

HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE
COUNTY OF HAWAII

FINAL MINUTES
August 13, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Brad Kurokawa called the meeting of the Hāmākua Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 5:13 p.m. This meeting was held in person at the Kula‘imano Community Center and online via the Zoom platform.

The full YouTube video of this meeting can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJd8ggEJk0Y&t=6s>

ROLL CALL

Members Present (in person): Brad Kurokawa (Acting Chair), Mahealani Maikui (Vice Chair), Tawn Keeney, Robert Nishimoto, and Ben Dalauideo.

County Staff (in person): Maryam Palma, Jessica Lahip, and Janice Hata

There were approximately eight (8) members of the public in attendance – (4) in person and (4) via Zoom.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 3:39]

Vice Chair Mahealani Maikui made a motion to approve the October 9, 2024 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Keeney and passed unanimously

PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON AGENDA ITEMS [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 7:01]

There was no public testimony at this time.

BUSINESS:

1. Election of Committee Chairperson – Discussion and potential action to elect a Chair to serve the remainder of 2025.

This item was called to order at 5:20 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 7:50]

Vice Chair Maikui made a motion to nominate Acting Chair Kurokawa for Committee Chairperson for 2025. The motion passed unanimously. Acting Chair Kurokawa accepted the role of Chair for 2025.

This item was closed at 5:23 p.m.

2. Pāpa‘ikou and Pepe‘ekea and Bus Stop Shelters – Update from the Mass Transit Agency (MTA) on bus stop shelters along Hele-On routes, with focus on the Pāpa‘ikou and Pepe‘ekea areas. Discussion and potential committee decision-making.

This item was called to order at 5:23 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 10:24]

Mass Transit Program Manager Kasie Kailikea provided an update on planned bus stops and bus shelters in Pāpa‘ikou and Pepe‘ekea. A site visit is scheduled at the end of August with

representatives from the Mayor's Office, Department of Public Works, Department of Research and Development, and the State to assess potential locations.

The proposed Pepe'ekeo location would be situated further up the coast and is envisioned to include a bus pullout, crosswalk, and shelter. The site visit will confirm whether this location is viable. Kasie noted that Mass Transit Agency (MTA) engaged a consultant from SSFM International Inc. to review all flag stops and bus stop sites for ADA compliance, resulting in a recommendation to relocate the Pepe'ekeo stop further along the Hāmākua Coast.

Because Highway 19 is a State roadway, the State requires a bus pullout to avoid buses stopping directly on the highway. Kasie confirmed the project scope includes a shelter and acknowledged community concerns related to public safety, lighting, and weather protection. She will inform Administrator Zachary Bergum of the Committee's request for Committee Member Dalauideo to attend the site visit. MTA will provide an update at the next Action Committee meeting.

Public Testimony:

Darrel Argel provided testimony in favor of the bus shelters. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 11:59]
He also raised questions about incorporating safety features, such as offsite parking and adequate lighting, into the final design. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 19:50]

This item concluded at 5:34 p.m.

- 3. Update from Meeting with the Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) – Vice Chair Mahealani Maikui** will provide an update from her recent meeting with OHCD. Discussion and potential committee decision-making.

This item was called to order at 5:34 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 21:08]

Vice Chair Maikui reported on a previously proposed Honoka'a subdivision project of approximately 30 homes, noting that the project is on hold due to funding challenges.

Concerns were raised about a drainage ditch running through nearby properties and the potential for flooding during heavy rains. Updated road design plans have been developed to address these concerns and provided some clarification at the meeting.

Additionally, information was shared about housing resources, including a home improvement loan program available to the community; the Section 8 Housing waitlist, which is currently open; and a coordination center to help residents connect with financial and housing resources, similar to what Vibrant Hawai'i is doing with their Navigator services. Vice Chair Maikui expressed interest in ensuring these resources are shared widely within the community.

This item concluded at 5:38 p.m.

- 4. Proposed Amendment to the Planning Department's Public Notice Procedures – Committee Member Brad Kurokawa** will present a proposed amendment to the Planning Department's public notice procedures. Discussion and potential committee decision-making.

This item was called to order at 5:39 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 26:05*]

Planning Staff Maryam Palma provided background on ongoing discussions regarding the Planning Department's public notice procedures. The issue was previously raised at a chair meeting, and draft language for a potential amendment to the Hawai'i County Code has been prepared. Currently, the Planning Department publishes public notices for certain applications in two county newspapers on a semi-monthly basis. Notices typically include the property owner, Tax Map Key, land area, and street address. Similar procedures apply for subdivision applications. While the Planning Department posts these notices online as a courtesy, they are limited to the Department's website. The proposed amendment would require distribution through additional digital platforms or public notification systems, such as an email listserv where residents could sign up to receive notices directly.

Chair Kurokawa emphasized that the intent of this item is to increase transparency and public access to information related to land use activities. The Committee reviewed and discussed the draft amendment, noting that the language could be further refined. Members also raised the idea of providing district-specific notices; however, Maryam reported that, after consultation with the Planning Department's GIS and IT staff, the County's online permitting system (EPIC) does not currently support district-specific notifications.

