

**CULTURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
COUNTY OF HAWAI‘I**

**MINUTES
September 10, 2025**

MEETING LOCATION:

Hybrid in-person and interactive video conference through Zoom with live observation through YouTube. The in-person location was held at the Hilo Planning Department Conference Room, 101 Pauahi Street, Suite 3, Hilo, HI 96720.

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cW4CRgUJbC4>

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Matthew Clark (Chair), Desmon Haumea (Vice Chair), Roberta “Ku‘ulei” Keakealani, Kealohanuiopuna Kinney, and Janet Six.

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED: Darde Gamayo, Nicole Lui, and Aaron Spielman.

ALSO PRESENT: Jean Campbell, Deputy Corporation Counsel; Bethany Morrison, Planning Program Manager; Kim Tanaka, Planner IV; and Ashley DeVera, Board Secretary.

Chair Clark called the Cultural Resources Commission (CRC) meeting to order at 10:22 a.m. A quorum was established with five members in attendance. It was announced that pursuant to Act 220, Session Laws of Hawai‘i 2021, which amended the Sunshine Law to allow meetings to be remotely conducted online, effective January 1, 2022, the Cultural Resources Commission meetings will be held online, with an in-person location for the public to provide testimony. The meeting can be viewed live online, and a link to YouTube can be located on the County website, as well as links to reports and surveys reviewed at this hearing. Commissioners were reminded that only one person may speak at a time and were asked to raise their hands to be recognized before speaking.

Commissioners were asked to introduce themselves and in accordance with the Sunshine Law, identify any member(s) present within the household. All members reported being alone in their location, except Vice Chair Haumea, who was at the airport.

Staff introductions were made.

There were no addendums or supplemental agenda items.

STATEMENT(S) FROM THE PUBLIC

At 10:24 a.m., Chair Clark opened the floor to receive public testimony. Procedures for testimony were provided. There is a three-minute time limit on each agenda item; statements must relate to items on the agenda.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 4:12*] No testifiers were present on Zoom or in person.

Public testimony closed at 10:24 a.m.

BUSINESS OF THE COMMISSION

1. Kona Open Space Network Draft Plan

Review and discussion of the proposed Kona Open Space Network Draft Plan as it relates to known or probable cultural or historical sites within the area.

Location: North Kona, Hawai‘i Island

TMK: Various

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 4:18*] This agenda item was called to order at 10:25 a.m. One Long Range Planner, Shannon Arquitola, was in attendance. There were no members of the public present, and no public testimony was provided.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 4:36*] Ms. Arquitola provided a presentation on the Kona Open Space Network (KOSN) project. She explained that the goal of the project was to connect open spaces in the Kona District urban area harmoniously with the built environment to support the health and well-being of the community, while preserving Kona’s sensitive natural and cultural resources.

The network aimed to enhance opportunities for the community to access Kona’s environmental resources for recreation, education, subsistence, and gathering. An open space network was described as a system of interconnected open spaces. Open space was defined as land not used for buildings or structures, but characterized by scenic beauty, openness, and natural conditions. Within the context of the project, these were referred to as “sites” or “open space sites.”

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 6:42*] An open space hub was defined as a core gathering place within the larger network, as illustrated on the project map. Ms. Arquitola explained that the benefits of open space included the conservation of natural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources; enhanced recreational opportunities; protection of water, air, plants, and wildlife; delineation of natural hazard areas; and overall improvement to the social, environmental, and economic well-being of the community.

She noted that the project was born in the Kona Community Development Plan (CDP), specifically under Objective ENV-2 and Policy ENV-2.1 on page 4-66.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 7:54*] Ms. Arquitola provided a timeline of the KOSN project.

She explained that between 2005 and 2008, the Kona CDP was developed and adopted, with KOSN identified as a key cornerstone of the plan. Between 2014 and 2017, the Kona CDP Action Committee requested support from the Planning Department and formed a subcommittee. The subcommittee submitted a formal report to the Action Committee outlining the KOSN vision and goals and recommended hiring a consultant to support the effort.

In 2018 and 2019, the County approved Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding for KOSN, and in 2023, Jacobs Engineering was awarded the contract to support development of the plan. In August 2023, a project kickoff event was held, with approximately 100 community members in attendance. Following the kickoff, a series of workshops and meetings were held with the planning team, stakeholders, and subcommittee members to help shape the plan.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 9:16*] In June 2025, a community walkthrough event was hosted to share the draft plan and gather additional input from community members. Ms. Arquitola reported that the team is currently connecting with key organizations, continuing to gather feedback, and reviewing it with the planning team and subcommittee members.

Moving forward, the project team will begin identifying potential projects and partnerships as part of the implementation plan. Before the end of the year, a community celebration is planned to present the final report and implementation plan.

