

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

COUNTY OF HAWAII

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

9:05 a.m. to 11:06 a.m.

(Online meeting via WebEx videoconferencing)

Commissioners present:

Justin Pequeño, Chair
Jon Olson, Vice Chair
Georjean Adams
Melissa Cardwell
Dee Fulton
Rick Gaffney
Lee McIntosh

Staff present:

Ramzi Mansour, Director
Brenda Iokepa-Moses, Deputy Director
Eric Takamura, Wastewater Deputy Division Chief
Alika DeMello, Wastewater Operations Superintendent
Diana Mellon-Lacey, Deputy Corporation Counsel
Konrad Kaipo, Sewer Maintenance Working Supervisor
Sanne Berrig, Recycling Specialist
Peter Sur, Secretary

Others present:

Councilmember Holeka Inaba, Councilmember Rebecca Villegas, Council Legislative Assistant Wendy Baez, Nancy Cook Lauer, Sandra Demoruelle, Jennifer Navarra, Michelle Nicholls, Jerome Warren, unknown other(s).

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Pequeño called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. He opened by asking for a moment of silence for the passing of former Mayor Billy Kenoi on the previous day.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 16, 2020

Motion and second: Commissioner Adams moved to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Gaffney seconded the motion.

Commissioner McIntosh commented that he would prefer his last name be used in the minutes, consistent with practice for other commissioners, instead of “Commissioner Lee McIntosh.” Chair Pequeño noted two instances and indicated he would make the change.

Motion, second, and vote: Commissioner Adams moved to approve the minutes as amended, Commissioner Fulton seconded the motion, and all commissioners voted aye.

3. STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Pequeño thanked everyone for attending. The year 2021 has a lot of positivity coming forward with the coronavirus vaccines being rolled out. Many communities around the nation and the world are having access to the vaccine and it’s coming out in phases, meaning that hopefully in person meetings can resume soon, between summer and the end of the year.

The chair also reflected on Mayor Kenoi’s legacy. He told a story of Kenoi’s days in law school at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. Kenoi was one of two or three Native Hawaiians in his class and the only one from Hawai’i Island. He would show up to class wearing board shorts and slippers and would often be underestimated, but he was one of the most brilliant people in the room, and that was a paradigm shift for a lot of people around him. We are definitely proud of all the wonderful things he did for our island. The chair thanked the former Mayor’s family for sharing him with us for many years.

Chair Pequeño also wished Mayor Roth well in his recovery so that he too could continue to make an impact on our island.

4. PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Jerome Warren: Mr. Warren provided testimony on agenda item 5(a). He said previous director was an unapproachable bureaucrat, but the department has a recycling coordinator from Wisconsin, who seeks opinions, and an abandoned vehicle coordinator from New Zealand who also seeks opinions. Both these people are open to change in policy. There is also a gentleman from Montana in Traffic Services who is just as creative. His hope is that the new director is of the same dynamic mindset and is just as pleasant to talk to. We need to do this to restore faith in the department. As far as the EPA’s mandate is concerned, there are two of us in Nā’ālehu who have contact with the District 9 office, he said. We have both lived in Nā’ālehu for a total of seven decades, he said. A one-on-one discussion with us would be more constructive than the department’s sewer plans that were forced upon this town, he said. We must stop throwing good money after bad. Go back to the drawing board and do something simple and practical. Let developers install their own infrastructure.

Sandra Demoruelle: Ms. Demoruelle also spoke on agenda item 5(a). Unfortunately, she said, the new department leadership has inherited about \$1 billion in planned but unfunded CIP projects, including our Nā'ālehu septic conversion that has ballooned from a price tag of under \$10 million in 2007 in a final EIS that covered both Pāhala and Nā'ālehu to more \$137 million for Nā'ālehu alone. One reason for the escalating price tag is the consultant paid for “pie-in-the sky” design, but has failed to follow the law for environmental protection. A prime example is found in the 2019 Brown and Caldwell contract for Nā'ālehu, which amounted to almost a million dollars. This contract states the consultants will facilitate a Section 7 consultation to satisfy the Endangered Species Act requirement for mitigating harm from this project, which is to be located on conservation land specifically set aside to protect our Ka'ū avian and mammal threatened and endangered species. But the consultants should have known and should have informed the County that because this project is lacking federal participation, no Section 7 consultation is available, she said. Instead the project triggers Section 10, the incidental take permit process. This is a different process that requires a federal EIS to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requirements. Meanwhile, instead of getting the 2019 environmental review, the taxpayers have gotten nothing. So please ask Director Mansour about Contract 7672, which is one of many wasteful Kā'u contracts that have stretched unaudited for 14 years with no end in sight, she said.

