

KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE
COUNTY OF HAWAI'I

DRAFT MINUTES
January 13, 2026

Call to Order

Chair John Pelletier called the meeting of the Kona Community Development Plan (KCDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 12:03 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/YYHCLzA354E?si=7FfyCU8gmVVfCVO6>

Roll Call

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

Members Present (via Zoom): None

Members Absent: Roselyn Molina

Planning Department Staff Present (in person): Maryam Palma, Janice Hata, and Elizabeth August

Planning Department Staff Present (via Zoom): Kawelo Kalili

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

Approval of Minutes

Chair Pelletier requested approval of the December 9, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Committee Member Charles Young moved to approve the minutes with an amendment to line 113, correcting the date of the Keauhou Aquifer AMP expert panel meeting to January 10, 2026. Committee Member Kirchner seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the draft meeting minutes as amended. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 03:50]

Public Testimony on Agenda Items

Chair Pelletier called for public testimony on agenda items. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 04:55]

Janice Palma Glennie (via Zoom) raised concerns regarding Hawai'i County Council Bill 63, expressing skepticism about the bill's value and intentions and urging AC members to consider its potential impacts on KCDP transit-oriented development (TOD) policies. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 06:05]

Business

1. Welcome new AC member, Shane Palacat-Nelsen

This item was called to order at 12:11 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 08:24]

This item was called but the new member had not yet been sworn in or confirmed present. The AC agreed to defer formal introductions to a future meeting when the member can attend.

39 **2. Tree City USA Program Update** – AC member Thompson will provide an update on the
40 County's Tree City USA designation and related efforts, with discussion and potential action
41 to follow.

42 This item was called to order at 12:12 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 08:51*]

43 Public Testimony:

- 44 • Janice Palma Glennie testified about the need for incentives to preserve existing trees.
45 [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 09:11*]
- 46 • Lamakū provided testimony. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 12:09*]

47 Committee Member Thompson and Vice Chair Pisicchio echoed concerns about frequent
48 removal and “butchering” of large trees and noted that a future tree management plan and the
49 exceptional tree process may help address such issues.

50 Committee Member Thompson reported significant progress toward re-establishing Hawai'i
51 County's Tree City USA designation: [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 12:55*]

- 52 • She had completed the Tree City USA application and initially submitted it to the Mayor
53 for signature. The Mayor's office responded that, while the County had met Tree City
54 USA standards, the Mayor did not wish to sign because he viewed the program as a
55 “formal agreement” deemed unnecessary.
- 56 • Thompson clarified that Tree City USA is a recognition program, not a binding formal
57 agreement, and sought assistance from County long-range planning staff and the
58 Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) Urban Forestry staff.
- 59 • Upon review of the application language (which allows signatures by “mayor or other
60 city official”), DOFAW staff confirmed that a County Council representative could sign.
61 Thompson then contacted Council leadership, who agreed to sign the application on
62 behalf of the County.
- 63 • With the required signature secured, Thompson submitted the completed application
64 through the Tree City USA online portal earlier that day. The application will now be
65 reviewed by DOFAW and the Arbor Day Foundation.

66 Committee Member Thompson emphasized that Tree City USA is a starting point that can
67 help the County access grants and support subsequent efforts. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP*
68 *17:03*]

69 Vice Chair Pisicchio noted that long-term success will depend on administration support and
70 broader education about the program but agreed that achieving Tree City USA recognition is
71 an important step forward.

72 Additional public testimony and discussion highlighted the spiritual and cultural significance of
73 trees, the need to reduce unnecessary removals, and the importance of community
74 partnerships and incentives to keep shade trees in place. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP*
75 *19:51*]

76 No formal action was taken.

77 This item concluded at 12:28 p.m.

78 **3. Keauhou Aquifer System Area Groundwater Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) – AC**
79 member Young will provide an update on recent efforts related to the AMP, followed by
80 discussion and potential action.