Ms. Arquitola also provided a summary list of the proposed sites and noted that they remain open to community input and guidance on both the plan and individual sites. She concluded by stating that the next slides would walk through each section of the project area to allow for open discussion.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –10:45*] Ms. Arquitola shared Map #1 and reviewed the legend with the group. She explained that the yellow circles represented historical and cultural sites. The map also included certain trails, existing vehicular paths, and proposed paths—some of which were designated as trails, with varying levels of accessibility. Some trails were fully accessible, while others were only partially accessible. Dotted lines indicated planned or proposed projects.

She noted that the open space hubs were represented by large turquoise circles, which signified centralized gathering locations that connect to multiple open space sites.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –12:28*] Commissioner Keakealani commented on the list of sites, specifically Site #20, Hapaiali'i Heiau. She noted that the heiau is located on lands owned by Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate and emphasized that partnerships must be established with individual landowners, as not all of the identified sites are situated on state or federal lands. Commissioner Keakealani inquired about the ownership of the lands on which these sites are located and questioned the process used to select the specific sites included in the plan.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –13:57*] Ms. Arquitola responded that the selection of sites was based on input gathered through discussions with community members, subcommittee members,

and stakeholders who identified locations they felt should be uplifted through the plan. She noted that the team had been in communication with various parties, had distributed informational materials, and continued to reach out to additional organizations. She emphasized that the ability to implement projects in certain areas would depend on whether landowners were willing to collaborate and allow those spaces to be included as part of the network.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –15:21*] Commissioner Kinney raised a question regarding the proposed trails and access roads. He expressed interest in seeing the distribution of archaeological sites within the identified hubs. He noted that understanding where these access routes cross and how they interact with archaeological sites would be useful and helpful for planning and preservation efforts.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –17:52*] Ms. Arquitola asked the Commissioners if there were any additional sites they felt should be included in the plan. She stated that the project team was open to receiving suggestions for other sites but acknowledged that there is a level of sensitivity involved. She emphasized the importance of finding a balance between sharing and recognizing these sites for preservation purposes, while also being mindful not to draw excessive attention that could lead to disruption or harm.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –18:32*] Chair Clark inquired whether the project would comply with Chapter 343, including the potential need for an Environmental Assessment (EA), and also whether Chapter 6E compliance would be required for conducting archaeological surveys.

Commissioner Six added that she had reviewed the Hawai‘i Cultural Resource Information System (HICRIS) and found that there are numerous recorded sites and burials within the project area. She noted that she has access to Archaeological Inventory Surveys (AIS) that have been completed for these parcels. She explained that this is likely a key reason why many of these areas have been identified as open spaces—due to the prevalence of burials, sacred sites, and the cultural interconnectivity of these locations. She emphasized the importance of viewing the area as a cultural landscape and of understanding where access is appropriate to avoid harm to sensitive sites.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –20:07*] Vice Chair Haumea asked whether the Burial Council had been involved in the development of the plan. He expressed concern about the lack of control over tourism and the potential for cultural sites to be disrespected or harmed. He emphasized the need to find a pathway forward to protect these areas, noting that many of the identified sites are currently unprotected.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP –21:30*] Commissioner Kinney observed that some of the open space hubs appeared to extend into the ocean and asked whether the plan intended to preserve the cultural landscape in marine areas as well, such as through the protection of traditional aquacultural sites or the prevention of developments that may obstruct view planes.

Ms. Arquitola responded that the current plan does not include ocean areas but acknowledged it as a thoughtful suggestion and something to consider in future planning efforts.

Chair Clark noted that certain Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Preservation Commission (PONC) properties along Ali'i Drive were not included on the list of sites. He pointed out that these are County-owned lands already designated as open space—such as Pua Pua'aiki along the coast—and suggested that they could be added to the plan.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 23:42*] Ms. Arquitola presented Map #2, which highlighted five additional open space sites. Chair Clark asked what types of activities were planned for these sites, and whether a network of hiking trails or other recreational amenities would be developed.

Ms. Arquitola responded that those details would be part of the implementation phase. At this stage, the focus was on identifying and confirming the open space sites in coordination with community groups and stakeholders. She noted that while not all areas could be improved due to limited resources, the team aimed to prioritize hubs that would provide the greatest benefit to the community.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 25:16*] She added that a significant part of the discussion so far had centered on the creation of pedestrian walking paths and safe bike lanes, as many of the existing roads used by cyclists and pedestrians are currently unsafe. Other potential improvements included low-cost efforts such as educational signage to share the historical and cultural significance of the sites. Ms. Arquitola mentioned that during site visits, it was evident that signage was lacking. She expressed hope that by educating the public about the importance of these places, it would lead to greater respect and stewardship.

