

KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE
COUNTY OF HAWAII

FINAL MINUTES
November 12, 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/6HAK5bbt5Sc?si=DxeE_soUNeA-rpgO

Roll Call

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

Members Present (via Zoom): David Huerta

Members Absent: Roselyn Molina and Heather Korotie

Planning Department Staff Present (in person): Maryam Palma and Kawelo Kalili

Planning Department Staff Present (via Zoom): Janice Hata

There were approximately six members of the public in attendance (three in person and three via Zoom).

Approval of Minutes

Chair Young requested approval of the October 14, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Vice Chair Pisicchio moved to approve the minutes, and Committee Member Pelletier seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the October 14 meeting minutes. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 4:02]

Public Testimony on Agenda Items

Janice Palma Glennie provided testimony addressing several items:

- She requested that future minutes include more detailed summaries of public testimony to give context for readers who may not watch the video.
- She reiterated her concern that allowing dwellings in MCX districts is premature due to inadequate infrastructure and safety concerns, especially for families with children, and that such changes may undermine the motivation to advance Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) concepts embraced in the Kona CDP.
- She reported that she resubmitted her application to serve on the Kona CDP AC but had not received any acknowledgment and urged the administration to respond promptly and respectfully to volunteers so as not to discourage civic participation. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 5:25]

Business

1. Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) – Chair Young will provide an update on recent efforts related to the Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater AMP, followed by Committee discussion and potential action.

This item was called to order at 12:12 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 10:41]

No members of the public provided testimony at this time.

Chair Young reported that the Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater AMP was created by the State Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) in response to longstanding community

advocacy for designation of the Keauhou aquifer as a water management area. The AMP is intended to address water management concerns short of formal designation, which ultimately will be a CWRM decision rather than a County one.

From a County and CDP perspective, Chair Young emphasized the AC's interest in how permitted well water is allocated once CWRM approves withdrawals, given competing demands and community priorities for water use in Kona.

The AMP called for several expert panels and summaries of their work had been shared with the AC previously. The panels have been meeting separately and are scheduled to meet jointly in early December to refine recommendations. After the panels have met together, there will be further opportunities for public input, at which time Chair Young anticipates the AC may wish to take a position or submit comments.

The discussion focused on:

- The need for stronger County-level planning tools, including an up-to-date Water Use and Development Plan, to guide decisions and inform CWRM's permitting rather than handling wells one-by-one.
- Conservation and reuse measures the County could support (e.g., integrating water-efficiency standards into community plans)
- Ongoing efforts to upgrade the Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant to R-1 standards, including recent amendments to the Capital Improvement Program and a modular approach to improvements, with initial upgrades designed to meet settlement requirements and support planned park development.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 12:31 p.m.

2. Report on Hawai'i County Council Bill 63, Relating to Dwellings – Committee Member Pelletier will provide an update on testimony submitted regarding Bill 63, which proposes to allow residential dwellings within the Industrial-Commercial Mixed Use (MCX) district.

This item was called to order at 12:31 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 29:56*]

Committee Member Pelletier summarized his testimony and the County Council's recent consideration of Bill 63, which would allow single-family, duplex, and multi-family dwellings in MCX zones, most of which are in Kona.

Key points from his report:

- The Kona CDP AC's written testimony, grounded in CDP policies and concerns about infrastructure, livability, and mixed-use planning, was read into the record by Pelletier at the Council meeting and prompted extensive Council discussion.
- The Planning Director addressed the AC's concerns point-by-point, generally:
 - Minimizing concerns about noise and air pollution for residents in industrial-commercial areas;
 - Supporting the inclusion of single-family dwellings to accommodate on-site caretakers for businesses;
 - Noting that short-term vacation rentals are currently not allowed in MCX; and
 - Characterizing affordable housing requirements and needed infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, transit-supportive design) as outside the narrow scope of the bill, applying mainly in rezoning situations rather than in already-zoned MCX areas.

The Council then voted to defer Bill 63. It was not on the agenda for the subsequent Council meeting and remains deferred. The Committee discussed requesting that any future amendments to Bill 63 be shared with the AC in advance, so that the Committee can review and potentially update its testimony.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 12:49 p.m.

3. Tree City USA Program Update – Committee Member Thompson will provide an update on the County's Tree City USA designation and efforts to reinstate the Arborist Advisory Committee. Discussion and potential action.

This item was called to order at 12:49 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 47:55*]

Committee Member Thompson reported on progress toward re-establishing Hawai'i County's Tree City USA designation:

- **Arborist Advisory Committee:** A major previous obstacle was the lack of an appointed Arborist Advisory Committee. After visiting the Mayor's office, Committee Member Thompson learned that most positions had been selected, with only one vacancy remaining. She has received a list of appointees and is working with Boards and Commissions staff to obtain contact information and meeting schedules. The committee's formation will allow Tree City USA application requirements related to an advisory body to be met.
- **Tree care ordinance and Arbor Day:** Committee Member Thompson has identified the relevant sections of the County Code governing public trees and exceptional trees for the application. She has also collected documentation of the County's Arbor Day observances.
- **Expenditure requirement:** The remaining major requirement is to demonstrate annual expenditures of at least \$2 per capita on community tree care (maintenance, planting, removal, etc.). She plans to follow up directly with Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and budget/finance staff to identify and document relevant expenditures, recognizing that tree work is often performed by contractors and spread across multiple departments. Planning staff offered to assist by re-contacting departmental finance staff and including Committee Member Thompson in the communication.
- **Community partners/Outdoor Circle:** Thompson is in discussions with Kona Outdoor Circle regarding their interest in supporting exceptional tree nominations, educational efforts, and beautification projects, noting that there are already several trees ready for nomination.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 1:11 p.m.

