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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

PUNA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE

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Thursday, June 17, 2010
Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Barbara Bell called the PCDP Action Committee meeting to order at 3:07 p.m. in the Kea'au Community Center, with the following persons present:

Action Committee: Barbara Bell, Frank Commendador, Madie Greene (left at 5), Keikialoha Kekipi, Wesley Owens, Daniel Taylor, Tim Tunison. Excused: Jeffrey Krepps. Unexcused: Larry Higgins.

Staff: Larry Brown (Planning Department, Project Manager), Elizabeth "Liz" Hultman-Salfen (Planning Department, Community Planning Assistant), Cynthia Lahilahi Verschuur (Planning Department, Recorder).

Public servants: Faye Hanohano (State House Representative, 4th District), RJ Hampton (County Councilwoman Emily Naeole-Beason's office, 5th District), Shelly Ogata (County Councilman J. Yoshimoto's office, 3rd District).

Media: Tiffany Edwards Hunt

Members of the public**:** 21, including 7 students

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

1. **James Weatherford** from HPP, who formerly worked in mass transit, called our system "substandard". He testified on the need for bus service to the airport, asked about getting a "hub and spoke" system and bus stops. He said that we need to get people to take the bus as an alternative to driving their cars, not just a social welfare service for people who have no other means of transportation.
2. **Stephanie Bath** testified on behalf of 10 Puna residents who signed a petition advocating a Hele-On hub system. She personally asked the AC to request that the Mass Transit Authority (MTA) staff and Mayor Kenoi ride the bus for one week as their exclusive mode of transportation for all business and report back their findings. As a member of the PCDP Steering Committee, she asked the AC to make it a priority action to review the County mass transit plan currently in place for the purpose of creating a Puna mass transit master plan that meshes with the island-wide master plan (item 4.2.3.a of the PCDP). She offered that resident riders in Puna can come together to create the

master plan and show support for the item in section 4.2.3 to establish express routes.

3. **Katrina Bath**, 15 year-old Waiākea HS student from upper Puna, rides the bus a lot and offered to provide input. She testified in support of the hub and spoke system (PCDP item 4.2.3.c) and on the inconvenience of the current bus schedule for getting home after sports practice.
4. **Noah Bath** testified on the bus system and said we need more vehicles, like vans, to put into a hub and spoke system. Suggested conducting a census of bus riders at specific times for specific routes to determine where more buses are needed. When he started riding Hele-On bus it was empty, now it is full. Said the bus should be considered a primary, not a secondary, mode of transportation.
5. **Rob Tucker** spoke on Bill 194 and the amendment process. He said breaking the bill down into smaller segments would be more practical, but that the bill is one item and will either pass as a whole or not pass. He asked the AC to consider testifying on that concept.
6. **Tiffany Edwards Hunt** introduced four 10th and 11th graders from Kea'au High School who are participating in a summer journalism program. She had some questions for Tom Brown about parking issues in Pahoa, Maku'u "park and ride" as a solution, and the status of a designated bus stop at Pahoa HS. She also testified in favor of a paratransit system.
7. **Alexa von Alemann** from Paradise Park testified on the difficulty of using the bus, and said she wouldn't mind paying $1 per ride. She also advocated for park and ride.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Wes moved to approve the minutes of the special AC meeting held March 25 and continued on April 8, 2010. Madie seconded, all voted in favor. Wes moved to approve of the minutes of the April 15 meeting. Madie seconded, all voted in favor. Dan moved to approve the minutes of May 20, Wes seconded. After some discussion, all voted to approve minutes as written.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Puna mass transit/bus service update (Tom Brown, County Mass Transit Agency Administrator)

   A. Usage

      i. Ridership has increased 20% since last year and continues to rise.

      ii. 1.1 million passenger trips expected by end of June for this fiscal year.

      iii. Pahoa-Hilo route has 11 buses/weekday, one of county's largest route systems, averages 14-16,000 riders each month.