Chair Pequeño also acknowledged receiving written testimony from Ms. Demoruelle and Jennifer Navarra.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. Introduction of new department leadership

Chair Pequeño recognized Commissioner Fulton to speak on this item.

Commissioner Fulton thanked Ms. Demoruelle and Mr. Warren for their persistence, and assured them that there are Commissioners who are open and supportive, and she hoped for an Administration open to seeking practical solutions. There are alternatives out there and we need to figure out how to move in that direction.

Deputy Director Brenda Iokepa-Moses introduced herself as a longtime resident of Pāhala. She heard the residents and said the team has inherited quite a task. She has a background in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, as a state director for Hawai'i and the Western Pacific, and she brings a lot of resources that we need to think about entertaining. The County cannot do it all. We do not have the funds, but the federal government has a much deeper wallet than we do. These projects that we are talking about for health and well-being are very much projects that the federal government would be interested in helping. She is looking at every avenue – the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, all these big players because we cannot do it alone. And the way the project has been going, we need a new set of eyes. The Deputy Director took the job knowing there would be some difficult situations, but

she is down for helping and down for making it work. She said we can move forward in a better direction. She has been a grassroots community member for 25 years. She is retired from the military with 21 years of service with the 411st combat engineer unit located in Hilo. She feels comfortable coming on board with Director Ramzi Mansour, who brings 30-plus years of wastewater management. Both would be good partners together to locate avenues. She is used to thinking outside the box and getting the things we need. We don't want to jeopardize environmental safety, she said – that is something we will not compromise on – but as far as how to get there to get there, we have a new approach and a new vision for how that is going to happen. The Deputy Director then introduced the Department's new private secretary, Peter Sur. She said he would be vital to the team and has a lot of experience writing ordinances.

Chair Pequeño asked Mr. Sur to introduce himself.

Mr. Sur thanked the Department's leadership team for bringing him onboard. He acknowledged the outgoing Chair and pledged to work with the Commission in the future as it tackles challenges. He is willing to serve, having a background in journalism (Hawai'i Tribune-Herald staff writer 2004-2012) and working as a County Council staffer from December 2012 to January 2021. He is looking forward to getting involved in many issues and acknowledged the public testifiers on the call.

The Chair asked Director Mansour to introduce himself as well.

Director Mansour offered his thanks to the Commission. His team looks forward to hitting the ground running, and though there are many challenges he is very blessed to have Deputy Director Iokepa-Moses and Mr. Sur on the team, bringing a lot of knowledge and experience. He acknowledged the concerns raised in public testimony and said his first day on the job involved a major meeting with the consultant, and he gave his thoughts about what is going on. The route that is being taken for Pāhala and Nā'ālehu is challenging and to him, is unacceptable. Unfortunately, with the Environmental Protection Agency deadline, we are backed into a corner. We are supposed to have a design complete and submitted in July. We set up a meeting with the Mayor's office and Corporation Counsel to discuss maneuvering around the EPA and finding out our options. It's becoming a very costly project, and the County cannot afford it. We definitely will give them alternatives on the design and they are looking into the alternatives, which hopefully will save us millions and millions of dollars. We're tackling that issue in addition to the waste treatment plants within the island. In addition to that, his experience doesn't only end with wastewater. He said his 30 years of experience was a combination of solid waste and wastewater. So he is very well-rounded when it comes to solid waste issues, from design to construction, operations, and programs. Hopefully with his team, the Department will get the Commission on the right direction to become more economically efficient and provide for the safety of our constituents, he said.

Commissioner Gaffney asked Director Mansour about whether the proposal for cheaper alternatives that were shared with Brown and Caldwell could be wholly funded by the federal government, or whether County taxpayer money is required.