Council Member Heather Kimball expressed support for advancing the draft amendment to the Legislative Research Branch (LRB) for review. She also recommended refining the phrase "other digital platforms or public notification systems" to specify practical and feasible methods of distribution.

Chair Kurokawa moved to submit the revised draft language, including the request for district-specific notification, to the Planning Department and Corporation Counsel, for review. Vice Chair Maikui seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

5. Waipi'o Steering Committee Update – Council Member Heather Kimball will share updates from the most recent Waipi'o Steering Committee meeting. Discussion and potential committee decision-making.

This item was called to order at 6:02p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 49:49*]

Council Member Heather Kimball reported on the recent reconvening of the Waipi'o Valley Steering Committee. The meeting provided an opportunity for members to reconnect and share visions for a valley management program. A key theme of the discussion included a strong interest in developing educational components for both residents and visitors, focusing on the cultural, historical, and environmental significance of Waipi'o Valley and encouraging respectful behavior. Additionally, there was support for shifting the visitor experience from extractive to reciprocal by creating a system where visitors can contribute during their time in the valley.

There was some discussion about pedestrian access on Waipi'o Road. Council Member Kimball plans to reintroduce legislation prohibiting pedestrian access during specific high-use time periods

(morning, midday, and afternoon) as well as between dusk and dawn, balancing safety with the need for access.

Work is underway on draft legislation to establish a wahi pana overlay designation – a first in Hawai'i and potentially in the nation. This designation would apply to culturally significant sites that require management plans. Protocols based on historical texts would guide respectful interaction with these areas, addressing issues such as resource management, carrying capacity, and visitor limits. A draft is approximately 75% complete and further review is planned with the Steering Committee before the end of the year.

Lastly, the Department of Information Technology is working with Salesforce on a new permitting system for park facilities. The Steering Committee hopes to leverage this system to manage valley access permits. Progress has been slow but given that road repairs are expected to take 1.5–2 years, there is time to integrate these improvements.

The Committee raised questions on the permitting system, public access, and enforcement measures. *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 58:47]*

PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON MATTERS NOT ON AGENDA

There was no public testimony at this time. *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:14:59]*

THIRD-PARTY REPORTS; GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:15:27]

Council Member Kimball provided updates on several initiatives:

Ad Hoc Committee on Action Committees – The Council has formed an ad hoc committee (Members: Heather Kimball, Ashley Kierkiewicz, Rebecca Villegas, and Jennifer Kagiwada) to review the Hawai'i County Code provisions on Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committees. The committee will evaluate how Action Committees function and identify ways to improve their role. Council Member Kimball acknowledged the limitations Action Committees currently face and emphasized the County's need for these groups to effectively bridge government and community priorities. Feedback from Action Committees will be sought.

General Plan Update – The Council has received the draft General Plan and begun initial hearings. The plan will be reviewed section by section throughout the year, with in-depth amendment discussions expected in early 2026. Council intends to proceed deliberately, as this is only the fourth General Plan update in County history.

Bill 212 (Permitting in Agricultural Areas) – Passed by Council. This measure allows structures 1,000 square feet or less on agricultural lands to be exempt from building permits and raises the home improvement threshold (non-structural, non-electrical, non-plumbing work) to \$25,000 before requiring a permit.

Bill 121 (Short-Term Vacation Rentals [STVR]) – The Council has broken up the original comprehensive bill into multiple measures:

- The first component, a registration requirement for all STVRs (hosted and unhosted), was passed in June and takes effect in December. Registration must be renewed annually and will

require proof of tax compliance (Transient Accommodations Tax [TAT] and General Excise [GE] licenses).

- Fines for noncompliance include a \$10,000 penalty and up to two times the nightly rental rate for violators, to strengthen enforcement.
- An economic study of the STVR market estimated that the County is losing approximately \$12 million annually in uncollected TAT revenues. The study is available on www.hawaiicountytar.com.
- Future bills will address:
 - Standards of operation (e.g., quiet hours, parking, signage).
 - Land use amendments to clarify existing regulations.
 - Designation of vacation rental nodes in areas with high concentrations of STVRs, where rentals would no longer be treated as nonconforming uses.

NEW BUSINESS [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:28:50]

Public Testimony:

Wanda Louis provided testimony, sharing information about the collaboration between Pepe'ekeo Community Development Corporation (PCDC) and Makahanaloa Fishing Association. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:29:34]

Committee Member Nishimoto recommended inviting Ryan Okano from the State Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) to the next Hāmākua CDP Action Committee meeting to share information about DAR's work and explore opportunities for collaboration with the County.

ANNOUNCEMENTS [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:46:59]

- Requesting Agenda Items for Action Committee Meetings – Members of the public may request that a topic be added to a future Community Development Plan Action Committee meeting agenda. To make a request, please email CDP@hawaiicounty.gov or contact the Action Committee Chair or Vice Chair. Planning Department staff will coordinate with the Chair and Vice Chair in advance of each regularly scheduled meeting to review and confirm the agenda.
- The Planning Department is seeking applicants for the Hāmākua CDP Action Committee and requests 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-and-commissions/boards-and-commissions-application>

ADJOURNMENT [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:53:03]

Chair Kurokawa adjourned this meeting at 7:08 p.m.

These minutes and all related documents are available in the Planning Department's [Hāmākua 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.