



County of Hawai'i
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION AC
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Wednesday, November 8, 2023
DRAFT Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Tawn Keeney called the Hāmākua Community Development Plan (HCDP) Action AC (AC) to order at 5:33 P.M. Quorum was at this time. This meeting was held in-person at the Honoka'a Peoples Theater.

ROLL CALL

AC Members Present: Tawn Keeney, Brad Kurokawa, Robert (Bobby) Nishimoto, David Meyer, Richard Bidleman, and Mahealani Maikui.

AC Members Absent: Desiree Cruz and Crystal Kua

Discussion of serial absence for 7 months of Crystal Kua and Desiree Moana Cruz

Approximately 15 members of the public attended the meeting

County Officials: Deputy Corporation Counsel, Sinclair Salas-Ferguson

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Deputy Corporation Counsel provided clarification of requirements for removal of AC Members

- Discussion of addition to Agenda: writing a letter to the Mayor recommending to remove two members from commission.
- AC Members wished to have communication from members or Planning before letter to recommend removal. Chair Keeney had discussed with Mayor's office and Planning department, Planning indicated Director Kern would attempt to contact.

AC member Richard Bidleman motioned to add to the agenda discussion on writing a letter to the Mayor recommending removing Crystal Kua and Desiree Moana-Cruz from the AC.

Seconded by Chair Tawn Keeney. Motion did not pass with a voice vote 4 in favor, 2 opposed (4-2).

- Resignation of AC Member Niki Hubbard noted.
- Volunteer Secretary unable to participate in "in person," meetings, but may be possible to attend through Zoom.

- Council member Kimball notified of absence from meeting due to illness.
- Question raised of encouragement of individuals to apply for AC membership. Efforts have been made by multiple AC members to encourage new member application.
- Question raised about Zoom capabilities. AC members described technical difficulties with Zoom due to audio feedback and bandwidth for computers in the room and other audio issues.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Two member of the public provided oral testimony:

Michael Guth commented about roads in limbo and encouraged the AC to take up the issue. Discussion: difficulties are due to the capacity of the Public Works Department.

Michale McCool concerned about individuals and entities closing off roads which have been previously open to access for ages, such as, Mauna Ware(?) Homestead Road and Standard Oil Road. Respondent mentioned, “ag theft” as a reason for closure of many roads. Roads in limbo began with the closure of Plantation. Bridge closures are likewise a similar problem. Aspects of safety raised after the Lahaina fire and earlier Pa’auilo fires.

Member Richard Bidleman described frustrations with development of speed humps on Lehua Street.

Questions raised about fire hazards around our communities. Deferred to later agenda item.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Email address restoration segment of September 19, 2023 with unanimous vote to restore the email address. Email addresses have still not been restored. Was told the email addresses of members would be restored when the Planner returned from vacation 2 weeks ago after catching up on her work.

AC member Richard Bidelman motioned to approve the September 19, 2023 minutes.

Seconded by Robert Nishimoto. Motion passed unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).

BUSINESS:

1. Hakalau School Transition Status

Brad Kurokawa gave a brief history of the effort to achieve use of the long closed Hakalau School and the letter which was endorsed by the AC. The Management Plan of the community has been submitted to the DLNR. State Law exists that if a facility has not been used for long time it will be turned over to community. Community groups have been taking care of the building.

Richard raised the question of working through the county rather than state agencies.

Chair Keeney requested an item be added to the agenda, a written letter to the Honoka’a Heritage Center of endorsement of the Center’s effort to state a Sugar Days Agricultural Festival in October 2024.

AC member Mahealani Maikui motioned to add to the agenda a discussion on the written letter of endorsement to the Honoka'a Heritage Center and their efforts in the Sugar Days Agricultural Festival in October 2024. Seconded by AC member Brad Kurokawa. Motion passed unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).

The letter which Chair Keeney wrote was read in support of the Honoka'a Heritage Center's efforts towards creation of the festival. The letter is submitted as Communication Number 2023-31 . It was moved and seconded and passed unanimously for the AC to endorse the letter written and read by Chair Keeney.