Director Mansour said that unfortunately the prior administration had committed to these two projects to be under the county, and with bringing the new deputy director onboard, our goal is to see how much we could secure from the federal and state governments to get these two projects running. We are facing the administrative order of consent, and they have a timeline, and they have two meetings with the EPA, he said. The challenge now is that we are trying to get the EPA on our side. They're kind of on the side of getting the project going and following deadlines and so forth, but they are overlooking the massive issue of cost, and it's just mindboggling to him to have regulatory agencies hammering us on these projects while not taking into account the cost as a big consideration. We are talking about almost half a million dollars per connection per house. This is unheard of and unacceptable. So definitely there are challenges. We still have more meetings with the consultants, and we have just started, and hopefully we can come to the conclusion that hopefully at least when we cut the cost down to something reasonable, we can have it funded by state or federal money. This is something where the Deputy Director can assist us.

Commissioner Gaffney cited newly sworn in U.S. Rep. Kaiiali'i Kahele and U.S. Senator Brian Schatz as advocates who can help turn the EPA around and make them understand that the community does not need a \$500 million solution to a \$5 million problem. He said the commissioners could reach out to the Mayor or the Council with a letter asking for the support of our senators and members of Congress.

Director Mansour said this was a good idea and he had a meeting scheduled with the Mayor and Corporation Counsel to discuss the issue next week. He is glad to hear that the Commission and the Department are on the same page, and he said he would definitely tap into those resources.

b. Election of Commission chair and vice-chair for 2021

Chair Pequeño explained the role of the Chair is to act as a facilitator of meetings. There is a lot of behind the scenes work that happens but he hopes for active participation. While COVID-19 has upended many practices, in the past the Chair would attend many community meetings as a representative of the Commission and in support of the Department. Those may resume this year. The Chair and Vice Chair are buddies and back up, and the Vice Chair acts in the event the Chair cannot attend a meeting. He opened the floor for discussion for those interested in becoming Chair.

Commissioner Adams indicated her interest in serving as Chair. She said she believes she could act as a facilitator, although she will continue to take opportunities to continue to offer opinions. She thinks she can be fair to everyone to get input and will look forward to doing innovative things for public outreach, as well as working with the Department. While she's "not dying to be the chair," she is willing to serve. Commissioner Adams started her career as a junior bureaucrat in the EPA in Washington, D.C, working under the Toxic Substances Control Act. She then worked for a short time at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and then worked for 3M Co., dealing with state, national, and international matters around

environmental regulations, product stewardship. After 25 years, she left and formed her own consulting business, and worked with companies, helping them with product stewardship and regulatory issues. She moved to Hawai'i Island around six years ago and for a while was president of Recycle Hawai'i, but decided a better fit would be on a policy board like the Environmental Management Commission. Her professional background is in product stewardship, environmental regulation, and life cycle management, trying to find practical solutions to issues. Her technical background is in biochemistry and environmental policy.

Vice Chair Olson made a motion to accept Commissioner Adams as next Chair; to which Commissioner Gaffney made a second; however, the motion was deemed out of order, and Commissioner Olson withdrew his motion.

Chair Pequeño noted no other nominations for Chair. He then asked if there were any nominations for Vice Chair.

Commissioner Gaffney said he was willing to serve as Vice Chair. A lifetime resident of Hawai'i, he has been involved in ocean-related conservation since the 1970s. He has continued to work in meeting concern for the primary polluter on the Kona coast, which is the Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant. He has been doing this for a long time, and has testified in the national and state levels, and is involved in an international project as well. Since retiring he has the time to commit to the Commission.

Commissioner Adams spoke in favor of Commissioner Gaffney, noting that his interest in wastewater would complement her own experience in solid waste.

Motion, second, and vote: Commissioner Fulton moved to close the nominations, and Commissioner Cardwell seconded the motion. There was no further discussion.

On the vote to accept Commissioner Adams as Chair of the Environmental Management Commission, all commissioners voted aye.

On the vote to accept Commissioner Gaffney as Vice Chair of the Environmental Management Commission, all commissioners voted aye.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Discussion on the Commission's priorities for 2021 and beyond.

Chair Pequeño explained that he had asked everyone to bring one topic to emphasize as a priority for the coming year, and allowed 5 to 10 minutes for individual presentations.

