

KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE
COUNTY OF HAWAII

FINAL MINUTES
September 9, 2025

Call to Order

Chair Charles Young called the meeting of the Kona Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 12:02 p.m. This meeting was held in person at the West Hawai'i Civic Center, B2 Conference Room and online via the Zoom platform.

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

<https://youtu.be/iJUz71KHleA?si=9VHYLQa2dkYMHMy0>

Roll Call

Members Present (in person): Nancy Pisicchio (Vice Chair), John Pelletier, Raymond (RJ) Kirchner, and Charla Thompson

Members Present (via Zoom): Charles Young (Chair) and David Huerta (left meeting at 12:22 p.m.)

Members Absent: Roselyn Molina and Heather Korotie

Planning Department Staff Present (in person): Jessica Lahip and Janice Hata

Planning Department Staff Present (via Zoom): Maryam Palma (arrived at 12:14 p.m. and left meeting at 1:43 p.m.)

Other County Officials: Jean Campbell, Deputy Corporation Counsel

There were approximately 3 members of the public in attendance (1 in person and 2 via Zoom).

Note: Approval of the draft minutes from the July 8, 2025 and September 9, 2025 meetings will be considered at the next scheduled meeting on October 14, 2025 (subject to quorum).

Brief Discussion on Meeting Minutes [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 4:21]

The Committee noted that quorum was not met at the previous meeting; therefore, it did not constitute an official meeting and minutes are not required. Legal counsel clarified that under the revised Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), Chapter 92, when quorum is not met, any reports received or public testimony heard should be summarized and shared at the next meeting with quorum. While the Committee may choose to prepare minutes, it is not required.

Committee members were invited to share reports or testimony from the prior meeting where quorum was not met. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 6:13]

Public Testimony on Agenda Items [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 10:17]

No public testimony at this time.

Business

1. Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater Adaptive Management Plan – Update from Action Committee Chair Charles Young, followed by a discussion on potential Committee actions.

This item was called to order at 12:15 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 24:52*]

Chair Young shared recent updates and ongoing work related to the Keauhou Aquifer System Adaptive Management Plan (AMP). The Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) has established several expert committees to support the development of the AMP. The areas of expertise include hydrology, wastewater and pollution, Hawaiian perspectives, and ecological indicators. The hydrology committee is examining the structure and function of the aquifer to better understand potential impacts of groundwater withdrawal. The wastewater/pollution committee is evaluating the relationship between groundwater quality and shoreline water quality. The indicators committee is exploring species-based metrics, including 'ōpae'ula as an indicator of aquifer health. Lastly, the committee focusing on Hawaiian perspectives will be important for integrating Native Hawaiian knowledge and rights into the AMP process. The AMP is expected to deliver recommendations to CWRM by November 2025.

Committee Member Pisicchio summarized key points from the August CWRM meeting, noting extensive discussion on sustainable yield and the need to align the AMP with the County Water Use and Development Plan. It was noted that CWRM Commissioners expressed concern that the County Department of Water Supply has not been sufficiently involved in the AMP process. CWRM staff are committed to improving coordination between the County and the State. Commissioners also discussed whether the Keauhou Aquifer System should be designated as a Water Management Area. While no decision was made, several commissioners supported reexamining this designation concurrently with the AMP process. This topic is expected to be on CWRM's September 2025 agenda for further discussion. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 28:45*]

Committee Member Pelletier provided an update on County Council Resolution 137-25, introduced by Council Member Holeka Inaba, which requested that the Department of Water Supply develop an online system to display countywide water availability. The Department presented its new Water Availability Map, accessible via the County's website, which shows water commitments, active developer agreements, and general water availability by area. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 36:04*]

Chuck Flaherty provided testimony expressing concerns regarding the AMP process. He questioned whether water quality and benthic survey reports required under SMA permits would be reviewed and emphasized the importance of integrating cultural impact assessments and traditional ecological knowledge into the plan. Mr. Flaherty also noted that water recycling should be addressed, citing the administrative order of consent between the County and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) related to wastewater management at Kealakehe. He further expressed strong support for submitting a new petition to designate the Keauhou Aquifer as a Water Management Area. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 38:32*]

Committee members acknowledged the testimony and encouraged public participation directly at CWRM meetings, where decisions and technical discussions on the AMP and aquifer designation take place.

