

1 KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2 ACTION COMMITTEE
3 COUNTY OF HAWAI'I
4 DRAFT MINUTES
5 June 9, 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 12:05 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/1EVKjdax-UQ?si=ejDOgREESlzpT-BH>

12 **Roll Call**

13 Members Present (in person):

- 14 • John Pelletier, Chair
- 15 • Nancy Pisciocchio, Vice Chair
- 16 • Raymond "RJ" Kirchner
- 17 • Shane Palacat-Nelsen (arrived at approximately 12:11 p.m.)
- 18 • Charla Thompson

19 Members Present (via Zoom): Charles Young

20 Members Absent: Roselyn Molina

21 Planning Department Staff Present:

- 22 • Jeffrey Deason
- 23 • Maryam Palma
- 24 • Janice Hata
- 25 • Kawelo Kalili (via Zoom)
- 26 • Jessica Lahip (via Zoom)

27 Deputy Corporation Counsel Jean Campbell was present via Zoom.

28 There were approximately six members of the public in attendance (two in person and
29 four via Zoom).

30 **Approval of Minutes**

31 Chair Pelletier requested approval of the May 12, 2026 draft meeting minutes at
32 approximately 12:09 p.m. Vice Chair Pisciocchio moved to approve the minutes, and
33 Committee Member Kirchner seconded the motion. There being no discussion or

corrections, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the May 12, 2026 draft meeting minutes. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 03:34]

Public Testimony on Agenda Items

Chair Pelletier called for public testimony on agenda items at approximately 12:09 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 04:11]

Josephine Keli'ipio testified regarding Bill 66 and the Draft General Plan 2045. She stated that she believed climate change should not be used as a guiding policy in General Plan 2045 and expressed concern that climate change could be used to explain recent disasters without encouraging critical thinking about their causes. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 04:35]

Janice Palma Glennie testified via Zoom regarding Bill 147. She stated that Bill 147 was complicated and does not achieve what many residents want it to do and urged stronger limits on short-term vacation rentals to support affordable and workforce housing. She suggested limiting short-term vacation rentals to resort nodes, with an exception where the homeowner lives on site, and stated that hosted use is not the same as an owner living on site. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 06:26]

Chair Pelletier acknowledged written testimony from Lauray Walsh regarding Bill 147, which was attached to the meeting packet. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 08:26]

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. Chair Pelletier called for third-party reports from government officials. No third-party reports were presented. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 08:41]

Business

1. Introduction to the Tree City USA Program: Presentation by Le'a Ka'aha'aina of the Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program regarding the Tree City USA program, including an overview of the program's purpose, eligibility requirements, benefits, and opportunities for community participation. Discussion and potential action to follow.

This item was called to order at approximately 12:14 p.m. Chair Pelletier asked whether anyone wished to testify on this agenda item. No public testimony was provided. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 08:54]

Le'a Ka'aha'aina introduced Kaulunani, the State of Hawai'i Urban and Community Forestry Program housed within the Department of Land and Natural Resources,

70 Division of Forestry and Wildlife. She stated that Kaulunani supports Hawai'i
71 communities in cultivating well-being and resilience through relationships with trees
72 and forests where people live, work, learn, and play. She described community forests
73 as including trees in parks, along streets, in yards and subdivisions, on school
74 campuses, and in other public spaces, and stated that trees support water and air
75 quality, climate resilience, equity, food security, human health, education, the
76 economy, and community safety. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 10:23]

77 Ms. Ka'aha'aina explained that Tree City USA is an annual national recognition
78 program administered by the Arbor Day Foundation to raise awareness of community
79 trees, set foundational standards, and celebrate community improvement. She
80 described the four standards for participation: a tree board or department with legal
81 authority and responsibility for public tree care decisions; a public tree care ordinance;
82 annual spending of at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry; and an Arbor Day
83 observance with a proclamation. She stated that counties in Hawai'i are a strong fit for
84 the program because Hawai'i does not have incorporated cities in the same way as
85 many mainland states. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 13:50]

