

1 PUNA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2 ACTION COMMITTEE
3 COUNTY OF HAWAII

4 DRAFT MINUTES
5 April 23, 2026

6 **Call to Order and Roll Call**

7 Chair Susie Osborne called the meeting of the Puna Community Development Plan (CDP)
8 Action Committee (AC) to order at 5:01 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the Kea'au
9 Community Center and online via the Zoom platform.

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

11 https://youtu.be/-V4j3g_HJic?si=hR_YuTcxITyNhu60

12 AC Members Present (in person):

- 13 • Susie Osborne, Chair
- 14 • Leilani DeMello, Vice Chair
- 15 • Stephanie Bath
- 16 • Franny Brewer

17 AC Members Present (via Zoom): Leila Kealoha

18 AC Members Absent: Jennifer Scheffel

19 Planning Department Staff Present:

- 20 • Janice Hata
- 21 • Jessica Lahip
- 22 • Maryam Palma

23 There were approximately 26 members of the public in attendance (20 in person and six
24 via Zoom).

25 **Approval of the Minutes**

26 Chair Osborne requested approval of the February 26, 2026 draft meeting minutes at
27 approximately 5:04 p.m. AC Member Bath moved to approve the minutes as drafted, and
28 AC Member DeMello seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. [SEE
29 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:48]

30 **Public Testimony on Agenda Items**

31 Chair Osborne called for public testimony on agenda items at approximately 5:04 p.m. No
32 public testimony was provided at this time. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 03:18]

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. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 04:21]

Road Connectivity Update

Patti Pinto of the Planning Department – Recovery Division provided an update on Puna road connectivity and reported that the Department of Public Works (DPW) had been reviewing three connectivity points that may be implemented in the coming year. These connectivity projects would provide additional access for four subdivisions and improve the ability of residents and first responders to travel between subdivisions and Highway 11.

- Puhala extension between Fern Acres and Kopua Farm Lots/South Kopua Road: This project would provide additional access for Hawaiian Acres, Fern Acres, Kopua Farm Lots, and Eden Roc. Construction plans had been submitted and that right-of-entry documents were being reviewed, including by Corporation Counsel, because of title issues related to the road lot.
- Fern Forest and Eden Roc connection on Kaleponi: Patti Pinto described this as a short connection, estimated at approximately 200 to 300 feet, that would require clearing and dozing and would depend on cooperation between the relevant community associations.
- Ola'a Road connection: DPW had begun investigating ways to connect Ola'a Road to the upper area of Hawaiian Acres and Orchidland using and improving existing roads where feasible. In response to a question, Patti Pinto clarified that the route may cross the old Volcano Trail but would not use it.

Patti Pinto also noted recent state legislation allowing subdivisions without title to certain subdivision roads to assume title when the corporation that originally held the road lot has been dissolved for more than five years. The AC discussed the importance of community association cooperation and continued updates on this work.

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 05:40]

Business

- 1. Kea'au Benioff Health Center Project Presentation:** Informational presentation by project representatives regarding the proposed project and its relevance to the Puna Community Development Plan.

This item was called to order at approximately 5:12 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 10:59]

Chair Osborne called for public testimony. No testimony was provided at this time.
[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 11:55]

Dan Brinkman, Chief Executive Officer of Hilo Benioff Medical Center and the East Hawai'i Region of Hawai'i Health Systems Corporation, presented information on the proposed Kea'au Benioff Health Center, which is intended to expand local access to healthcare for Puna residents. A project video was shown describing the need for primary, urgent, specialty, diagnostic, wellness, and behavioral health services in the Puna region. The video can be accessed using the following link:
https://youtu.be/UV_tTSQZPVA?si=yPFmtfFzwf1cbkCX

Dan Brinkman stated that the project is planned for a 20-acre site in the Shipman area near Kea'au, within an area identified for regional services and commercial development. The single-story facility is expected to open toward the end of 2028 or early 2029, depending on permitting and approvals. He stated that the projected cost had increased to approximately \$80 million due in part to infrastructure needs at the new location. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 19:08]

