

PUNA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE
COUNTY OF HAWAII

FINAL MINUTES
December 5, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kanoe Wilson called the Puna Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee (AC) meeting to order at 5:06 p.m. A quorum was established with seven members in attendance. This meeting was held in person at the Pahoa Community Center and via the Zoom online platform.

The YouTube video of this meeting can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBiK78i9dNs&t=6664s>

ROLL CALL

AC Members Present (in person): Martha Morishige, Franny Brewer, and Susie Osborne

AC Members Present (via Zoom): Chair Kanoe Wilson, Vice-Chair Leilani DeMello, Leila Kealoha, Jennifer Scheffel, and Gregory Henkel

County Staff: Maryam Palma and Kawelo Kalili

There were approximately 10 members of the public in attendance (8 in person and 2 via Zoom).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:10*]

Committee member Morishige motioned to approve the October 3, 2024, minutes as drafted. The motion was seconded by Committee member Henkel. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 3:43*]

Council member for District 5, Matt Kaneali'i-Kleinfelder, provided testimony on Business Items 2 and 3. Council member Matt emphasized the importance of collaboration between the Action Committee, Council, and the new administration to prioritize critical infrastructure projects, especially connectivity at both major and minor levels. He highlighted ongoing projects, including subdivision connections, and urged focus on existing funding and bond ordinances to advance these initiatives. Additionally, he mentioned long-term plans such as the community center replacement and civilian park master planning, offering his support to facilitate project progress under the new administration.

Hannah Hendricks provided testimony on Business Item 2.

BUSINESS

- 1. Presentation by Orchidland Neighbors** – Presentation and discussion regarding potential action for the proposed Orchidland Park. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 19:34*]

This item was called to order at 5:26 p.m.

Stephanie Bath provided testimony.

Committee member Morishige addressed the need for foundational infrastructure on Orchidland Drive, emphasizing the challenges of limited land availability. They proposed starting development with a water source, either by extending an existing water line from Highway 130 or constructing a well, to support envisioned facilities such as a certified kitchen, activity spaces, and a fire station. Committee member Morishige recommended the AC draft a letter to the Director of the Department of Public Works to initiate the water project, with plans to review and vote on the draft at the next meeting.

There was no presentation for this item. The AC agreed to table this item to a future meeting.

This item concluded at 5:32 p.m.

2. Presentation by Patti Pinto – Presentation and discussion regarding highway connectivity in upper Puna. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 26:18*]

This item was called to order at 5:23 p.m.

Patti provided an extensive overview of connectivity issues between subdivisions, emphasizing challenges such as emergency access, school transportation, and social connectivity. She recounted the history of efforts to address these issues, including the formation of a subcommittee in 2011, community engagement events, and collaboration with the Department of Public Works to identify and prioritize points of connectivity. Patti highlighted the need for staggered connections to avoid thoroughfare concerns while improving safety and emergency routes. She underscored the importance of resolving legal barriers, such as acquiring road titles from dissolved corporations, and advocated for continued community and governmental action to implement proposed solutions without additional delays or studies.

Committee member Brewer motioned to dedicate two members of the AC (committee member Brewer and committee member Morishige) to work with Patti on organizing meetings and preparing letters of support for the connectivity project. Vice-Chair DeMello seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Stephanie Bath provided testimony.

Nannette Savage provided testimony.

This item concluded at 6:15 p.m.

3. Discussion of AC Implementation Priorities – Continued discussion and potential action regarding AC Implementation Priorities noted in the Google Form, such as:

- Puna CDP 4.3.3 Roadway Network
- Puna CDP 2.2.3 Native Forests and Geological Features
- Puna CDP 3.3.3 Social Services and Housing

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:08*]

This item was called to order at 6:15 p.m.

Stephanie Bath provided testimony.

The AC discussed urban sprawl in Puna and its carrying capacity, as well as the impact of grading and grubbing on the environment, with an emphasis on preserving native forests and the sense of place. The AC also considered the balance between protecting land and respecting private property rights and raised concerns about contractors clearing land extensively. The AC suggested creating an educational video to raise public awareness about grubbing and grading, and also explored the potential for promoting agricultural services in Puna, including the option of offering tax incentives for new agricultural businesses. The AC proposed writing a letter to the mayor and the new DPW director to address concerns about buildout in Puna and suggest solutions. The importance of land preservation and promoting agriculture was reiterated. Lastly, the AC approved to focus on the three priorities listed in this business item.

This item concluded at 6:39 p.m.

4. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair – Discussion and potential action to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the Puna CDP Action Committee for 2025. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:30*]

This item was called to order at 6:39 p.m.

The AC discussed nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair positions. Chair Wilson nominated Vice-Chair DeMello for Chair, and committee member Osborne seconded the nomination. Chair DeMello accepted the position, and the motion passed with unanimously.

Committee member Kealoha then nominated committee member Henkel, with Committee member Osborne seconding. Vice-Chair Henkel accepted the nomination, and the motion passed with unanimously.

This item concluded at 6:45 p.m.

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:35*]

Stephanie Bath provided testimony.

1. Council member Ashley Kierkiewicz to present on Pahoia Special District and ADU Bill.

ANNOUNCEMENTS [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:44*]

Kori Hisashima provided testimony on Kea‘au Benioff Facility announcement.

Debbie Collins provided testimony on Kea‘au Benioff Facility announcement.

1. The Environmental Notice –

- Comments are due by December 9, 2024, regarding Hilo Benioff Medical Center Kea‘au Outpatient Center – Draft EA (AFNSI):
https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/The_Environmental_Notice/2024-11-08- TEN.pdf
- Comments are due by December 23, 2024 regarding Hawaiian Paradise Park New District Park – Draft EA (AFNSI):

https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/The_Environmental_Notice/2024-11-23- TEN.pdf

2. The Planning Department is currently seeking applicants for the Puna CDP Action Committee and is requesting assistance to get the word out to interested community members. The application can be found on the Mayor's office website at:
<https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-commissions-application>

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Wilson adjourned the meeting at 7:20 P.M. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:15*]

These minutes and all related documents are available in the Planning Department's Puna Community Development Plan Action Committee 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.