Vice Chair Olson (Council District 4) said his two top priorities are 1) Enhancements to solid waste infrastructure, given that the population in Puna is booming; and 2) the wastewater treatment plant for the Pahoia town center. He said we have significant challenges in Puna that

go beyond the latest volcanic episode. There are between 80,000 and 120,000 available land parcels for somebody to come and build something, and we're going to have some discussion about where we go with the new Council, he said, and about how we're going to deal with the infrastructure for lots that are there are available to be built on. They're all in private hands now. The County is in the position of being able to respond, and that's going to be really big challenge, he said.

Of the available building lots, the Vice Chair said we are probably about one-third of full buildout in Puna. There is a building boom in the central corridor from Hawaiian Beaches to the areas around Pāhoā. If you look at documents that were produced during the planning process, there should be planning for road infrastructure, water infrastructure, sewage infrastructure, and solid waste infrastructure that either needs to be built or some solution needs to be achieved to reduce the density. The Lanipuna Gardens-Leilani Estates areas are all zoned Agricultural-1 acre. These are lots that have been inundated by lava, so are we going to deal with the issues of the high hazard zone? And that is a topic all unto itself. It certainly isn't going to start going away if we don't start talking about it soon, the Vice Chair said. He hopes to have meetings with the new Mayor soon.

So we have some tools, and we have the discussion out there, and we have to have discuss how to move forward, Vice Chair Olson said. His dissatisfaction with the County's failure during the recent lava inundation is pretty much endless, he said. If you want to know how bad it really was from a planning perspective, read the after-action report, he said.

Commissioner Cardwell (Council District 5) began her presentation next, which was titled "Moving forward with composting: Challenges and ideas." She said that about one-third of materials going into the landfill is organic material. If we want to make a dent in diverting waste, organic material is a good place to start. Food waste at the commercial level is being handled by local pig farmers, and green waste is mostly being used by the mulching program, though that can be expanded. The residential organic waste stream is not being addressed on a large scale and that is where the County can step in. Compost is extremely valuable. Growing food is important to move toward self-sufficiency. One of the challenges is that there is no defined legislation around composting. The state laws regarding composting were last updated in 1994. So that's a long time ago. It's not clear how to go about doing compost legally and logistically. So we need coordination with the State and the federal government. The new federal government administration is putting climate change and environmental justice at the forefront of their priority. We are at a really good time where it is possible not only to get funding but have some clear definitions around the legislative practice, and develop best standardized practices. The withdrawal of Hawaiian Earth Recycling from the contract for the East Hawai'i Organics Facility is a blessing in disguise because as we have seen in a lot of public testimony, they were not in support of that project. It was an expensive project that does not make sense for our island and our population density.

What people are calling for is we need a decentralized composting network, Commissioner Cardwell said. If HER withdraws from the contract, the contract needs to be

closed so we can move on with a plan more feasible and practical. My last question is, what is happening with the \$10.5 million earmarked for that project? Is that money available and would it be available to make progress with a decentralized composting network? She would like an answer to that question as soon as possible.

What would this look like to have a network of composters around the island? A good way to start would be a pilot program for processing, scaled and duplicated around the island. A facility would serve a specific community. These could extend to other communities around the island. Another idea would be to have a collection and drop-off system. The Shipman Business Park project had no clear plan about how the organic waste was going to be brought to the facility and how it would be picked up once finished. There are a lot of localized haulers within the community. They could transport materials to the processors, and this would cut down on distance of transportation, and mitigate the hazards associated with transport of waste. This is going back to the legislation, she said. We need clear legislation around composting. In addition, there would be a separation of roles so that the burden is not simply falling on one individual. Some organizations are engaging in composting but they do not have the manpower to deal with all of organic waste. She called for a collaborative network of the public and the private sector, and also some financial support from the County. The issue comes up a lot. We need for them to be properly funded and have consistency from one Administration to the next in order to make some progress. The Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan lays out plans to increase revenue, such as the "Pay as you Throw" proposal and a fee associated with collecting solid waste. We could increase revenue if we follow the ISWMP and implement these programs. And lastly, we don't need to reinvent the wheel. These composting programs are happening around the country. It really does come down to having good legislation and county partnerships to have this happen.