AC member Brad Kurokawa motioned to endorse the letter written by Chair Keeney to the Honoka'a Heritage Center and their efforts in the Sugar Days Agricultural Festival in October 2024. Seconded by AC member Robert Nishimoto. Motion passed unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).

2. Annual Nomination and Election of Committee Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for 2024

Brad Kurokawa was nominated by Chair Keeney. Brad indicated his reluctance to assume chairmanship due to previous chairmanship and the limitation of his previous commitment and time availability. It was pointed out that there are only four people identified on the website who will be on the AC beginning in January, three of them are new to the AC.

Questions raised about previous outreach for recruitment. Suggestion made of placing an article in Hāmākua Times. Ramona Frances offered to write an article for Hāmākua Times to help with recruitment. Chair Keeney will contact Ramona.

AC Members Mahealani and Richard Bidleman indicated inability to assume chairmanship. David Meyer expressed reluctance but would consider, especially if process was shared with the Vice Chair. Encouragement for Chair and Vice Chair to work together.

Impression expressed by Chair Keeney that Bobby and Tawn will be leaving at the end of 2023. *The selection of Chair and Vice Chair was tabled until the next meeting.*

Brad indicated might consider being the Vice Chair.

3. Hāmākua CDP AC's Recommendations to Amend the County of Hawaii's Draft General Plan.

Comments and questions arose as to what has been changed in the Draft General Plan from the previous General Plan. Per Chair Keeney, the Planning Department has expressed that they are working on a compendium of changes from the previous General Plan. The Draft General Plan is approximately 200 pages. Discussion took place of how to address making comments on amending the Plan and Draft Plan. Considerations were, 1) Establishment of a Permitted Interaction Group. The advantage being unlimited interaction between themselves, and the public, then return to the whole AC for a vote. 2) The AC would identify

106 individuals from the community with expertise and experience to work on recommendations
107 which would be submitted to the AC. 3). Each AC member to take a section of the Draft
108 General Plan to review and raise questions and make recommendations.

109 Chair Keeney recounted that the letter which he had written to other district ACs had
110 received no responses from the Chairs regarding a Joint AC meeting. Expressions made that
111 the Draft General Plan recommendations would benefit from a combined Joint AC meeting.
112 Expression that lots of concepts and terms are new and need explanation from Planning.

113 There was a request made to Planning to make a presentation of the Draft General Plan to
114 the Hāmākua AC. Chair Keeney expressed preference that a combined meeting take place
115 where questions and comments will be addressed.

116 Chair Keeney expressed that the advisory function of the AC extended to the public and
117 County Council. Suggested that if the request for delineation of new changes in the Draft
118 General plan has not been addressed sufficiently by the Planning Department that
119 expression to County Council could be undertaken.

120 Frustration was expressed with the “shop talk” and terminology in the Draft Plan. It needs to
121 have clarification of all the concepts available to the public.

122 *AC member Brad Kurokawa motioned to write a letter to the Planning Department asking for*
123 *clarification of changes in the Draft General Plan from the current plan. Seconded by AC*
124 *Member David Meyer.*

125 *Expressed that this clarification should be written, and that Planning be asked to make a*
126 *presentation to the Hāmākua AC describing these changes. Changes should be made in*
127 *layman terms. Ask Planning to make a presentation at the next meeting. Recommendation*
128 *that Planning present the synopsis of changes 2 weeks before the presentation. First, we*
129 *want to look at the changes to prepare to make comments. Discussion of the Draft General*
130 *Plan will take place at each meeting.*

131 Unable to tell what is changed and not changed on the land use maps. Need to click on any
132 property before knowing if zoning is changed.

133 *Motion passed unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).*

134 *AC member Bidleman motioned to have assignment of AC members to individual sections of*
135 *the Draft General Plan. Seconded by AC Member Brad Kurokawa. Motion passed*
136 *unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).*

137 **4. Discussion of the Draft General Plan’s Expansion of Heavy Industrial Zoning at Hu Honua**
138 **near Pepe’ekeo.**

139 Brief history explained that PUC denied contract of Hu Honua with Hawaiian Electric. The
140 denial was sustained by the Supreme Court and the purchase contract was not in the best
141 interest of the public.