She further stated that specific implementation projects were still being determined and would involve ongoing discussions and administrative processes. The team was also engaging with other County agencies to explore opportunities to align with existing projects or secure support for implementation.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 26:47*] Chair Clark asked whether, as part of the site identification process, the County intended to apply additional protections—such as restrictions on development or added layers of review—to help preserve these open spaces and maintain important view planes, including views of the ocean and mountains. Ms. Arquitola added that once the plan is completed, the intention is to bring it to the County Council for adoption, which would help guide future development to acknowledge and respect these designated open spaces.

Ms. Bethany Morrison, Planning Program Manager, added that part of the implementation process would involve assessing what level of support the County could provide for maintaining and preserving the open spaces. She stated that zoning considerations may also be reviewed, along with potential improvements such as interpretive signage and trail construction.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 28:39*] Ms. Arquitola presented Map #3, which included four sites. Commissioner Keakealani questioned the location of Site #64 Parcel Natural Spring, asking whether it was situated in the ocean. Ms. Arquitola responded that the site was located

near Hulihe'e Palace and the ABC Store, situated on a private parcel. She noted that she would need to have a conversation with the landowner regarding the site.

Commissioner Keakealani expressed concern about the number and range of sites that had been identified. She noted that specific cultural practices are often tied to individual sites and questioned whether designation of these sites would provide any additional benefit to the ongoing work already taking place.

She referenced Ahu'ena Heiau, a site that receives minimal visitation but carries significant kuleana (responsibility) related to access. She inquired whether protections could be established to preserve and conserve such areas, particularly with respect to pedestrian traffic, bicycles, and trails.

Commissioner Keakealani also raised concerns about signage, stating that it may be disregarded and that the effectiveness of such signs would depend on the awareness and respect of those reading them.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 34:11*] Chair Clark recommended that, as part of the implementation process, funding sources be identified to partner with stewardship groups and appropriate individuals or organizations to care for those areas.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 35:05*] Commissioner Six, in reference to signage and interpretation, recommended the use of storyboards or story maps, accompanied by a QR code to provide as much information as possible. She noted the ongoing concern that visitors may either read the signage or choose to ignore it, potentially leading to the misuse or desecration of cultural or sacred spaces.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 35:53*] Vice Chair Haumea expressed concern regarding the effectiveness of signage, noting that based on observations through social media and local news, many individuals—particularly younger people—tend to disregard signs, with some even desecrating the areas. He emphasized that while some local residents do respect signage, there is currently no enforcement in place, leaving the meaning and intent of signs open to interpretation.

He stated that the narrative surrounding signage and open spaces needs to be reworded and revisited. Additionally, he voiced concern over ongoing development, describing it as a monumental challenge. He stressed the importance of informing the community before any funding is allocated or approved.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 39:03*] Commissioner Six clarified that when signage had previously been installed, it was stolen within a week. She noted that while story maps can provide access to a large amount of information, she agreed that signage is not always effective.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 39:50*] Commissioner Kinney shared that he had looked up the definitions of "hub" and "link." He emphasized that the "link" should represent the kuleana—

the responsibility carried by the people stewarding these spaces. He stated that links are not merely geographic features, but are embodied by the people connected to and caring for these places.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 41:28*] Ms. Arquitola presented Map #4, which included two sites. Chair Clark observed that there were additional numbered sites on the map and inquired about their significance. Ms. Arquitola explained that those numbers represented other sites, but she had selected specific ones to guide the current discussion. She invited feedback from the group regarding those sites.

Chair Clark noted that Site #72 appeared to be a PONC parcel. Ms. Arquitola confirmed that there were at least one or two PONC parcels included and stated that the subcommittee was hoping to have PONC consider purchasing one of the parcels.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 42:58*] Commissioner Keakealani reiterated her concerns, emphasizing that the utmost reverence is required for all of the identified sites. She stressed that many of these locations are associated with specific cultural practices and are not intended for recreational use. Some sites involve deep ceremonial protocols—for example, restrictions on the use of certain colors or specific behaviors that are either required or prohibited.

She noted that one of the sites identified in the plan includes a cave, and reminded the group that, by law, entry into the cave is prohibited. Additionally, there are areas where bicycles are not permitted. Commissioner Keakealani highlighted the importance of acknowledging the work of individuals who, over decades, have dedicated their lives to mālama (care for) these spaces. She urged the group to be mindful of both past and ongoing efforts to protect and steward these areas.

She concluded by questioning whether there is an inherent conflict between recreational use and the preservation of culturally significant sites.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 47:12*] Vice Chair Haumea expressed concern regarding the use of the word "heiau," noting that to their ancestors, a heiau is equivalent to a church. He emphasized that one should not be able to simply walk through the area. He stated that failing to honor this is hurtful to their kūpuna (ancestors) and mākua (elders) and questioned what message would be taught to future generations if this is not properly addressed. He stressed the significance, spirituality, and mana (power) of heiau and stated that he did not want these sites to be treated as open spaces. He underscored the need to protect these sites for future generations and expressed that he could not support the current approach.

