

Summary of Hawaii County Committee and Commission Workshop

Workshop Overview

Aloha Kakou KDCP-AC members and staff,

On Saturday, October 28th, I attended a workshop at the invitation of the mayor's office. The event was facilitated by Mayor Kimo Alameda, Micah Alameda (Executive Assistant, Boards and Commissions), and Bill Brilhante (Managing Director). The workshop brought together Chairs and Vice Chairs from various Hawaii County committees and commissions, including representatives from the Liquor Commission, Kau' and South Kohala Action Committees, Game Commission, Merit and Appeals Board, Leeward and Windward Planning Commissions, Environmental Management, Veterans Advisory Board, and Waimea Community Association. There were also attendees whom I did not have the opportunity to meet, as well as several invitees who were not present. Notably, Puna and Hamakua ACs were not represented, and it was also noted that the North Kohala AC has disbanded.

Opening Remarks and Meeting Facilitation

The workshop began with brief presentations from Mayor Alameda and the Managing Director, emphasizing the significance of county Boards and Commissions. As appointees, we were reminded that we serve as representatives for the county during meetings and hearings we chair. The discussion highlighted best practices for facilitating meetings, with advice drawn from individual experiences. Key points included the use of Robert's Rules of Order, setting time limits on testimony, and strategies for de-escalating potential conflicts. While these practices are important, it was acknowledged that meetings differ in their subject matter, attendees, purpose, and tone.

As committee or commission members, we were encouraged to focus on drawing out information from those who wish to testify, rather than engaging in debates about agreement or correctness. The Mayor and Managing Director stressed that maintaining decorum during meetings is essential and leads to positive outcomes.

The remainder of the session was facilitated by Micah Alameda who conceded that the individual commissions and committees vary widely and that a one size fits all will likely not work and that his goal was to hear from the various Boards and Commissions and look for ways on how the administration can improve its support.

Mr. Alameda posed three questions for open discussion.

1. Is there a format that you prefer for your meetings? In person, zoom or hybrid.

Ideally, the In Person format was preferred. However, members felt that hybrid would work the best toward encouraging community participation and with issues in achieving quorum. The issue of the differences between quasi legal and advisory Boards and/or Commissions needed clarification.

Zoom and hybrid may lead to distractions, poor communication, blackouts and hacking as was recently reported by the Game Board.

Quorum was the biggest concern and achieving quorum the most disruptive when scheduling meetings.

2. Your Thoughts on Sunshine Law.

Members felt that more training was needed for all Boards and Commissions. In principle the Sunshine Law supports the need for transparency but can also limit interactions. Members felt that much more could be accomplished if members were allowed to discuss issues without having to worry about who else is present.

Many members serve in advisory positions and felt that the Sunshine Law may be trying to address an issue that does not exist.

3. How can the county administration better serve the Boards and Commissions?

Allow, encourage, facilitate, schedule regular meetings of all the Boards and Commissions.

Fill vacancies. Mr. Alameda mentioned that the present administration has appointed 47 new members to B & 's since taking office.

Provide stable funding to increase staff and support other board activities (travel costs, outreach).

Mr. Alameda suggested that the County Council has or will be taking up as a budget issue the hiring of two additional staff to support the B&C's and that each B&C can request funding.

I suggest that the Kona CDP Action Committee take up these issues at our next meeting.