Janice Palma-Glennie provided testimony expressing appreciation for the discussion on water resource management and emphasizing the importance of community outreach on the issue. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 48:05*]

Josephine Keli'ipio provided testimony raising concerns about water usage associated with electric vehicle (EV) fires, noting that large volumes of water are required to contain such incidents. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 49:41]

Committee Member Pisicchio mentioned that during the August CWRM meeting, it was noted that R-1 water recycling would not be included in the first-generation AMP.

This item was closed at 12:55 p.m.

2. Tree City USA – Update on Tree City, followed by a discussion on potential Committee actions.

This item was called to order at 12:55 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 53:16]

Committee Member Thompson provided an update on efforts to obtain a Tree City designation. She noted that achieving this designation requires reinstatement of the Arborist Advisory Committee (AAC) by the Mayor, which is mandated under County Code, Section 14, Article 10. A functioning AAC is needed to meet one of the Tree City standards. Committee Member Thompson and Planning Department staff met with Council Chair Inaba and Council Member Rebecca Villegas to raise awareness of the Tree City Requirements and to encourage support for budget allocations dedicated to tree care, fulfilling another standard. Planning Staff Maryam Palma shared highlights from her discussion with Le'a from Kaulunani, which is the State's Urban and Community Forestry Program. The application is due at the end of 2025 and there are four standards that must be met to obtain the Tree City designation:

1. Arborist Advisory Committee – must be active with meetings.
2. Mayor's Arbor Day Proclamation – can be substituted with a County Council certificate if necessary.
3. Dedicated tree care expenditures – minimum \$2 per capita annually, which is being verified through the Parks budget.
4. Arbor Day observance – tree planting ceremony or similar event, coordinated with the County's Office of Sustainability, Climate, Equity, and Resilience (OSCER).

Maryam reported that all Tree City standards are in progress except for the Arborist Advisory Committee (AAC), which requires action by the Mayor. The Committee discussed a draft letter to the Mayor requesting reinstatement of the AAC. Legal considerations under the Sunshine Law were noted, as approval of the letter was not on the agenda. The draft letter was shared on-screen, and members discussed a brief recess to review the document.

The Committee agreed to seek guidance from Deputy Corporation Counsel regarding the vote. Committee Member Pelletier moved to approve the draft letter pending legal approval, and Committee Member Pisicchio seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

This item was closed at 1:17 p.m.

Public Testimony on Matters Not on the Agenda [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:14:27]

Chuck Flaherty provided testimony regarding the proposed five-lot development on Pu'u Ohau. He outlined the history of the site, noting that in 1999 the Hawai'i Island Burial Council designated it as a Royal Mausoleum, and a 2003 settlement agreement required its relocation to the State Conservation District. Mr. Flaherty requested that this item be added to a future agenda for discussion of the County's

116 obligations, given its cultural significance and associated constitutional rights. [SEE YOUTUBE
117 *TIMESTAMP 1:14:58*]

118 **Third-Party Reports; Government Officials** [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 1:18:35*]

119 None.

120 **New Business** [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 1:19:11*]

121 Committee Member Kirchner referenced the Hawai'i County Code, Section 16-3, which requires a
122 comprehensive review of the community development plans within 10 years of adoption. He moved that
123 the Kona CDP Action Committee immediately begin a comprehensive review of the CDP to identify
124 necessary amendments, and recommended the following proposed scope of review:

- 125 1. A committee should be established to begin the process of a comprehensive 5-, 10- and 15-
126 year study of infrastructure needs, in consultation with the Department of Water Supply, the
127 Department of Environmental Management and County Highways on how to generate plans
128 to accommodate the predictable population increases to come. It should also include
129 recommendations to the County Council to fund these studies.
- 130 2. The committee should invite heads of the Department of Water Supply, Environmental
131 Management and Highways to present their views to our committee.
- 132 3. A committee should be formed to make recommendations on where the current Community
133 Development Plan has failed and how to amend it to make it more useful. This committee
134 should specifically consider where Concurrency has become unworkable and what
135 alternatives there are to these portions of the plan.
- 136 4. A committee should be formed to make recommendations on how to generate more long-
137 term market rental projects in our community. There is a lack of RM zoned land that can
138 reasonably be developed. Incentives should be created to encourage this type of
139 development.
- 140 5. The result should be a comprehensive, revised Community Development Plan.