   B. Funding

      i. Operating funds: $3 million from County, $900k from vehicle weight tax, $900k from federal funds.

      ii. Capital expenditure funds: $1.2-2 million/year from federal earmarks.

      iii. Bus has been free since Oct. 2005, will remain free at least through June 2011.

C. Island-wide bus stops
   i. SSFM created plan, which identified 125 bus stop/shelters.
   ii. County has secured funding for 18 bus stops, East Hawaii stops were designed by Hilo Engineering.
   iii. Two stops per council district slated for completion by the end of 2010.
   iv. Bus stops will look like the one on Aupuni Street between Aupuni Center and the old County building.
   v. Site planned at Pahoa HS but project on hold because of DOE stipulations.

D. Maku'u Park and Ride
   i. Contracts have been signed by Maku'u Association, should be effective July 1.

E. Paratransit services
   i. County funded Hawaii County Economic Opportunity Council to provide services in Puna.
   ii. "Coordinated services for the elderly" provided through the Department of Recreation.

F. Routes through private subdivisions
   i. Corporation Council is reviewing proposed routes that go through private subdivision roads to identify issues and concerns and to find solutions that will enable bus routing. Tom said he would ask the Corporation Council to write up a report for the AC. Frank asked for a response within one month.
   ii. Necessary approvals to allow mass transit operations on private subdivision roads varies depending upon how ownership is held and how they are legally managed.
   iii. Service through Seaview Estates and Leilani will be on line soon, including a new early bus along the Pohoiki route around 5:30 a.m.

G. Airport service
   i. Reason given for not having bus service to airports: Council and Mayor's position is they don't want to negatively impact Big Island small businesses, i.e. taxi companies.
   ii. Pahoa riders can get close via Hele-On, then can get a voucher-based, shared-ride taxi for $2-3. Can travel within Hilo up to 9 miles using one of 8 or 9 taxi services for around $4. Voucher system has been in place since 1991.

H. Hub and spoke system
   i. Federal "job-area reverse-commute" grant of $350k in place to fund program.
   ii. Passed by County Council, waiting for funds to become available.
   iii. The system will be implemented as soon as possible. MTA has funding which could last two years. Planning can start now, but could take 4 months to design system. Tom said he would get something in writing to the AC regarding the implementation timeline.

I. Highlights from public questions

   i. To track ridership, MTA uses driver's logs, video and audio surveillance.

   ii. There is a GPS vehicle location system in place to track buses; MTA does random checks and people can call 961-8744 to report bus schedule discrepancies.

   iii. The express bus from Pahoa to Hilo leaves Pahoa at 8:15 a.m.

   iv. Bike lockers are scheduled to go in at Maku'u and Mo'oheau Bus Terminal.

   v. The MTA will be adding alternate energy hydrogen buses to the fleet.

2. Planning Commission's Recommendations on Bill 194

   A. Larry B. updated the AC on the status of Bill 194. The soonest the Council would hear the bill would be at the July 22 meeting.

   B. Dan reported on the Planning Commission meeting.

      i. He gave a written statement on behalf of the AC.

      ii. A motion to send Bill 194 on to the Council with a positive recommendation received a 2:2 split vote, so the Commission was required by its rules to forward a negative recommendation to the County Council.

      iii. Barbara proposed sending an AC member to the Council meeting to testify on behalf of the AC, and to submit the written testimony early enough to get it on the Council agenda and ensure Council Members have ample time to read and consider it.

      iv. **Frank moved to authorize Dan and Barbara as the AC spokespeople on this issue, Keiki seconded. All voted in favor.**

3. General Plan (GP) Amendments

   A. The AC discussed how to address the Planning Director's request to identify any amendments needed to implement priority actions in the Puna CDP.

      i. GP document is available via the county resource website.

      ii. The GP review/amendment process is scheduled to be completed in 2015.

   B. Larry B. recommended the AC identify priority projects first, then look at the GP to see if it needs to be amended to facilitate implementation of those projects.