Commissioner McIntosh (Council District 6) spoke next. He said he was going to focus on encouraging the new Administration and the Director to re-evaluate the current wastewater plans for Nā'ālehu and Pāhala and going possibly look at going back to original design, especially considering the short amount of time we have to do additional research, and the smell is really a problem, then implementing scrubbers would still be much cheaper over the long run than the current plans that they are pushing forward. We will know in the next couple of months considering that we have a deadline, he said.

Commissioner Fulton (Council District 7) addressed sewage management and its impact on water quality. She showed a map of the Keauhou area and circled five areas of concern. There are many possibilities to bring new sewer-connected homes into a wastewater treatment plant, but the problem is that plant is in private hands. The He'eia plant is owned by Hawai'i Water Service. This would be a fabulous opportunity for a public-private partnership with HWS to bring more homes onto a sewer system. However, the obstacle is the 1997 Hawai'i Supreme Court decision *Konno v. County of Hawai'i*. The action that she is seeking is for the Hawai'i County Council to discuss legal action with the Honolulu City Council to see what we can do to legitimize a public-private partnership. This would be tremendously beneficial to be able to get some action in this area, she said. Commissioner Fulton wanted to acknowledge Cindy

Punahole, the project director at Kahalu'u Education Center, who along with Commissioner Gaffney and former Commissioner Rick Bennett, and Council Member Rebecca Villegas, have been working with former Managing Director Roy Takemoto to get a sewer improvement district designation. If we get the designation, we can make headway. We do know that Hawai'i Water Service is open and very welcoming to the idea of a public-private partnership, she said. Their plant right now is operating at a reduced capacity because of COVID. Normal flows are operating at a capacity of 0.4-0.5 million gallons per day and it has a capacity for 0.85 mgd, so it can double its capacity. There is potential for wastewater recycling. The Kona Country Club is happily accepting R-2 water and is using it on the golf course, and the golf club can accept more water. So that is her first ask, to explore how legally we can work past the Konno decision and work toward a public-private partnership. The second area of concern is to clean up Kailua Bay. The bay is very important to a number of people as a recreational destination. We have a perfect storm at Kailua Bay because it is such a popular destination and yet we have all this development right there. Lots of people, lots of development, and very aged infrastructure. So Commissioner Fulton's second ask is that she would like the County Council to take action to legitimize the inspection of the sewer laterals. The county can explore their sewer mains with cameras, but they can't look at those laterals. Honolulu can inspect their laterals. It is a matter of language, and the County Council can put language into the code to allow the Department to check out and inspect those laterals. Commissioner Fulton said the bay is constantly receiving sewage from all the leaking laterals. Seawater is going into the system and being pumped up to the plant. Seawater coming into plant not a good thing. And also the big thing is we cannot recycle that water if it has a high saline content. So we have a lot of reasons to get this issue under control. It's going to increase the health of the water, it's going to support public health, and it's going to enable us to recycle and reduce cost to the taxpayer. The commissioner's third long-term goal was to support an extension of the highway, the midway between Ali'i Drive and Kuakini Highway. Sea level rise is coming. At some point facilities will probably relocate. While she's not the biggest fan of development, this is a serious issue and we have to get ahead of this issue that we can see is coming.

Commissioner Gaffney (Council District 8) said his number one issue is the Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant and the continuing dumping of 1.8 million gallons per day of barely treated wastewater into a cesspool behind the police station. It has been going on for a long time and is completely inappropriate. We are supposed to be getting rid of cesspools, and we are dealing with getting rid of hundreds of them in some areas, and yet the largest single polluter on this island is the Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is dumping into hole in the ground. He said it is scientifically certain that water is making its way from a hole in ground to the ocean. The result of that water that was Class AA, the highest quality ocean water in the state in 1970s when Honokōhau Harbor was first built, has deteriorated to impaired status, and that's a travesty. The island is dependent on ocean recreation tourism, as a primary reason people come here, and no matter what we do with tourism, it is absolutely inappropriate that we are destroying the goose that laid the golden egg, he said. The ocean is an important resource for our island and the practice has got to stop. Sadly, the previous administration decided to stop forward progress toward R-1 water at the Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant, and that needs to be reversed immediately. We need to get back

in line for R-1 treatment. However, that is only part of the solution. The long term plan is that even after we have R-1 water, we will not have enough users to utilize all of it, because the park that was supposed to be created in the area where water is currently being dumped has not moved forward. And in any event, it would not be able to use water produced by the wastewater treatment plant.

