

KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE
COUNTY OF HAWAI'I

DRAFT MINUTES
February 10, 2026

Call to Order

Chair John Pelletier called the meeting of the Kona Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 12:20 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the West Hawai'i Civic Center, Council Meeting Room A, and online via the Zoom platform.

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

https://youtu.be/3P65J8V_hgg?si=1scR-qJlgdIEtUDv

Roll Call

Members Present (in person):

- John Pelletier (Chair)
- Nancy Pisicchio (Vice Chair)
- Raymond "RJ" Kirchner
- Charla Thompson
- Shane Palacat-Nelsen

Members Present (via Zoom): None

Members Absent:

- Charles Young
- Roselyn Molina

Planning Department Staff Present (in person):

- Janice Hata
- Jessica Lahip

Planning Department Staff Present (via Zoom):

- Elizabeth August

Other County Representatives Present:

- Jeffrey Darrow, Planning Director
- Michelle Ahn, Deputy Planning Director
- Jean Campbell, Deputy Corporation Counsel (via Zoom)

32 There were approximately 12 members of the public in attendance (three in person and nine
33 via Zoom).

34 **Approval of Minutes**

35 Chair Pelletier requested approval of the January 13, 2026 draft meeting minutes.

36 Vice Chair Pisicchio moved to approve the January 13, 2026 minutes. Committee Member
37 Kirchner seconded the motion. There being no discussion or corrections, the Committee
38 voted unanimously to approve the January 13, 2026 draft meeting minutes. [SEE YOUTUBE
39 *TIMESTAMP 02:56*]

40 **Public Testimony on Agenda Items**

41 Chair Pelletier called for public testimony on agenda items. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP*
42 *03:28*]

43 **Announcements**

44 **1. Welcome to New Member** – Chair Pelletier welcomed returning AC member **Shane**
45 **Palacat-Nelsen**, noting his previous years of service on the Kona CDP AC and long
46 involvement in community planning dating back to the mid-1990s. Committee Member
47 Nelsen shared that community development is his “hobby” and that he looks forward to
48 helping interpret policy and support land-use improvements.

49 **2. Board and Commission Vacancies** – Chair Pelletier announced that the Planning
50 Department is continuing to seek applicants for the Kona CDP Action Committee and
51 requested assistance in spreading the word to interested community members.
52 Applications are available on the Mayor’s Boards and Commissions webpage:
53 <https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions>
54 [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 04:06*]

55 **Business**

56 **1. Update of the Kona CDP** – The AC will discuss with Director Darrow the future approach
57 and potential timeline for updating the Kona CDP, in relation to the AC’s October 30,
58 2025 letter requesting funding to support a comprehensive review and update of the
59 2008 Kona CDP, as amended September 2019. Discussion and potential next steps.

60 This item was called to order at 12:27 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 05:55*]

61 Chair Pelletier called for public testimony. No public testimony was provided at this time.

62 Planning Director Darrow described current constraints and priorities for long-range
63 planning:

- 64 • **Budget and staffing limits:** In recent years the Department has been required to
65 hold a “status quo” budget, with no new positions and several federally funded
66 positions (including long-range planners and support staff) lost when federal funding

changed. Requests to convert those positions to general fund have not yet been funded. As a result, the Department has limited capacity to initiate major planning processes. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 08:12]

- **CDP update sequencing:** When reviewing all CDPs island-wide, the South Hilo area stands out as having the oldest plan (a 1970 document predating the CDP framework). The Department has requested funding in this year's budget to initiate a South Hilo update. After that, Director Darrow anticipates that Kona, North Kohala, and South Kohala CDPs would be among the next priorities, given the 2008 adoption date and subsequent amendments. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 09:37]
- **Use of the existing Kona CDP:** Darrow emphasized that the Kona CDP remains an "award-winning" and widely used plan that introduced new planning tools to Hawai'i County (e.g., Transit-Oriented Development [TOD] concepts and multimodal transportation planning). Staff rely on the plan regularly to evaluate consistency of proposed developments. Some projects do not proceed when they conflict with CDP policies. He suggested that future work may focus on targeted amendments rather than a complete rewrite. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 13:21]

Vice Chair Pisicchio stressed the need for gray infrastructure studies, particularly a transportation study that updates traffic counts, connectivity analysis, and network priorities. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 18:17]