86 Ms. Ka'aha'aina reported that Hawai'i County was recognized as a Tree City USA
87 community for 2025. She thanked Committee Member Thompson for spearheading
88 the application and acknowledged support from the AC, Planning Department staff,
89 Kaulunani, the Outdoor Circle, County Council members, and the Mayor. She stated
90 that Hawai'i County met the Tree City standards through the Mayor's Arborist Advisory
91 Committee, the County's exceptional tree ordinance, Department of Parks and
92 Recreation tree-related expenditures, and County plant giveaways and Arbor Day
93 messaging supported by a mayoral proclamation. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 19:14]

94 Ms. Ka'aha'aina identified near-term opportunities for growth, including designating
95 who will prepare the annual Tree City application, supporting updates to the
96 exceptional tree law and related ordinances, considering expansion of the Arborist
97 Advisory Committee's role, and increasing support from the Mayor and County
98 Council. She identified longer-term opportunities including broader tree care
99 ordinances, filling or refining a County arborist position, and pursuing a Tree City
100 Growth Award. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 24:53]

101 Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen asked how the Tree City program avoids
102 introducing invasive species or selects trees appropriate to local conditions. Ms.
103 Ka'aha'aina stated that Tree City USA does not prescribe a specific invasive-species
104 mechanism, but communities can use ordinances or expenditures to support native
105 species, remove invasive species, and tailor the program to local needs. [SEE
106 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 31:20]

107 Chair Pelletier asked about the vacant County arborist position referenced in the
108 presentation. Ms. Ka'aha'aina stated that her understanding was that the position was
109 in the Department of Parks and Recreation, though she was not certain whether its

status had changed. Chair Pelletier stated that the AC could research the status and potentially consider a future letter to the Mayor if a position exists and remains unfilled. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 33:05]

Public questions via Zoom asked what “incorporated community” means and who chooses which trees are planted. Ms. Ka’aha’aina explained that eligible communities must have a governing structure able to adopt and enforce ordinances, laws, or policies, and that tree selection would be guided by County plans, the tree care board, and professional staff. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 33:59]

Committee Member Young asked about the \$2 per capita expenditure standard, County budgets, and tree maintenance contracting at Ho’okena Beach Park facilities managed through agreements with Parks and Recreation. Ms. Ka’aha’aina responded that the \$2 per capita amount is a minimum and that in other counties a professional arborist or urban forestry staff position often manages tree care budgets, contracts, and standards. Committee members and public participants also discussed volunteer maintenance, liability, tree safety, tree trimming, and the need to protect trees while maintaining public safety. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 35:58]

No formal action was taken. This item concluded at approximately 12:49 p.m.

- 2. Urban Forestry Presentation:** Presentation by Jill Wagner, forester and tree advocate, regarding urban forestry and tree stewardship efforts in cities around the world, including strategies for improving county tree maintenance practices, appropriate species selection, and long-term urban forestry management to support climate resilience and watershed health. Discussion and potential action to follow.

This item was called to order at approximately 12:49 p.m. Before the presentation, Committee Member Young suggested that the AC consider a future letter supporting the filling of the County arborist position. Chair Pelletier stated that additional research should be done first to determine the specific status of the position. No public testimony was provided on this item before the presentation. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 43:27]

Jill Wagner, forester, tree advocate, and chair of the Hawai’i County Arborist Advisory Committee, gave a presentation on urban forestry and tree stewardship. She acknowledged the Outdoor Circle’s history of beautification, tree planting, opposition to billboards, and support for the exceptional tree law. She then described the global movement to green cities and stated that urban trees are increasingly recognized as important to quality of life, climate resilience, public health, and community well-being. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 44:54]

Ms. Wagner described examples of communities with substantial tree canopies and discussed the relationship between urban tree cover, heat, and public comfort. She stated that shade beneath trees can be significantly cooler than direct sunlight, that

tree planting is an important climate mitigation strategy, and that trees also contribute to water and watershed health. She discussed research on forest ecology, tree communication, roots, mycorrhizal networks, and the ways trees can affect human stress and health. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 47:31]

Ms. Wagner presented photos of trees on Manawalea Street and Walua Trail that she believed had been severely over-pruned or cut back. She stated that harsh pruning can remove shade, prevent trees from retaining natural form, and lead to weak regrowth that is more vulnerable to wind damage. She also showed examples from other communities where root conflicts were addressed by building around trees rather than removing them, and she encouraged thoughtful maintenance practices. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 57:40]

