

1 KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2 ACTION COMMITTEE
3 COUNTY OF HAWAII
4 DRAFT MINUTES
5 April 14, 2026

6 **Call to Order**

7 Chair John Pelletier called the meeting of the Kona Community Development Plan (CDP)
8 Action Committee (AC) to order at 12:04 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the West
9 Hawai'i Civic Center – Building G, and online via the Zoom platform.

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

11 https://youtu.be/I1joldTwVR4?si=FOgnZ_Z8tyXfv4Yf

12 **Roll Call**

13 Members Present (in person):

- 14 • John Pelletier, Chair
- 15 • Nancy Pисicchio, Vice Chair
- 16 • Charla Thompson
- 17 • Charles Young

18 Members Present (via Zoom): Shane Palacat-Nelsen

19 Members Absent: Raymond “RJ” Kirchner and Roselyn Molina

20 Planning Department Staff Present (in person):

- 21 • Janice Hata
- 22 • Maryam Palma
- 23 • Jessica Lahip
- 24 • Kawelo Kalili

25 There were approximately 19 members of the public in attendance (four in person and 15
26 via Zoom).

27 **Approval of Minutes**

28 Chair Pelletier requested approval of the March 10, 2026 draft meeting minutes at
29 approximately 12:07 p.m. Vice Chair Pисicchio moved to approve the minutes, and
30 Committee Member Thompson seconded the motion. There being no discussion or
31 corrections, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the March 10, 2026 draft
32 meeting minutes. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 03:06]

Public Testimony on Agenda Items

Chair Pelletier called for public testimony on agenda items at approximately 12:08 p.m. Testimony was received primarily regarding Hawai'i County Council Bill 66, Draft 2, the Draft General Plan 2045, and the proposed General Plan 2026.

Michelle Melendez testified in opposition to General Plan 2045 and in support of the 2026 proposal. She stated that the 2045 draft is too lengthy, vague, and difficult for the County to implement, and expressed concern that its language would allow outside organizations and stakeholders to influence Hawai'i Island planning. She also raised concerns about climate change-related policy language and asked the Committee to support the 2026 proposal, while noting that maps are needed. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 04:42]

Donna Thompson testified in support of the 2026 proposal and raised concerns about General Plan 2045, including alleged links to outside templates, sustainability initiatives, privacy rights, rezoning, and implementation complexity. She stated that the general plan should be streamlined, simpler to understand, and made available for broader public review, including maps. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 09:36]

Sarahlee Kittons testified against General Plan 2045 and in support of the 2026 proposal. She stated that the 2045 draft includes vague policies that could allow outside stakeholders to influence land use decisions and expressed concern about data systems, resource management, and community control. She urged more local involvement in planning. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 14:13]

Kevin Hill testified against General Plan 2045 and in support of the 2026 proposal, with reservations. He stated that any new plan should still go through public review, the Planning Commission, and County Council. He also expressed concern that Hilo has not had an updated Community Development Plan and that public testimony during earlier stages of the General Plan process had not been adequately incorporated. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 17:38]

Janice Palma-Glennie testified in support of continuing work on General Plan 2045 rather than replacing it with the 2026 proposal. She stated that community-based land use planning, CDPs, maps, zoning guidance, and implementation provisions are important tools for protecting natural and cultural resources, reducing sprawl, and supporting future planning. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 23:16]

Juhl Rayne testified in support of the 2026 proposal and against General Plan 2045. She expressed concern that the 2045 draft could affect property rights and described the document as too long and influenced by outside agendas. She stated that the 2026 proposal is not perfect but is preferable. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 26:27]

Lily Booth testified about concerns related to land clearing, development, public awareness, and access in South Kona. She stated that local families need more information and education about land use planning and the General Plan process, and

that meeting times can make participation difficult for working residents. [SEE YOUTUBE
TIMESTAMP 30:20]

Millicent Cummings testified in opposition to General Plan 2045 while expressing concerns about voting on the 2026 proposal without associated maps and without a complete public process. She raised concerns about procedure, Sunshine Law compliance, Hilo's lack of an updated CDP, Hawaiian Home Lands, and public trust resources. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 34:30]