The proposed services include primary care, enhanced urgent care, specialty clinic days or hours, diagnostic imaging, and outpatient behavioral health for children and adults. Dan Brinkman clarified that the center is not planned as a hospital or emergency room and would not receive ambulances; emergency cases would continue to be transported to a hospital setting. He stated that the urgent care model could safely handle a broader range of non-emergency needs because imaging services are planned on site. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 33:14]

The presentation noted that imaging services are expected to include X-ray, ultrasound, and CT, with possible mammography and future MRI as population growth warrants. Behavioral health services were described as preventive and outpatient in nature, not crisis or inpatient care, with space planned for both adult and child services. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 35:05]

Committee members and the public asked questions about the existing Kea'au clinic near Longs, hospital services, dialysis, solar energy, staffing, local hiring, cultural responsiveness, landscaping, and transparency. Dan Brinkman stated that the existing clinic is part of East Hawai'i Health and could move into the new facility, though future use of the current space had not been determined. He stated that a hospital is not anticipated in Puna because of population, cost, and operational feasibility, that dialysis presents similar sustainability challenges, and that solar is not currently planned based on the organization's return-on-investment analysis. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 41:17-54:48]

Peggy Farias of W.H. Shipman stated that Shipman is selling the land to the medical center and that the area is envisioned in the Puna CDP and Shipman master planning as a hub for regional services. She stated that Shipman is also discussing possible county services nearby, including a fire station, police station, other county services, commercial services, grocery options, and a possible transit hub. Chair Osborne

requested that Shipman return to present more concrete plans to the AC as the plans develop. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 58:53]

No formal action was taken on this item.

This item concluded at approximately 6:00 p.m.

2. Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Preservation Commission (PONC) Presentation: Informational presentation by County staff providing an overview of the PONC nomination process, including properties in Puna that have been nominated and/or are on the current priority list.

This item was called to order at approximately 6:01 p.m. There was no public testimony at this time. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:01:36]

Benjamin Schapiro, County staff assigned to the PONC program, provided an overview of the Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Preservation Commission and the County's land acquisition and stewardship processes. He stated that PONC was established by public referendum in 2006 to preserve and protect the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Hawai'i Island by acquiring and protecting important coastal, cultural, and natural resources. He reported that, to date, the program has helped protect 30 properties totaling nearly 11,000 acres islandwide. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:02:36]

Benjamin Schapiro explained that nominations may be submitted by the public and are considered annually, with the annual cycle closing at the end of January. Nominated properties must meet at least one statutory purpose, such as recreation and access, cultural or historic protection, natural resource preservation, agricultural land preservation, or watershed protection. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:05:41]

The presentation included a summary of the PONC process: the PONC Commission reviews nominations, conducts site visits, consults with nominators and community members, scores and ranks properties, and prepares an annual report for the Mayor by December 31. The report is then transmitted to the County Council, which may adopt resolutions authorizing the Director of Finance to negotiate for acquisition by fee simple purchase or conservation easement. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:07:12]

Benjamin Schapiro highlighted Puna properties, including Pohoiki Bay, acquired in 2015, and Wai'eale, acquired in 2021. He stated that Honolulu Landing was in active negotiation and that the County hoped to close by the end of May 2026. He also noted that Kumukahi had received a unanimous Council resolution the day before the meeting. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:09:14]

The presentation also described the maintenance fund, which supports stewardship grants to qualified community organizations. Benjamin Schapiro stated that grant applications are expected to open in July and be due in August and clarified that the \$3 million cap discussed during the presentation is the total cap for the maintenance fund, not an amount available to a single organization. He reported that the

149 preservation fund has approximately \$22 to \$24 million available. [SEE YOUTUBE
150 *TIMESTAMP 01:10:32*]

151 Chair Osborne noted that Puna has fewer PONC-acquired properties than some other
152 districts and encouraged continued attention to preserving important Puna lands. It
153 was also noted that the County is seeking applicants for a Puna representative on the
154 PONC. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 01:13:55*]