Ms. Wagner suggested that the County could benefit from advisory support on species selection, size at maturity, planting location, maintenance standards, and coordination with County offices and community groups. She stated that community partnerships, including with the Outdoor Circle and other organizations, could support tree planting and maintenance. She also stated that not all trees in urban settings need to be native, but species should be selected carefully for site suitability, safety, noninvasiveness, and long-term function. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:00:01]

Vice Chair Pisicchio described seeing a large tree canopy over an urban street on O'ahu and stated that the Kona CDP's goals for transit accommodation, multimodal transportation, higher-density development, and urban core planning should include green space and trees. She stated that new development should not be planned without accounting for trees and green space, and she supported a County tree plan that addresses species selection and proper maintenance training. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:03:44]

Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen asked whether the data and examples presented included traditional ecological knowledge. Ms. Wagner stated that she did not know the specifics of how traditional ecological knowledge was incorporated into those examples. Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen emphasized the importance of including traditional ecological knowledge and a balanced process in any County tree management plan. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:05:41]

Chair Pelletier asked whether the Arborist Advisory Committee would support taking on expanded responsibilities related to urban tree care. Ms. Wagner stated that, as chair of the Arborist Advisory Committee, she would support that direction and believed the committee could help advise on tree care, maintenance, taxonomy, and appropriate species selection. Vice Chair Pisicchio noted that Maui County's arborist committee has broader duties and suggested that the AC could work with Ms. Wagner on a possible legislative package to expand Hawai'i County's Arborist Advisory Committee responsibilities. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:07:23]

187 Public discussion included comments from Janice Palma Glennie regarding the
188 importance of shade along the Kona Open Space Network [*SEE YOUTUBE*
189 *TIMESTAMP 01:11:22*]

190 Committee Member Kirchner asked whether tree planting could be considered along
191 Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway to improve the appearance of the entry into Kona. Ms.
192 Wagner stated that such an effort could be valuable if species were selected
193 thoughtfully for drier conditions. Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen noted that some
194 community members have historically preferred open ocean view planes and the
195 natural lava landscape, and again emphasized that traditional ecological knowledge
196 should be part of planning decisions. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:14:27*]

197 A Zoom participant asked about tree barriers and root conflicts with asphalt, roads,
198 plumbing, and urban development. Ms. Wagner responded that tree roots are
199 generally equivalent to the tree's crown size and that urban forestry decisions should
200 match species, root behavior, canopy size, and available space to the planting site.
201 [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:22:44*]

202 No motion was made and no formal action was taken. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP*
203 *01:24:50*]

204 This item concluded at approximately 1:30 p.m.

205 **3. Hawai'i County Council Bill 66 (Draft 2), Relating to the County of Hawai'i General**
206 **Plan 2045:** The AC will discuss Bill 66 (Draft 2), including updates from the first and
207 second readings before the Hawai'i County Council and potential implications for the
208 Kona CDP. The AC may consider and take action, including the submission of
209 testimony to the County Council.

210 This item was called to order at approximately 1:31 p.m. Chair Pelletier asked whether
211 anyone wished to testify on Bill 66 and noted the earlier testimony provided by
212 Josephine Keli'ipio. No additional public testimony was provided on this item. [*SEE*
213 *YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:25:02*]

214 Chair Pelletier reported that Bill 66 had passed two readings before the County Council
215 and was with the Mayor for action. He stated that the Mayor's deadline had not yet
216 passed and discussed the possibility that the Mayor might decline to sign the bill or
217 veto it. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:25:44*]

218 Vice Chair Pisicchio reflected on the public testimony submitted to the Council and
219 stated that much of it appeared to reflect a lack of trust in government. She stated that
220 the "silent majority" may also reflect lack of trust because some residents do not
221 believe testifying will make a difference. She stated that the AC can serve as an
222 interface between residents, local government, and planning processes to show that
223 participation can achieve results. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:26:29*]

Committee members discussed possible future General Plan amendments after adoption. Chair Pelletier and Vice Chair Pisicchio stated that future amendments would likely follow the normal amendment process and would need to be introduced through the County Council. Committee Member Thompson asked whether important amendments could move more quickly, and Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen stated that the process is part of democracy even when it is frustrating. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:28:01]

Janice Palma Glennie commented on the importance of CDP AC outreach and suggested that, after the General Plan discussion settles, the AC could focus on a few necessary changes and bring in additional community voices. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:31:29]

No motion was made and no action was taken. This item concluded at approximately 1:39 p.m.

