

KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE
COUNTY OF HAWAII

FINAL MINUTES
December 9, 2025

Call to Order

Chair John Pelletier called the meeting of the Kona Community Development Plan (KCDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 12:04 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/IBPFGy2dB8M?si=hzFhOLpl4v99zkJf>

Roll Call

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

Members Present (via Zoom): Charles Young and David Huerta

Members Absent: Roselyn Molina

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

There were approximately four members of the public in attendance (none in person and four via Zoom).

Approval of Minutes

Chair Pelletier requested approval of the November 12, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Vice Chair Pisicchio moved to approve the minutes, and Committee Member Kirchner seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the November 12 draft meeting minutes. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:18]

Public Testimony on Agenda Items

Chair Pelletier called for public testimony on agenda items. No members of the public provided testimony at this time. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:55]

Business

1. Overview of the Special Management Area (SMA) Permit Process – Planning Department staff will provide a general overview of the SMA permit process, followed by Committee discussion.

This item was called to order at 12:07 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 3:33]

Senior SMA Planner Alex Roy provided an overview of the State and County framework for Special Management Area (SMA) regulation. Key points included:

- The shoreline is certified by DLNR as the upper reaches of the wash of the waves under normal high tide conditions (often identified by a rack line). County SMA jurisdiction extends from the certified shoreline inland; in-water work is under State jurisdiction.
- On Hawai'i Island, SMA typically extends about 300 feet inland but is broader in some areas (e.g., Waipi'o, parts of Kona and Puna).
- Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 205A guides SMA objectives, including protection of coastal resources, cultural and historic sites, public access (both lateral along the shore and mauka-to-makai access), recreation, fisheries, and public safety. Any development must be consistent with 205A, the County General Plan, community development plans (including the Kona CDP), and zoning.

- “Development” includes placement of solid material, grading, dredging, construction or alteration of structures, and changes in land use intensity (e.g., subdivision).
- Certain activities may be exempt, such as:
 - Single-family residences on non-shoreline parcels under specified size and value thresholds;
 - Routine road and highway maintenance within existing rights-of-way;
 - Improvements related to established uses (e.g., adding PV to resort roofs);
 - Structural/non-structural improvements to existing dwellings or commercial structures that do not expand ground disturbance.
- The Planning Director may still require an SMA permit if an otherwise exempt action would cause cumulative or significant impacts.
- Permit tiers and valuation thresholds:
 - SMA exemption/short form (SFA/SAA): For exempt actions, often processed concurrently with building permits.
 - SMA Minor: For development below valuation thresholds (with different limits for shoreline vs. non-shoreline parcels). These are approved by the Planning Director.
 - SMA Major / SMA Use Permit: Required when valuation exceeds thresholds or impacts are significant. SMA Majors are heard and decided by the appropriate Planning Commission (Windward or Leeward). The Planning Department prepares a background and recommendation report, but the Planning Commission has final authority to approve, deny, or condition the permit.
- SMA permits typically include standard conditions (e.g., compliance with grading, building, and DOH regulations) and project-specific conditions (e.g., public access easements; archaeological monitoring; view plane protections). Conditions are now written more clearly than in older permits to ensure enforceability.

Committee discussion and questions included:

- Who sets valuation thresholds (answer: the State Office of Planning and Sustainable Development under HRS 205A; thresholds were recently increased for non-shoreline projects).
- How community input is gathered during review for SMA Majors and the importance of proactive community engagement.
- Differences in SMA practices across counties, including City and County of Honolulu’s requirement for Council approval of SMA permits and the trade-offs of that approach.
- How shoreline setbacks changed from 20 feet to a minimum 40 feet in 2020, and that there is no “grandfathering” for new development; shoreline setback variances are possible but must demonstrate hardship and are decided by the Planning Commission.
- Treatment of downtown Kailua-Kona renovations, and how the Planning Director may elevate projects (e.g., significant commercial redevelopments) to the SMA Major level to ensure full public review.
- Consideration of groundwater, anchialine ponds, and subsurface flows in SMA review, particularly near the shoreline; Roy noted staff work closely with DLNR and other agencies to address these issues.

Roy emphasized that SMA review is often the only comprehensive environmental review for a coastal project and that the Department strives to use this process to minimize and mitigate impacts rather than simply stop development.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 1:07 p.m.

89 **2. Kona Open Space Network (KOSN) Update** – Vice Chair Pисicchio will provide a summary of the
90 recent KOSN public meeting, with discussion to follow.