155 Committee members and members of the public asked questions about stewardship,
156 multiple stewards on one parcel, state or county land, grant timelines, and parcel sizes.
157 Benjamin Schapiro stated that multiple stewards may be appropriate where roles are
158 clear, non-overlapping, and coordinated; there is no size requirement for nominated
159 parcels. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 01:15:43*]

160 No formal action was taken on this item.

161 This item concluded at approximately 6:28 p.m.

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

163 This item was called to order at approximately 6:29 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP*
164 *01:27:32*]

165 Dave Webb testified by Zoom and asked about public transparency in public-private
166 partnership decision-making. He also asked about the status of the County General Plan
167 and whether the Puna CDP would be updated to align with it. Chair Osborne and Council
168 Member Matt Kaneali'i-Kleinfelder explained that the General Plan remains under review
169 and that review of the Puna CDP would occur after the General Plan is approved. [SEE
170 *YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:28:17*]

171 Council Member Kaneali'i-Kleinfelder also discussed the importance of planning
172 holistically for Kea'au and Puna as growth continues, including coordination among the
173 proposed health center, regional commercial and public services, police and fire facilities,
174 parks, public facilities, roads, water, sewer, and mass transit. He stated that police and fire
175 had prioritized the Kea'au police and fire station project and that the Mayor had asked
176 departments to begin looking at design needs. He noted that the Pāhoa police and fire
177 facilities function as substations and that a Kea'au facility could reduce travel time for calls
178 across the district. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 01:32:34*]

179 In response to questions from AC Members, Council Member Kaneali'i-Kleinfelder stated
180 that the Puna Makai Alternative Route (PMAR) study had been completed and that DPW
181 would be organizing community meetings with affected communities. AC Members
182 emphasized that PMAR discussions should include the broader Puna community because
183 regional traffic and evacuation routes affect communities beyond the immediate route
184 area. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 01:39:48*]

185 This item concluded at approximately 6:45 p.m.

Proposed New Business

At approximately 6:46 p.m., committee members and members of the public suggested several items for future agendas, including:

- Continued road connectivity updates from Patti Pinto as a recurring update.
- An update on Kīlauea recovery projects.
- Discussion of food security issues, including possible incentives or support for people growing food.
- Future presentations from County departments and/or partners regarding the Kea'au police and fire station, parks and recreation, mass transit, Shipman area planning, and other regional services related to the Puna CDP.
- Follow-up on the PMAR study and upcoming public meetings, with attention to broader Puna impacts.

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:43:00]

Judi Houle of Hawaiian Paradise Park (HPP), co-chair of the Sustainable Development Committee, requested assistance regarding a proposed commercial development by Ohana Foods and Gas and Pacific Realty Organization, LLC, on approximately 20 acres in HPP. She stated that the proposal discussed with residents included a grocery store and gas station, with possible future phases. She raised concerns about agricultural zoning, deed history, subdivision roads, lack of water, sewer, sidewalks, streetlights, access, traffic, safety, road maintenance costs, possible pollution, and the County and State permitting process. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:46:42]

Chair Osborne encouraged a discussion with Planning Director Jeffrey Darrow. Council Member Kaneali'i-Kleinfelder noted that any special management area, special permit, rezoning, or related permit process would include public notice and opportunities for testimony. AC Members also encouraged review of the Puna CDP and asked that Judi Houle return with updates. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:51:24]

Announcements

Chair Osborne provided announcements at approximately 6:59 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:57:42]

The County of Hawai'i announced the launch of the Coastal Zone Management Atlas, a new online tool to help the public explore coastal hazards and ecosystems. The Planning Department announced informational webinars to introduce the Atlas, including a May 7, 2026 webinar from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

The Planning Department is continuing to seek applicants for the Puna CDP Action Committee and encouraged interested community members to apply through the County's boards and commissions process. The link to the boards and commissions website can be accessed here: <https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions>

224 The next meeting of the Puna CDP Action Committee was announced for Thursday, June
225 25, 2026.

226 **Adjournment**

227 Chair Osborne adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:01 p.m.

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