- 4. Hawai'i County Council Bill 147, Relating to Transient Accommodations:** The AC will discuss Bill 147, including potential implications for the Kona CDP. Potential action to follow.

This item was called to order at approximately 1:39 p.m. Chair Pelletier asked whether anyone wished to testify on Bill 147. No additional public testimony was provided beyond earlier testimony and the written testimony already acknowledged. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:33:10]

Chair Pelletier reported that, since the AC's prior meeting, the AC's testimony on Bill 147 had been submitted to both the Windward and Leeward Planning Commissions. He stated that the Windward Planning Commission had discussed the bill and deferred action, with much of that meeting's testimony focused on transient accommodations on agricultural land. He also noted newspaper coverage of the AC's testimony and stated that the Leeward Planning Commission had lacked quorum at its last meeting and might discuss Bill 147 at a later meeting, possibly June 30 if placed on the agenda. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:33:42]

Committee Member Thompson asked about enforcement and whether hosted vacation rentals that do not conform to neighborhood character could be addressed. Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen stated that short-term rentals had changed the culture of his traditional fishing village and made land unaffordable for many local families. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:36:12]

Committee Member Young raised concerns about enforcement capacity, funding, and monitoring of online advertisements. He stated that the County should be able to compare online listings with permitted or registered vacation rentals and should not rely solely on penalties to fund enforcement. Vice Chair Pisicchio stated that other

261 jurisdictions require official registration numbers for online postings and fine platforms
262 that allow unregistered listings. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:39:21]

263 Committee Member Kirchner stated that County enforcement is a broader problem
264 across several areas. He stated that many short-term rentals are purchased by people
265 who do not live in the community, who then use the rental income to support
266 occasional personal use while increasing housing prices and rents. [SEE YOUTUBE
267 TIMESTAMP 01:45:46]

268 Committee members and public participants discussed reasons property owners may
269 choose short-term rentals over long-term rentals, including the ability to use the unit
270 for part of the year and concerns about difficult long-term tenants, eviction, and
271 damage. Chair Pelletier stated that encouraging long-term rentals is important for
272 teachers, workers, and the broader community, and that the AC could continue
273 examining disincentives to long-term rental housing. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP
274 01:47:01]

275 No motion was made and no action was taken. This item concluded at approximately
276 2:00 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:54:24]

277 **5. Holomua Marine Initiative Talk Story Update:** AC Member Charles Young will
278 provide an update regarding recent community talk story sessions held across Hawai'i
279 Island and ongoing efforts related to the Department of Land and Natural Resources,
280 Division of Aquatic Resources Holomua Marine Initiative. Discussion may follow. For
281 more information, visit the following link:
282 <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/holomua/hawai%ca%bbi-island-talk-story-events/>

283 This item was called to order at approximately 2:00 p.m. Chair Pelletier asked whether
284 anyone wished to testify on this agenda item. No public testimony was provided. [SEE
285 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:54:32]

286 Committee Member Young stated that the Holomua Marine Initiative is primarily under
287 the jurisdiction of the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the Division of
288 Aquatic Resources, but he emphasized that County decisions also affect the ocean.
289 He stated that land and ocean health are connected, and that the County and State
290 should work across jurisdictional silos because land use decisions, water use,
291 wastewater, golf course runoff, and other land-based activities affect nearshore
292 resources. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:55:11]

293 Committee Member Young summarized the Holomua process, including the formation
294 of a Navigation Team, or NAV team, intended to represent districts or regions around
295 the island and eventually make recommendations to the Division of Aquatic Resources
296 on management tools. He stated that the process stems from the 30x30 initiative
297 announced by Governor Ige in 2016, which has evolved into Holomua, and that 2030
298 is not necessarily a fixed deadline. He noted that nominations for the NAV team are