Melvin Mason Jr. testified regarding Bill 66, Draft 2, and the proposed draft General Plan 2026. He urged the Committee to ground its decision in kuleana and stated that the General Plan guides land use, infrastructure, economic development, and protection of cultural and natural resources. He expressed concern that replacing General Plan 2045 with a substantial rewrite could undermine public process, Native Hawaiian rights, consultation, and the County's ability to influence decisions affecting federal lands [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 41:31]

Josephine Keli'ipio testified against General Plan 2045 and stated that she had changed her earlier position after reviewing concerns about the plan's climate change-related content. She urged rejection of the 2045 draft. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 47:32]

Third-Party Reports; Government Officials

Pursuant to Hawai'i Senate Bill 405 (2025), signed into law as Act 72, the AC may receive and discuss information from third-party reports by any government official not included in the publicly noticed agenda, but may not make decisions on matters raised through such reports until a later meeting with proper notice. No third-party reports were presented. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 51:40]

Business

Chair Pelletier reordered the agenda to take up Business Item 2, regarding Hawai'i County Council Bill 66 (Draft 2), as the first item of business. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 13:20]

1. Hawai'i County Council Bill 66 (Draft 2): The AC will discuss Bill 66 (Draft 2), including its potential implications for the Kona CDP and any relevant developments arising from the April 7, 2026 meeting of the County Council Policy Committee on Planning, Land Use, and Economic Development. The AC will consider submitting testimony to the Council on this matter. Supporting materials are included in the meeting packet:

- Communication No. 2026-05 Testimony of Planning Director Jeffrey Darrow – Bill 66, Draft 2
- Communication No. 2026-06 Documents and Supporting Information – Bill 66, Draft 2

107 This item was called to order at approximately 12:56 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP
108 51:45]

109 Chair Pelletier summarized the status of Draft General Plan 2045, which was before
110 Council as Bill 66, Draft 2, and described Council Member Ashley Kierkiewicz's
111 proposed substitute document, referred to during the meeting as the "General Plan
112 2026" proposal. He noted that the 2026 proposal was introduced as an amendment to
113 General Plan 2045, that Corporation Counsel had discussed whether such a
114 substantial change could proceed, and that additional public, state, and federal
115 consultation would likely be required if the proposed substitute moved forward. Chair
116 Pelletier also noted that the 2026 proposal did not yet include maps, while land use
117 maps are a required component of the General Plan. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP
118 52:54]

119 Vice Chair Pisicchio stated that the proposed 2026 document was concerning
120 because, if adopted as a substitute amendment, it would replace the 2045 draft rather
121 than remain as a separate option for further work. She stated that the 2026 proposal
122 is too stripped down, removes important planning and implementation material, and
123 reduces opportunities for community participation. She cited the implementation
124 chapter of the 2005 General Plan as an example of language that helped establish the
125 CDP program. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 56:25]

126 Committee Member Young stated that it was concerning for a substantially different
127 proposal to be introduced late in the process. He said that, although he did not agree
128 with every part of the General Plan 2045 process, he did not believe the existing draft
129 should be dismissed. He also emphasized that the world and planning issues are more
130 complex than they were decades ago, and that the County needs to recognize
131 changing environmental conditions, including impacts to reefs and ocean resources.
132 [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:02:03]

133 Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen commented on outside influences, aloha 'āina, the
134 need to uphold public process, and the importance of scrutinizing planning
135 amendments while recognizing the long history of outside influence in Hawai'i. [SEE
136 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:05:49]

137 Vice Chair Pisicchio moved that the Kona CDP Action Committee recommend that the
138 Council not support the substitution requested through Communication 372.192 and
139 instead work collaboratively to make further improvements to and adopt Bill 66, Draft
140 2, the 2045 General Plan. The motion stated that Bill 66, Draft 2, includes visions,
141 objectives, policies, actions, and implementation provisions compatible with the Kona
142 CDP and that the proposed substitute does not qualify as an amendment but
143 constitutes a complete rewrite and new general plan. Committee Member Young
144 seconded the motion. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:08:22]

Chair Pelletier stated that neither plan is exactly what the County needs, but that continuing to work from the 2045 draft would provide a better path than starting over with a proposal written by one council member and not yet supported by the same level of community or Planning Department collaboration. Vice Chair Pisicchio further noted that General Plan 2045 includes a section supporting the County planning system and the CDP program, while the proposed 2026 substitute eliminates much of that material. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:13:13]

The Committee voted unanimously to submit the testimony to Council, with Chair Pelletier to present or submit the testimony as appropriate. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:16:41]

This item concluded at approximately 1:17 p.m.