141 Committee Member Kirchner stated that one of the Committee's responsibilities is to undertake a
142 comprehensive review of the Community Development Plan. He expressed concern that limited housing
143 supply is driving young and working residents further away from the community, underscoring the need
144 to address housing affordability.

145 Committee Member Kirchner moved to include his proposed business item on the next meeting agenda.
146 Committee Member Pisicchio seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously. [SEE YOUTUBE
147 *TIMESTAMP 1:25:59*]

148 A question was raised regarding whether the 2008 Kona CDP is invalid due to not being updated within
149 the 10-year period specified in Chapter 16. Deputy Corporation Counsel Campbell clarified that while
150 Chapter 16 states the CDP "shall" be updated every 10 years, there is no legal consequence for not
151 doing so. The plan remains valid and in effect until formally updated, similar to the General Plan.
152 Committee Member Kirchner asked whether there are consequences to not meeting the "shall"
153 requirement. Deputy Corporation Counsel explained that the update requirement is a directive rather
154 than an enforceable mandate, as the law does not specify penalties or invalidation.

155 Janice Palma-Glennie stated that the distinction between "shall" and "should" is a valid and important
156 question that has surfaced repeatedly in the context of the CDPs. She expressed concern over remarks
157 suggesting that the existing CDP could be considered null or invalid, emphasizing that such an

158 implication disregards the significant public investment, time, and effort that went into creating the plan.
159 Before the CDP, she noted, there was no guiding plan for the community, and thousands of residents
160 participated over many years to ensure its development. Ms. Palma-Glennie underscored the continued
161 relevance of the CDP's principles, including concurrency, which she described as both valid and
162 achievable with administrative will and adequate resources. She encouraged newer committee
163 members to review the plan's history and recognize the challenges faced by previous administrations
164 that, at times, hindered the Action Committee's progress. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:29:32]

165 Chair Young acknowledged that the question regarding the use of "shall" in reference to updating the
166 CDP had been clarified and that the plan remains valid under current law. He suggested that while the
167 legal issue was settled, other points raised during discussion warranted further consideration. Chair
168 Young expressed that the topic was complex and would benefit from additional time for review and
169 reflection before any decisions were made.

170 He noted concerns about the financial and logistical feasibility of undertaking a new CDP update, given
171 the extensive public involvement required in the previous process. Chair Young recommended placing
172 the item on the next meeting agenda for continued discussion and determining what, if any, action the
173 Committee may take. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:32:43]

174 Committee Member Pelletier reported on two potential topics for future discussion, depending on
175 County Council action. He noted that Council's Finance Committee recently introduced a bill to allocate
176 \$31 million in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget for upgrades to Kealahou Wastewater
177 Treatment Plant. The project would help address compliance issues and make R-1 water available. A
178 feasibility study for offsite water delivery is also being conducted.

179 Committee Member Pelletier also recommended adding Bill 63 – which would allow housing within
180 Industrial-Commercial Mixed (MCX) zoned districts (Industrial-Commercial Mixed) – to the next meeting
181 agenda for discussion. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:37:23]

182 Committee members agreed to move their next meeting to Tuesday, October 14, 2025.

183 **Announcements** [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:45:55]

- 184 • The Planning Department is seeking applicants for the Kona CDP Action Committee and
185 requests assistance to get the word out to interested community members. The application can
186 be found on the Mayor's office website at: [https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-](https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions/boards-and-commissions-application)
187 [commissions/boards-and-commissions-application](https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions/boards-and-commissions-application)
- 188 • Committee Member Pelletier announced that the Kona Airport is undergoing a master plan
189 update. A public community meeting will be held at the West Hawai'i Civic Center on Thursday,
190 September 25, at 6:00 p.m. The airport staff emphasized that the updated plan aims to be
191 consistent with the Kona CDP.

192 **Adjournment** [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:49:29]

193 Chair Young adjourned this meeting at 1:52 p.m.

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