299 open and encouraged AC members to follow the process, network with interested
300 community members, and provide feedback through the Holomua website. [SEE
301 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:58:08]

302 Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen described the connection between the Kona CDP
303 and Holomua through traditional ecological knowledge, including the principle that
304 what happens on land also happens in the ocean. He discussed coral restoration work
305 in Kealahou, impacts from land use and development, and the need for the County
306 to understand Holomua because future ocean management policies may affect County
307 zoning, development, transportation-oriented development, and housing decisions.
308 [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:01:32]

309 Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen stated that Holomua is part of a broader
310 international movement to improve ocean management and that meetings across the
311 island have focused on the characteristics and responsibilities of NAV team members
312 and on how jurisdictional boundaries should be defined. He stated that he had
313 recommended using CDP districts as a model, with separate North and South Kona
314 representation, because existing districts can reflect place-based knowledge. [SEE
315 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:04:18]

316 Public and committee discussion considered whether CDP districts could be an
317 appropriate model for Holomua representation. Committee Member Young stated that
318 a CDP-based model could make sense because land-use decisions in each district
319 may affect ocean resources, and because cross-jurisdictional communication could
320 help prevent impacts to the ocean from decisions made on land. He stated that the AC
321 could consider a future recommendation to the Division of Aquatic Resources, while
322 recognizing that the AC is not part of DAR. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:07:26]

323 Chair Pelletier stated that the Holomua matter could be placed on the next agenda,
324 including potential discussion of a recommendation to the Division of Aquatic
325 Resources. Committee Member Palacat-Nelsen offered to help draft language. No
326 motion was made and no action was taken. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:12:35]

327 This item concluded at approximately 2:19 p.m.

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

329 Chair Pelletier called for public testimony on matters not on the agenda at approximately
330 2:19 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:13:52]

331 Janice Palma Glennie testified via Zoom regarding the Keauhou resort proposal. She
332 stated that the discussions about land, ocean, trees, and Holomua reinforced her concern
333 that the proposed development could have lasting impacts on the land and ocean. She
334 noted an upcoming Third Circuit Court hearing regarding the project. [SEE YOUTUBE
335 TIMESTAMP 02:14:17]

336 Committee members also discussed future opportunities for public and AC input when
337 special management area applications are submitted and reviewed by the Leeward
338 Planning Commission. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:15:30]

339 **Proposed New Business**

340 This item was called to order at approximately 2:24 p.m. Committee Member Kirchner
341 requested that the next agenda include discussion of whether to invite the Director of the
342 Department of Water Supply to discuss water infrastructure capacity, any studies of that
343 capacity, and the Department's understanding of the sustainable capacity of the aquifer.
344 He also requested discussion of whether to invite the Director of Public Works to discuss
345 the Lako Street extension, the Kahului-Keauhou Parkway, possible alternatives, and other
346 transportation-related uses. Committee members expressed support for considering
347 letters or invitations to the directors, while noting that the next agenda discussion would
348 be about whether to invite them, not the merits of the underlying water or roadway issues.
349 [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:18:55]

350 Chair Pelletier stated that Bill 147 and the Holomua Marine Initiative would be placed on
351 the next agenda. Committee members also discussed placing the Keauhou resort matter
352 on the agenda if SMA applications are submitted before the agenda deadline. [SEE
353 YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:21:28]

354 Chair Pelletier stated that additional agenda items may be emailed to the Chair, Vice Chair,
355 and the CDP team at CDP@hawaiicounty.gov. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:24:26]

356 **Announcements**

357 Chair Pelletier announced upcoming Mālama 'Aimakapā Community Workdays at Kaloko-
358 Honokōhau National Historical Park. Workdays were scheduled for Thursday, June 11,
359 Thursday, July 9, and Saturday, July 11, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. [SEE YOUTUBE
360 TIMESTAMP 02:24:35]

361 Chair Pelletier announced that the Kona International Airport master plan update meeting
362 was scheduled for Monday, June 22, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in Council
363 Chambers. He stated that airport representatives had expressed a desire to align the
364 master plan update with the Kona CDP. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:24:55]

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

368 The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, 2026.

369 **Adjournment**

370 Chair Pelletier adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:31 p.m.

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