4. Report on County Boards and Commissions Meeting – Chair Young will provide an update on the Mayor's meeting with Boards and Commissions Chairs and Vice Chairs, held on October 18, 2025. Discussion to follow.

This item was called to order at 1:11 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:10:08*]

Chair Young reported on the October 18, 2025 meeting convened by the Mayor for all County board and commission chairs and vice chairs. He had previously provided a written summary to the AC; highlights from his report and discussion included:

- **Sunshine Law & consistency:** The administration recognizes the Sunshine Law as both necessary and, at times, constraining. Different boards and commissions interpret and apply the law differently while others prohibit discussion entirely if quorum is not met. The Mayor's office expressed interest in promoting more consistent practices and providing better training.

- **Support from Boards & Commissions staff:** Micah Alameda (Boards and Commissions) invited chairs and vice chairs to contact him directly with operational issues or questions, indicating a willingness to “fast track” solutions where possible.
- **Common challenges:** Many boards and commissions are struggling with vacancies, meeting quorum, and engaging the public. Participants at the meeting reaffirmed their commitment to service despite these challenges.

The AC discussion touched on the potential value of facilitation training for chairs and vice chairs to help manage meetings, particularly around public testimony and time limits. Members also discussed the importance of securing funding and staff capacity to support outreach and a comprehensive review/update of the Kona CDP. Members noted that the AC has previously voted to undertake a comprehensive review of the plan and should continue to advocate for resources in upcoming budgets.

There is a need for more effective public outreach and community venues, including possibly rotating meetings into different communities and reconsidering meeting times to increase public participation, while balancing staff travel from Hilo.

Public testimony from Janice Palma Glennie emphasized that the AC should feel and function differently from some other boards, with a more welcoming, less formal environment to encourage participation from residents who may not be familiar with planning or government processes. She suggested that the physical space and a midday weekday meeting time may discourage attendance and urged the AC to consider alternative formats, locations, and times.

Staff noted that other CDP Action Committees meet in the evenings and that it is logistically feasible to explore similar options for Kona, though staff travel and scheduling must be considered. The AC agreed to place meeting time/location and broader community outreach strategies on a future agenda.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 1:24 p.m.

5. Election of Kona CDP Action Committee Chair and Vice Chair – The Committee will elect a Chair and Vice Chair to serve for the 2026 calendar year.

This item was called to order at 1:24 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:22:55*]

Vice Chair Piscichio nominated Chair Young to continue as Chair. Chair Young declined, explaining that, after many years of service, he believes it is important to support succession planning and develop new leadership within the AC.

Chair Young nominated Vice Chair Piscichio to serve as Chair. She declined, noting that, given her long involvement in the CDP process, she prefers to remain actively engaged but not take on the chair role again. Vice Chair Piscichio then nominated Committee Member John Pelletier to serve as Chair for 2026. Pelletier accepted the nomination, stating that he has appreciated serving on the AC for the past two years and would welcome the opportunity to chair, particularly with the continued support of an experienced vice chair.

Vice Chair Piscichio made a motion to elect John Pelletier as Chair of the Kona CDP Action Committee for the 2026 calendar year, effective January 2026. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Kirchner and passed unanimously.

Chair Young stated that he plans to remain on the AC as a regular member to assist with continuity and quorum, particularly for South Kona representation.

Later in the discussion, Committee Member David Huerta informed the AC of his intent to resign from the committee by the end of December 2025.

This item concluded at 1:36 p.m.

Public Testimony on Matters Not on the Agenda

No public testimony on matters not on the agenda was provided. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:35:33]

Third-Party Reports; Government Officials

No third-party reports or presentations from government officials were provided during this time. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:35:45]

Proposed New Business

The Committee identified several items for future agendas, including:

1. Continued updates on the Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater AMP following the December expert panel meeting and any subsequent CWRM actions
2. Continued monitoring and possible further testimony regarding Hawai'i County Council Bill 63
3. Ongoing updates on the Tree City USA application
4. Follow-up with the Planning Director regarding the AC's prior letter requesting specific studies and support for a comprehensive update of the Kona CDP, including potential funding and schedule.
5. Discussion of meeting times, locations, and community outreach strategies to improve public participation (including possible evening meetings and community-based sessions).
6. A presentation from Planning staff on the Special Management Area (SMA) permitting process, particularly in anticipation of future SMA applications for coastal projects in the Kona area, so that the AC and public can better understand appropriate points for input and how CDP policies may apply.

Announcements

1. Kona Open Space Network (KOSN) Update – Vice Chair Pisicchio reported that the KOSN project is continuing to develop a draft “hubs and links” open space network plan for Kona. A public meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 4, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Maka'eio Pavilion (Old Kona Airport) to present updated maps and gather community feedback. Additional materials (e.g., brochure or handout) are expected to be available prior to the meeting.
2. Board and Commission Vacancies – The County is currently seeking applicants for the Kona CDP Action Committee and the Cultural Resources Commission and requests assistance in spreading the word 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>

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:52:33]

Adjournment

Chair Young adjourned this meeting at 1:55 p.m.

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