Ms. Arquitola responded that she would have the team review and consider removing the heiau sites from the plan.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 49:25*] Chair Clark mentioned that Keolonāhihi State Historical Park is a state park and that funding was recently received to initiate a study aimed at its protection. He noted that access would likely fall under the responsibility of the state parks

and suggested that this could potentially provide an additional layer of protection for the site.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 50:03*] Ms. Arquitola presented Map #5, which included eight sites. Commissioner Kinney raised a question regarding the Kuamo‘o burial area, noting that a proposed path appeared to go through the site. He asked whether that proposal had come from the ‘ohana or those who steward the space.

Chair Clark responded that there is a government road that runs through the area and noted that Kamehameha Schools is currently working on updating the National Register nomination for the site. He added that an existing path already runs along the coastline in that area.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 53:36*] Commissioner Six expressed concern about selecting individual sites without providing context to the surrounding sites that would have historically connected them. She noted that there are many additional sites that form part of a broader cultural landscape, but only certain sites are being highlighted. She recommended that when featuring individual sites, it is important to also consider the larger context. She suggested finding a way to show how all of the sites are interconnected, including those that may not be officially recognized as significant but would have played a role in the overall cultural and historical framework of the area.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 54:39*] Commissioner Keakealani referred to the last slide, noting that Pua Pua‘a along the coast was circled. She explained that a Permitted Interaction Group (PIG) had previously visited Kukui ‘Ula Heiau, which is directly associated with and located within the same ahupua‘a. She emphasized that these sites should not be viewed in isolation, as standalone locations, but rather as part of a broader network of interconnected places. She highlighted the importance of recognizing the association between sites and understanding them as part of a larger cultural tapestry woven into the landscape.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 56:58*] Vice Chair Haumea added that many of these sites have previously come before the Burial Council from lineal descendants. He noted that wherever there is a spring inland that flows into the kai (ocean), that is traditionally where fishponds would be established.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 59:03*] Ms. Arquitola shared a list of subcommittee members who have been involved in working on this project for approximately twenty years.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 59:19*] Chair Clark recommended that the CRC be kept informed of ongoing developments related to the project. He also emphasized the importance of considering Vice Chair Haumea’s comments regarding the naming of sites, stating that these are not simply open spaces for general use, but rather places intended for cultural and traditional practices.

Ms. Arquitola responded by suggesting that the CRC submit a letter outlining their recommendations.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 1:01:18*] Vice Chair Haumea added that while signage is important, the key issue is enforcement. As part of the recommendations, he emphasized the need to identify who would be responsible for enforcing the rules and regulations. He noted that on federal land, certain conduct could be considered both a federal and state offense. He suggested that enforcement mechanisms should be clearly outlined in the recommendations. Additionally, he inquired about possible requirements such as visitor check-ins during visiting hours, which would provide an added level of security and educational opportunity.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 1:03:19*] Vice Chair Haumea motioned to draft a letter to acknowledge the CRC's position on the project. Ms. Campbell explained two procedural options: first, any commissioner could work with staff to draft the letter, which would then be brought back to the full commission for approval before being submitted to the KOSN team; alternatively, the commission could authorize a single commissioner to collaborate with staff to summarize the discussion from the meeting, with the Chair signing and providing the letter to the KOSN team without returning to the full commission for approval.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 1:05:08*] Vice Chair Haumea revised his motion to draft a letter incorporating recommendations from the commissioners, which would be brought back to the CRC for review prior to submission to the KOSN team. Chair Clark agreed to work with CRC staff to prepare the letter. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kinney. No further discussion occurred. The motion was approved with a unanimous aye voice vote.

This matter concluded at 11:27 a.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. Approval of minutes for the meeting held on August 13, 2025.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 1:06:58*] Commissioner Six motioned to approve the minutes as circulated; seconded by Commissioner Keakealani. No discussion occurred. The minutes were approved without opposition with a unanimous aye voice vote.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP – 1:07:33*] Chair Clark inquired about the status of the PIG that was supposed to do a site visit to Kawaihae and requested any updates. Ms. Morrison responded that the first PIG meeting was scheduled for September 24th at 11:00 a.m., to be held in a hybrid format with both in-person and Zoom attendance options. She explained that the initial meeting's purpose was to organize the PIG and outline the group's plan moving forward. Commissioner Six indicated that she would be unavailable for the meeting but was agreeable to the group proceeding without her.

2. Next meeting tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, October 8, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Haumea and seconded by Commissioner Six. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. with a unanimous aye vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley DeVera, Board Secretary

A T T E S T :

Matthew Clark, Chairman
Cultural Resources Commission