91 This item was called to order at 1:07 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:03:41]

92 Vice Chair Pисicchio reported on the KOSN public meeting held the previous week at Maka'eо Pavilion:

- 93 • Attendance was strong, with a notable presence of long-time community members, former and
94 current Council members, and individuals involved in earlier CDP and community processes.
- 95 • Few attendees had participated in the first KOSN meeting, suggesting both a shift in participants
96 and that some earlier participants may not have felt compelled to attend a follow-up.
- 97 • Some attendees later expressed concerns about audio and visual quality, noting difficulty
98 seeing the display and hearing the presentation; this was flagged as a lesson for future
99 community meetings.
- 100 • The consulting team did not present a tangible draft plan document at the meeting, and next
101 steps and final products remain unclear.

102 No formal action was taken.

103 This item concluded at 1:21 p.m.

104 **3. Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater Adaptive Management Plan (AMP)** – Committee
105 Member Charles Young will provide an update on recent efforts related to the AMP, followed by
106 discussion and potential action.

107 This item was called to order at 1:21 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:17:48]

108 Committee Member Young reported that:

- 109 • The expert panels convened under the Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater AMP
110 (including hydrologic, cultural, and other technical groups) have completed their individual
111 summaries, which have been shared previously with the AC.
- 112 • The next step is a joint meeting of all expert panels, including Native Hawaiian and cultural
113 representatives, scheduled for January 10, 2026. This meeting will be by invitation to allow
114 focused discussion within limited time and space.
- 115 • The goal of the joint meeting is to develop consensus recommendations that can be forwarded
116 to the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) as part of the AMP.

117 Committee Member Young expressed hope that any recommendations emerging from the January
118 meeting would be made public prior to CWRM action so that the community and the Kona CDP AC
119 can review and potentially provide input.

120 Committee members inquired whether the January meeting would be open to the public (it will not) and
121 whether individuals could be added to the contact list to receive materials and updates. Young indicated
122 he would follow up regarding possible distribution of materials and add interested parties to circulation
123 lists where feasible.

124 No formal action was taken.

125 This item concluded at 1:26 p.m.

126 **4. Tree City USA Program Update** – Committee Member Thompson will provide an update on the
127 County's Tree City USA designation and related efforts, with discussion and potential action to follow.

128 This item was called to order at 1:26 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:22:04]

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

- The Arborist Advisory Committee (AAC), required as the "tree board" under Tree City USA standards, has been largely appointed. An initial AAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 11, which is needed to demonstrate an active advisory body before the program deadline.
- The County has met the requirement to demonstrate at least \$2 per capita in annual expenditures related to community trees (planting, maintenance, removal, etc.).
- The County has documented Arbor Day observances and received a mayoral proclamation supporting Arbor Day activities, satisfying another Tree City USA standard.

Committee Member Thompson plans to complete the application following the AAC meeting and route it to the Mayor for signature prior to submitting the application.

Committee Member Thompson and Vice Chair Pisicchio suggested that, once designation is secured, the County and AC pursue the development of a County tree planting plan – using Maui's current effort as a model – that identifies eco-zones and recommended species. They also recommended exploring a public right-of-way/street tree ordinance for Kona to guide the planting, management, and protection of trees along roadways and within urban corridors.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 1:35 p.m.

5. Report on Hawai'i County Council Bill 63, Relating to Dwellings – Chair Pelletier will provide an update on Hawai'i County Council Bill 63 (Draft 2), which proposes to allow residential dwellings within the Industrial-Commercial Mixed Use (MCX) district, followed by discussion and potential action.

This item was called to order at 1:35 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:31:14*]

Committee Member Pelletier summarized recent County Council proceedings on Bill 63 (Draft 2):

- The AC previously submitted written testimony expressing concerns about allowing dwellings in MCX without corresponding infrastructure, design, and affordability standards.
- Chair Pelletier and Vice Chair Pisicchio attended two Council meetings where Bill 63 appeared on the agenda; in both cases the bill was deferred after several hours of discussion on other matters and did not move forward.
- Draft 2 of the bill currently incorporates a setback change requested by Civil Defense to align with MG (general industrial) zoning, but no other substantive amendments have yet been adopted.
- A communication (not yet formally introduced as an amendment) has been circulated that would remove single-family dwellings from the bill; however, full amendment language is still being developed by the Planning Director and Councilmember Onishi, with Councilmember Inaba indicating amendments may be ready for a January 7, 2026 Council meeting.