Quorum was lost at approximately 1:17 p.m. when Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen left the meeting. The Committee continued with discussion only and took no further action. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:17:14]

- 2. Tree City USA Designation:** Committee Member Charla Thompson will provide an update on the County's designation as a Tree City USA community. Discussion on next steps and potential action to follow.

This item was called to order at approximately 1:22 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:18:32]

Chair Pelletier called for public testimony on this item. No public testimony was provided.

Committee Member Thompson reported that the County had officially received the Tree City USA designation and that she had begun reviewing suggested next steps. She described possible future work, including forming a committee or nonprofit effort, identifying a steering committee, coordinating with arborists and County departments, planting appropriate trees in parks and along public roadways, increasing shade in parking lots and walking areas, supporting arboretums and educational projects, and exploring grants and maintenance funding. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:18:59]

Vice Chair Pisicchio thanked Committee Member Thompson for her work and suggested that the AC invite people with direct experience in Tree City USA implementation to provide a public presentation. She suggested that County staff and community members with arborist experience, including Kevin Sullivan, may be able to help explain what the designation requires and what opportunities it creates. Committee Member Young noted that funding, potential ordinance changes, and possible capital improvement needs may need to be considered once the program requirements are better understood. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:22:06]

Discussion also addressed the importance of tree species selection, cultural and traditional practices, use of trees for food and lā'au lapa'au, maintenance of existing trees, tree safety, shade, walkability, and coordination with other organizations. Committee Member Thompson stated that she would begin identifying presenters and next steps for a future discussion. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:27:55]

This item concluded at approximately 1:41 p.m.

Public Testimony on Matters Not on the Agenda

Pursuant to Hawai'i Senate Bill 869 (2025), signed into law as Act 53, testimony on matters not on the agenda may be limited to three minutes per speaker. Chair Pelletier called for testimony at approximately 1:46 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:42:07]

Janice Palma-Glennie provided testimony regarding the General Plan process. She stated that she agreed with some concerns raised by testifiers about process and public outreach, while also believing that planners had tried to engage the public. She stated that some meetings felt too top-down and urged broader outreach and improved meeting formats to help rebuild trust and incorporate public concerns through the General Plan 2045 process. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:42:42]

Proposed New Business

This item was called to order at approximately 1:49 p.m. Committee members discussed placing the General Plan on the next agenda for a report on Council action, continuing discussion of the Tree City USA designation and next steps, and exploring whether Committee Member Young would have a water-related update. Committee members also discussed coordinating Tree City USA information with the other CDP Action Committees. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:45:13]

Announcements

Chair Pelletier provided an update on Senate Bill 2372, Relating to Trees. He stated that the AC had submitted testimony, that the bill had passed House committees with minor amendments, and that the Committee's testimony had been referenced in committee reports. He reported that the bill had passed third reading in the House and would next move through the remaining legislative process. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:48:48]

Chair Pelletier also announced Hawai'i County Council Bill 147, relating to short-term vacation rentals. He explained that the bill would redefine hosted and unhosted short-term vacation rentals, identify where such uses may operate, and proceed through the Planning Commissions before returning to Council. Janice Palma-Glennie commented that vacation rental regulation is important to land use and community planning even though the Kona CDP may not expressly mention vacation rentals. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:51:43]

216 The Planning Department is seeking applicants for the Kona CDP Action Committee.
217 The application can be found on the Mayor's office website at:
218 <https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions>

219 The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 2026.

220 **Adjournment**

221 Chair Pelletier adjourned this meeting at 1:59 p.m.

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