AC member Brad Kurokawa motioned to request that Planning provide explanation/reason for expansion of Heavy Industrial Zoning at Hu Honua. Seconded by AC member Robert Nishimoto.

Expression made from AC desiring to hear reasoning from Planning. Kuleana expressed that the AC should try to protect important agricultural lands and that the heavy industrial zoning increase was taken from important Agricultural lands. Therefore, an explanation should be given as to why this expansion is taking place.

Motion passed unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).

5. Discussion of the Draft General Plan's Expansion of Heavy Industrial Zoning at the Old 'Ō'ōkala Mill Site

AC member Mahealani Maikui motioned to ask Planning for explanation/reason for expansion of Heavy industrial Zoning at Ookala. Seconded by AC member Brad Kurokawa.

Comment offered that the zoning change is taking place in agricultural lands. Comment offered that the heavy industrial zoning should not be placed next to the residential neighborhoods in the current General Plan. Comment offered that the Hāmākua Community Development Plan states that Heavy Industrial zoning in most areas of North Hilo is inappropriate due to proximity to coastline. Request made to Planning to identify on the land use map where changes are being made because currently able to tell.

Motion passed unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).

6. Hāmākua CDP AC's Investigation into the Fire Preparedness of the Communities in the Hāmākua District

Chair Tawn Keeney has spoken with the Fire Captain of Honoka'a and the Fire Prevention Office of Hāmākua, Director of Civil Defense, the Asset Manager of Kamehameha Schools, and the Board of the Honoka'a Business Association about Fire Break and Fuel Break around Honoka'a. A representative of the Board of the Honoka'a Business Association and Hawaii Wildfire and Chair Keeney will have further discussion of this topic. Kamehameha Schools expressed that we need to express very specifically what we wanted, and that this communication would be passed to their administration for evaluation. This model should be applied to each community on the Hāmākua Coast.

AC member Bidleman motioned the AC write a letter addressed to the various groups and persons written by Chair Keeney after further investigation. Chair Keeney, after discussions with Honoka'a Business Association representative and Hawaii Wildfire Preparedness rep would write a letter to be presented in Communications for the next meeting. Seconded by AC member Mahealani Maikui. Motion passed unanimously with a voice vote (6-0).

7. Mud Lane Roadway that runs from Kukuihaele to Māmalahoa Highway

Discussion of Mud Lane status as emergency route or as public roadway. Concern raised with AC Member Mahealani about evacuation and emergency route after the Lahaina fire. Comment offered of the presence of several options for evacuation. Ainsley Loo said that a

second 'way out' is needed as currently only one exit present. Chair Keeney read several passages from the Hāmākua CDP pertaining to determination of evacuation and emergency route from Waipio. Also, policy statements from the CDP were read regarding advocating for making study of Kukuihaele to Mud Lane connector road. In addition, a policy to do a study of development of park on rim of Waipio at the old lookout was noted. Impact on Honokaa must be considered. Consideration of 'one way' public road was raised, referencing the letter from Chair Keeney to Public Works Director. Google Earth images were presented of the Mud Lane area. Michael McCool presented perspective from residents of Mud Lane. No emergency route for the Mud Lane residents. The access from Mud Lane residents used to be down to Old Airport Road until 3 years ago when Old Airport Road was blocked off at the Waipio end. It is clear to Mr. McCool that the residents of Mud Lane would object to making Mud Lane public access to Kukuihaele. It was stressed that this discussion should take place for months to come before any decision making. No motion was entertained. *This will again be on the agenda of next month's meeting.*

8. Scheduling of Future Hāmākua Community Development Plan Action Committee Meetings

Discussion held on date of next meeting and whether it should be Zoom capable. Next meeting is scheduled for December 13. It was decided that it would be an in-person meeting unless Chair Keeney is able to enable a satisfactory Zoom environment.

9. Future Agenda Item Recommendations

1. Annual Nomination and Election of AC Chairperson and Vice Chairperson
2. Mud Lane as an Emergency Route or Public Roadway

ADJOURNMENT:

AC Chair Keeney motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by AC Member Richard Bidleman. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:51 p.m.

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