blake McNaughton on Pepe'ekeo PONCs

183 **ADJOURNMENT:**

184 The meeting ended at 6:20 P.M.

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