Committee members briefly discussed possible connections between Bill 63 and plans for the new Queen's hospital and clinic, Queen Lili'uokalani Trust lands, and sewer versus septic service, but emphasized that the AC is responding to the bill's general policy implications rather than advocating for or against any specific project.

Bill 63 remains on first reading and deferred; the AC intends to review any forthcoming amendments and may offer additional testimony. Members were encouraged to attend Council meetings and testify as individuals if they share concerns.

This item concluded at 1:47 p.m.

173 **6. Proposal to Invite the Planning Director to a Future Meeting** – The Committee will discuss inviting
174 the Planning Director to provide an update on the AC’s request for funding to support comprehensive
175 review studies. Potential action to follow.

176 This item was called to order at 1:47 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:43:03]

177 The Committee discussed a prior letter sent to the Planning Director requesting funding and support
178 for gray infrastructure and related technical studies (e.g., transportation, infrastructure capacity,
179 population and land use data) needed to prepare for a comprehensive review and update of the Kona
180 CDP following adoption of the County General Plan.

181 Members agreed it would be helpful to receive a direct update from the Planning Director regarding:

- 182 • How the Department plans to sequence CDP updates after completion of the General Plan;
- 183 • What resources may be available to support Kona-specific studies; and
- 184 • How the AC will be involved in scoping and guiding this work.

185 Planning staff reported that the Director is willing to attend in person, and that February 2026 appears
186 to be a likely timeframe for his visit.

187 Committee Member Kirchner made a motion to invite the Planning Director to attend the February 2026
188 Kona CDP Action Committee meeting to respond to the AC’s letter regarding funding and support for
189 comprehensive CDP update studies. Vice Chair Pisicchio seconded the motion, and the motion carried
190 unanimously by voice vote.

191 This item concluded at 1:51 p.m.

192 **7. Kona CDP Action Committee 2026 Meeting Schedule** – The Committee will review and consider
193 adopting the proposed meeting schedule for 2026. Discussion and potential action.

194 This item was called to order at 1:51 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:47:25]

195 Key points included:

- 196 • Midday meetings can be difficult for many members of the public to attend; some AC members
197 suggested exploring late-afternoon or evening meetings.
- 198 • Other CDP Action Committees meet in the evenings, and Planning staff confirmed they are
199 able to support evening meetings, though staff travel from Hilo and venue availability must be
200 considered.
- 201 • Members discussed the idea of holding quarterly evening meetings in community locations
202 (e.g., Hōnaunau/Yano Hall and other South Kona venues) relevant to agenda topics while
203 maintaining other meetings at the West Hawai’i Civic Center, to reach more residents across
204 the district.
- 205 • Planning staff offered to send a poll to AC members to assess availability and preferences, and
206 to work with the Mayor’s office to reserve venues in advance (including use of Building G at the
207 Civic Center).

208 No formal action on a revised schedule was taken at this meeting. Staff will circulate a scheduling poll
209 and return with any proposed changes at a future meeting.

210 This item concluded at 2:05 p.m.

211 **Public Testimony on Matters Not on the Agenda**

212 No public testimony was provided. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:01:44]

213 **Third-Party Reports; Government Officials**

214 No third-party reports or presentations from government officials were provided. [SEE YOUTUBE
215 *TIMESTAMP 2:02:04*]

216 **Proposed New Business**

217 The Committee identified several items for future agendas, including:

- 218 1. Redevelopment of downtown Kailua Kona
- 219 2. Redesign and alignment of Kahului-Keauhou Parkway and Lako Street

220 **Announcements**

- 221 1. Board and Commission Vacancies – The County is currently seeking applicants for the Kona CDP
222 Action Committee and the Cultural Resources Commission and requests assistance in spreading
223 the word to interested community members. The application can be found on the Mayor's office
224 website at:
225 [https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions/boards-and-commissions-](https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions/boards-and-commissions-application)
226 [application](https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions/boards-and-commissions-application)
- 227 2. Committee Acknowledgements – Members thanked former Chair Charles Young for his years of
228 service and leadership and welcomed Chair Pelletier in his new role. Committee Member David
229 Huerta announced his intent to resign from the AC at the end of December 2025. Members
230 expressed appreciation for his service and encouraged him to remain engaged as his schedule
231 allows.
232 [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 2:14:55*]

233 **Adjournment**

234 Chair Pelletier adjourned this meeting at 2:22 p.m.

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