Director Darrow and AC members discussed existing and planned transportation improvements and how they intersect with the CDP's concurrency framework. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 19:44]

- Several projects from the Kona CDP's concurrency tables have been completed (e.g., Henry Street to the airport; Māmalahoa Bypass between Kealahou and Kailua-Kona).
- Current County Capital Improvement Program (CIP) priorities in Kona include the Lako Street extension (from its current terminus down toward Ali'i Drive) and Phase 3 of Ane Keohokālole Highway (connecting Hina Lani to Ka'iminani). Archeological work and right-of-entry efforts are underway for the Lako corridor.
- The group also discussed prior community working group efforts that envisioned a scaled-down Kahului-Keauhou Parkway (Lako Street to Kuakini Highway) using existing County right-of-way, emphasizing cultural sites, open space, and non-motorized access. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 26:31]
- Director Darrow noted that the Kona CDP's original concurrency language was amended in 2019 to soften strict requirements, which had effectively stalled development in some concurrency zones. Current concurrency practice is more closely aligned with the County zoning code's traffic impact analysis and mitigation requirements.

Members highlighted that the original CDP did not sufficiently address water and affordable housing and that any comprehensive review should strengthen these sections. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 42:39]

The AC emphasized that updates must be grounded in robust community outreach, with the Action Committee helping to design and promote a grassroots participation process, rather than the AC itself drafting substantive amendments in isolation. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 43:30]

Mikahala Roy provided testimony. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 48:43]

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 1:14 p.m.

2. Hawai'i County Council Bill 63, Relating to Dwellings – The AC will discuss any amendments Bill 63 proposed by the County Council and consider whether to submit additional testimony on the legislation.

This item was called to order at 1:14 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 53:39]

Chair Pelletier called for public testimony. No public testimony was provided at this time.

Chair Pelletier and Vice Chair Pisicchio reported on the February 4, 2026 County Council meeting regarding Bill 63 (Draft 2), which proposes to allow residential dwellings within the Industrial-Commercial Mixed (MCX) district. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 54:02]

- Councilmember Heather Kimball introduced an amendment to change dwellings in MCX from a blanket permitted use to a use permit use, with the intent of better targeting workforce housing associated with MCX uses rather than opening all MCX lands to unrestricted residential development.
- The Council adopted the amendment, and the bill (now a new draft) passed first reading and was forwarded for second reading at a future Council meeting.
- Earlier written testimony from the Kona CDP AC opposing broad by-right housing in MCX remains in the record.

Chair Pelletier and Vice Chair Pisicchio prepared a draft letter for potential submittal at second reading. The draft would:

- Express support for shifting MCX dwellings to a use permit process;
- Recommend that, as part of the use permit review, applicants be asked to address:
 - The relationship of the request for workforce housing to employment located within the MCX District; and

138 ○ The affordability of proposed dwellings for the workforce that the dwellings
139 would serve.

140 [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 57:07]

141 Discussion focused on how to support the workforce housing intent without creating
142 unworkable regulatory burdens. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 57:55]

143 Committee Member Kirchner cautioned that formal affordable housing requirements
144 often entail ongoing income qualification and compliance costs, which can discourage
145 development.

146 Chair Pelletier clarified that the draft testimony does not propose affordability mandates;
147 rather, it asks the Council to ensure that applicants demonstrate a clear workforce
148 connection.

149 Members discussed examples such as housing for hospital staff or teachers, and the
150 challenge of ensuring that units remain available to those workers over time instead of
151 becoming general market or short-term rental units.

152 Vice Chair Pisicchio reiterated that previous versions of Bill 63 would have allowed
153 housing across hundreds of acres of MCX land without guarantees of serving the
154 intended workforce. She stated that the use-permit framework, combined with clear
155 expectations in AC testimony, moves the legislation closer to its stated purpose.

156 Committee Member Kirchner made a motion to submit testimony from the Kona CDP
157 Action Committee in support of the new use permit framework for dwellings in MCX,
158 recommending that use permit applications be required to (1) describe the relationship
159 between proposed dwellings and employment within the MCX district, and (2) address
160 the affordability of the units for the workforce to be served. The motion was seconded by
161 Committee Member Thompson, and it passed unanimously by voice vote. [SEE
162 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:15:55]

163 Planning staff will prepare and transmit the testimony, to be signed by Chair Pelletier, to
164 the Council in advance of second reading of Bill 63.