81 This item was called to order at 12:28 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 25:05]

82 Committee Member Young reported on a January 10, 2026 “sharing session” convened by
83 the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) regarding the Keauhou Aquifer
84 System Area Groundwater AMP: [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 26:06]

- 85 • The session was not a formal CWRM public hearing but a facilitated meeting to bring
86 together multiple expert panels – hydrologic, pollution/water quality, indicator species,
87 and cultural advisors – who had previously been working separately.
- 88 • The Deputy Director opened by clarifying CWRM’s jurisdiction (groundwater resource
89 management) versus County and Department of Health responsibilities (e.g.,
90 wastewater, pollution regulation, land use). Many community concerns about
91 development, traffic, and wastewater lie outside CWRM’s direct authority.
- 92 • Presentations by the scientific panels focused on:
 - 93 ○ Hydrology: Relationships among high-level water, the basal lens, and deep
94 confined water, and the need to better understand interactions and recharge;
 - 95 ○ Pollution and water quality: Existing contamination concerns and the role of DOH
96 and County agencies in addressing them; and
 - 97 ○ Indicators: Potential monitoring metrics to detect changes in groundwater and
98 coastal conditions.

99 The process is still in early stages and will likely take several years to synthesize scientific and
100 cultural input into a coherent AMP recommendation for CWRM consideration.

101 Funding exists for monitoring wells, but their final locations and depths will depend on AMP
102 design decisions and the need to monitor key transition zones (e.g., the interface between
103 fresh and salt water). Some existing wells may be converted to monitoring use in high-level
104 areas.

105 Public Testimony:

- 106 • Lamakū spoke about water as a sacred gift and the importance of spiritual guidance in
107 protecting freshwater resources, referencing concerns about past blasting and coastal
108 impacts. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 37:09]
- 109 • Keola Childs questioned whether it is necessary to wait for full AMP completion before
110 allowing additional housing within known sustainable yield limits, noting that current
111 withdrawals may be well below modeled sustainable yield. [SEE YOUTUBE
112 TIMESTAMP 43:08]
- 113 • Janice Palma Glennie responded that development is proceeding in many areas and
114 that other infrastructure remain major unresolved issues. She stressed the need to
115 respect and rely on both scientific and cultural expertise and to treat water as a finite,
116 critical resource. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 52:37]

117 Committee Member Kirchner emphasized the severe housing shortage and observed that at
118 least one large project (Stanford Carr’s) has cited water constraints as a reason for not
119 proceeding. He expressed concern that limited housing supply is driving residents away due
120 to high costs. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 54:37]

121 No formal action was taken.

122 This item concluded at 1:05 p.m.

- 123 **4. Hawai'i County Council Bill 63, Relating to Dwellings** – AC members will discuss any
124 amendments to Bill 63 proposed during the January 7, 2026 meeting of the Hawai'i County
125 Council. AC members will decide whether to submit further testimony on this legislation.

126 This item was called to order at 1:05 p.m. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:01:23*]

127 Chair Pelletier and Vice Chair Pisicchio summarized proceedings at the January 7, 2026
128 Council meeting on Bill 63 (Draft 2), which proposes to allow residential dwellings within the
129 Industrial-Commercial Mixed Use (MCX) district:

- 130 • Council Member Onishi introduced an amendment that would have allowed dwellings
131 in MCX as accessory uses tied to permitted industrial-commercial uses rather than as
132 stand-alone residential projects.
- 133 • After extensive discussion, the Council voted 8-1 to defeat the amendment (Council
134 Member Onishi in favor). The bill remains in Draft 2 form, with its only adopted change
135 to date being a setback alignment with MG (general industrial) zoning requested by
136 Civil Defense.
- 137 • The bill was deferred to the Council's February 4, 2026 meeting. Several Council
138 Members expressed discomfort with broad, by-right residential use in MCX and interest
139 in alternatives such as project-specific zoning changes or a use permit approach.