4. Subcommittee Reports

   A. Amendment Subcommittee

      i. Discussed whether subcommittee should be dissolved. Consensus was to keep it in place, at least until action on Bill 194 is completed.

   B. Budget & Finance Subcommittee

      i. Discussed the Planning Director's denial of Council Member Emily Naeole-Beason's request for the use of Geothermal Relocation and Community Benefits Fund to support the Puna CDP Action Committee.

      ii. No change in the Planning Department CDP budget for upcoming fiscal year.

a. New CPA contract expires in one year, recorder's contract expires at the end of Sep. 2010.

b. Larry B. plans to ask for a no-cost extension to keep the recorder position filled using remaining funds that were allocated for 2010.

c. Liz is looking for grant funding for support staff for Puna and island-wide CDPs.

iii. Reviewed Planning Department report on Geothermal Fund expenditures.

a. $300k earmarked to purchase "Steam Vents" and do environmental studies for the 10-acre parcel.

C. Mālama I Ka ʻĀina Subcommittee

i. Identified top priority: establishing a waste water treatment facility for Kapoho Beach Lots, Farm Lots, and Vacationland Estates.

a. Next step is to get $30-40k for funding study.

b. Barbara suggested the subcommittee meet with RJ Hampton, Eric Schott and Senator Russell Kokubun to identify funding resources. Should also meet with the lead agency, Dept. of Environmental Management, to find out what the community can do to facilitate.

ii. Second highest priority (moved up from 4^{th}) is to create the Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zone for the greater Volcano area.

a. Larry B. suggested going to other jurisdictions to see how the process worked, Barbara suggested creating an inventory of what is there.

D. Managing Growth Subcommittee

i. Discussion on options, such as Form-Based Code being calibrated for Kona Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and Kaʻu Village Centers under the Kaʻu CDP, which may serve to as a substitute for the Floating Zone designation proposed for elimination from the Puna CDP in Bill 194.

ii. Larry B. recommended deferring discussion. Talked to Ron Whitmore, program manager for the Ka'u CDP, about coming in August or September to talk about what they are doing.

iii. Larry B. said if Bill 194 passes and the floating zone tool gets thrown out of the CDP, they will have to figure out another way to do village centers. Either way, the zoning code has to be changed to have an effective means of implementing the Village Center concept.

E. Transportation Subcommittee

i. Met on May 27, came up with a priority action list and criteria to determine priorities.

ii. Recognize the need for excellent communication with the public to make the public aware of what the CDP says on major transportation projects and to move the projects forward. PMAR is especially difficult because it will affect so many people.

iii. Drafted memo to Warren Lee regarding prioritization of the PMAR project, initiating the functional classification report and getting the project on the STIP.

iv. Larry B. still hasn't heard whether there is money available from the remaining 2004 general obligation bonds. If there is, the AC can call on the Dept. of Public Works to get the functional classification report done. State CIP funds lapse in two years.

v. **Frank moved to approve the letter to Warren Lee, Wes seconded. All voted in favor.** Discussed copying the Mayor, State Senator Kokubun, State Representative Hanohano, and Councilwoman Naeole-Beason. Barbara gave Larry B. the draft to finalize.

vi. Discussed Friends of Puna's Future proposal to adjust the way county fuel tax revenues are allotted.

vii. Next meeting July 17 at the Kea'au Community Center at 3 p.m.

5. Action Committee Workshops: No suggestions

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

1. Consolidate action items from the different subcommittees, prioritize top five or six action items.
2. Subcommittee reports with priorities due one week before July 15 meeting.
3. Reports/Guest Speakers for future meetings:
   A. Parks and Rec. - future plans
   B. Milton Pavao, Dept. of Water Supply - aquifer
   C. PMAR - Warren Lee
   D. Dept. of Hawaiian Homes (Micah Kane) - latest developments in Puna

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

1. **Jon Olson** recommended the AC request a written statement from the Planning Director regarding the relationship between the General Plan and the CDP. Larry B. said if there is a conflict between the two, the General Plan takes precedence, as per chapter 15 of the GP.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 6:26.