165 This item concluded at 1:39 p.m.

166 **3. Tree City USA Program Update** – AC Member Charla Thompson will provide a status
167 update on the County's Tree City USA application.

168 This item was called to order at 1:39 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:18:03]

169 Committee Member Thompson reported that:

- The Hawai'i County Tree City USA application has been completed and submitted. The County will likely learn whether it has been approved by April or May 2026.
- In anticipation of eventual Tree City USA recognition, she has begun exploring next steps, including development of a County tree planting plan/urban forest plan and improvements to County tree management practices.

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:18:21]

Committee Member Thompson highlighted a bill currently moving through the State Legislature that would help support better tree care statewide. The bill would require State agencies and counties (and their contractors) involved in planting, maintaining, or removing public trees to adhere to best management practices for tree care.

No formal action was taken.

This item concluded at 1:46 p.m.

Public Testimony on Matters Not on the Agenda

Testimony may be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. (Pursuant to Hawai'i Senate Bill 869 [2025], signed into law as Act 53)

This item was called to order at 1:46 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:25:26]

- Mikahala Roy provided additional testimony. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:26:26]

Third-Party Reports; Government Officials

The AC may receive and discuss information from third-party reports by any government official not included in a publicly noticed agenda. The AC may only make decisions on matters originally raised by third-party reports from any government official at a later meeting, where the agenda for the meeting gives notice of decision-making on the matter. (Pursuant to Hawai'i Senate Bill 405 [2025], signed into law as Act 72)

This item was called to order at 1:50 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:29:47]

Director Darrow responded to questions previously submitted by Committee Member Young and engaged in a discussion with the AC regarding:

- The Planning Department's role in transportation planning, including development of roadway alignment maps and coordination with the State Department of Transportation and County Department of Public Works on future arterials and collectors. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:30:37]
- Ongoing and upcoming discussions at the County level around short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) and hosted rentals. Director Darrow noted that existing regulations

204 primarily address unhosted STVRs and that Council Member Kimball is preparing a
205 new bill to cover hosted rentals as well, likely coordinated with a Countywide
206 registration requirement scheduled to take effect July 1, 2026. [SEE YOUTUBE
207 *TIMESTAMP 01:39:16*]

208 During the discussion, Deputy Corporation Counsel Jean Campbell reminded the AC of
209 Sunshine Law and neighborhood-board-style requirements under SB 405, emphasizing that:

- 210 • Agendas should clearly identify the topics to be discussed under any third-party report
- 211 so members of the public know what will be covered;
- 212 • Pre-submitted questions to the Director (or any official) should be incorporated into
- 213 the board packet or otherwise made available so the public has adequate notice; and
- 214 • Some questions (e.g., regarding water supply operations or State law changes) may
- 215 be better directed to agencies with direct jurisdiction (e.g., Department of Water
- 216 Supply) rather than the Planning Department.

217 [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 01:42:55*]

218 Suggestions for future meetings:

- 219 • Clearly list the subject areas for any requested report; and
- 220 • Consider inviting other agencies (e.g., DWS) when questions relate to their authority.

221 In light of this guidance, Chair Pelletier, Director Darrow, and the Committee agreed to
222 conclude the open-ended Q&A for this meeting and instead work with staff and Corporation
223 Counsel to structure more focused, well-noticed report topics for a future agenda. Darrow
224 indicated he is willing to return at a subsequent meeting once topics and questions are
225 properly listed on the agenda. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 01:48:13*]

226 **Proposed New Business**

227 This item was called to order at 2:12 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 01:51:04*]

- 228 • Ali'i Parkway Corridor
- 229 • Follow-up Questions for Planning Director/STVR Legislation
- 230 • Downtown Kailua-Kona Redevelopment and Parking

231 Staff and Deputy Corporation Counsel also reminded the AC that:

- 232 • Future agenda items should be clearly grounded in existing Kona CDP policies and
- 233 within the scope of the AC's advisory role; and
- 234 • The AC may use tools such as permitted interaction groups, structured site visits, and
- 235 recesses to help manage complex topics and challenging public testimony while
- 236 remaining in compliance with the Sunshine Law.

237 The next Kona CDP Action Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

238 **Adjournment**

239 Chair Pelletier adjourned this meeting at 2:20 p.m.

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