140 Public Testimony:

- 141 • Keola Childs testified, suggesting that, if the County wishes to allow some residential
142 use in MCX, it could do so through a use permit mechanism rather than as a blanket
143 permitted use. A use permit process would allow case-by-case evaluation, public input,
144 and site-specific conditions. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:06:33*]
- 145 • Janice Palma Glennie testified in support of TODs. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP*
146 *01:14:16*]

147 Committee Member Kirchner pointed out that the zoning code already contains an RCX
148 (Residential-Commercial Mixed Use) district where housing over commercial use is more
149 appropriate than in industrial MCX, and suggested that the impetus for Bill 63 may be the
150 proposed new Queen's hospital campus seeking on-site housing. He noted that the hospital
151 could instead pursue a zoning change or other tools without rewriting MCX uses countywide.
152 [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:04:43*]

153 Initially, Chair Pelletier and Vice Chair Pisicchio suggested waiting to see whether new
154 amendments are proposed by the Council or Planning Director on February 4 before
155 submitting additional testimony, noting that the AC's earlier written testimony remains in the
156 record.

157 After further discussion, the Committee agreed to proactively request that the bill be referred
158 to committee for more thorough work and additional CDP AC input.

159 Committee Member Kirchner made a motion to transmit a letter from the Kona CDP Action
160 Committee to Council Chair Inaba requesting that Hawai'i County Council Bill 63 be referred
161 to the Council Planning Committee for further deliberation, including an opportunity for the
162 Kona CDP Action Committee to review and comment on any proposed changes before the bill

proceeds. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Pisicchio and passed unanimously. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:19:37]

Planning staff will draft the letter for Chair Pelletier's signature.

This item concluded at 1:28 p.m.

5. Ali'i Highway – AC members will discuss engaging with the community in envisioning opportunities for the development of the Ali'i Highway corridor.

This item was called to order at 1:28 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:24:41]

Public Testimony:

- Lamakū provided testimony [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:27:43]

Vice Chair Pisicchio noted that input from Shane Palacat-Nelsen, who previously served on the Action Committee, would be valuable to consider before determining any next steps.

Committee Member Young summarized prior work he co-chaired with Shane in a small working group several years ago. That effort focused on the existing County-owned right-of-way and engaging lineal descendants and other stakeholders to gauge whether any use (such as pedestrian paths or open space) might be acceptable. The work at this time did not advance any specific roadway alignment or project. No capital improvement funds were expended beyond exploratory discussions. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:40:31]

Given the strong community views and incomplete information, the Committee agreed that further discussion would be more productive when Shane and additional background are available.

No formal action was taken. Chair Pelletier deferred further consideration of this matter to a future meeting. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:56:52]

This item concluded at 2:00 p.m.

6. 2026 Meeting Schedule Poll – Planning staff will provide an update on the meeting schedule poll distributed to AC members on December 17, 2025.

This item was called to order at 2:00 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:57:00]

Planning staff reported that responses to the poll indicated a strong preference for continuing monthly meetings on the second Tuesday from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Staff confirmed that:

- Conference Room B2 and Building G at the West Hawai'i Civic Center are generally available for these times;
- Special evening meetings and/or community-based meetings in other locations (e.g., South Kona venues) are possible when agenda topics warrant, subject to room availability and staff travel; and
- Any changes in time or location will be clearly indicated in agenda postings, emails, and on-site signage.

Committee members discussed the possibility of holding occasional site visits linked to specific agenda items (e.g., through permitted interaction groups), following Sunshine Law requirements. The discussion also included scheduling some future meetings in community

locations to increase public participation, particularly when discussing geographically focused topics.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 2:06 p.m.

Public Testimony on Matters Not on the Agenda

No public testimony was provided. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:07:03]

Third-Party Reports; Government Officials

No third-party reports or presentations from government officials were provided. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:07:03]

Proposed New Business

Committee Member Kirchner proposed the following item for a future meeting agenda:

1. Discussion regarding redevelopment of downtown Kailua Kona

Announcements

1. 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>

2. The next AC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, 2026, and will include attendance by the Planning Director.

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:23:59]

Adjournment

Chair Pelletier adjourned this meeting at 2:28 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.