Commissioner Gaffney said he asked the Chair to forward a copy of an article that was just published in Civil Beat that lays out a much larger solution to this problem. First, we should begin to connect the people that need R-1 water with the wastewater treatment plant. There are numerous problems to get there; for instance, when the Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway was widened, plumbing was put in, sewage pipes were put in, and return lines were put in, between Kealakehe Parkway, which is the entrance to the harbor and also the road that goes by the West Hawai'i Civic Center. Those lines were terminated at Kealakehe Parkway. And they run north to Kohanaiki development, and part of the reason for that was that Kohanaiki wanted to buy R-1 water from the wastewater treatment plant. So, he said, we basically have a plumbing system between the Kealakehe Parkway and the wastewater treatment plant that is incomplete. That needs to be completed. That either needs federal money or state money. That needs the cooperation of the Department of Transportation, and so on, Commissioner Gaffney said. Then we need to look at getting other places along the Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway that currently do not have access to the sewer treatment plant, and get them connected. One of the largest of those would be Honokōhau Harbor, which has inappropriate sewage treatment systems. There are cesspools, leaking septic tanks, and broken injection wells at Honokōhau, and the whole harbor needs to be sewerred and go to the treatment plant, and hopefully come back. The larger solution that he looked at really requires the new Administration to reach out both at the federal and state levels, and get a lot of people involved toward a solution. The Department of Land and Natural Resources, the Department of Health, the Department of Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and probably Department of Agriculture funds could be brought to bear and all of these things need to be pursued and explained, and persistence is required for a solution to be able to happen. Commissioner Gaffney's proposal went further because he recognized the agricultural needs of this island and of the State, in order to increase our sustainability, we need to look at exporting agricultural opportunities in the State. He looks at the agricultural park at the bottom of Ka'iminani Drive. It was created in the 1980s and was filled immediately and was full ever since it was created, yet the Department of Agriculture has done nothing to expand the agricultural park. There is adjacent land owned by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and another 100 acres of agriculturally zoned state-owned land, and he cannot find who is responsible for it, immediately east, mauka of the agricultural park. If the agricultural park were expanded to include those two hundred-acre parcels, it would be mean triple the water needs for that park. Currently 100 percent of agriculture in that park is being used by water from our diminishing aquifers, and if we could get R-1 water there, we could get all of the water there through recycled water, and it would eliminate the use of valuable drinking water for agriculture in that area. And while he was looking at the agricultural park, he was considering what is across the street from it, which is the Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology Park, which is administered by the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority, and they have something very interesting. They have a lot of

high-nutrient waste. And their high-nutrient waste is being dumped into a trench, which currently flows back into the ocean. If at least some of that high-nutrient waste could be used in the production of compost, then we have a win-win situation because if we increase the agricultural park to 350 acres from its current 139 acres, and we have immediately adjacent compost, then we have a win-win for the farmers in the agricultural park. All of that is laid out in that Civil Beat piece that Chair Pequeño shared. So Commissioner Gaffney said he was trying to look at the big picture, look at the long term, look out of the box, and look at available resources that are available on this island. He reiterated it is a win-win situation. He mentioned some of the agencies need to be involved. The Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism needs to be brought in as well. One of the advantages that NELHA sells for its clients is it is one of the highest areas for solar radiation in the state. There is so much sunlight available that the opportunities for solar power generation, for taking our green waste and turning it into high value compost is all there. Whether this larger, broader plan can be executed, we will see in the long term. But it is an example of looking at the bigger picture and looking at solutions.

Commissioner Gaffney wanted to mention one more thing that was in the article, which is the concept of using Ane Keohokālole Highway as a transmission corridor for water coming from the wastewater treatment plant. The Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant is on the makai side of the highway, opposite the waste transfer station and the police station. The wastewater line already crosses Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway in order to get to the current sump. It is a matter of moving water from the sump to Ane Keohokālole Highway, and then to Ka'iminani Drive, which is where the highway is going. And that's already under way, and that brings that water to the lands that are designated for agriculture above and around the agricultural park. One of the things that is an opportunity right now is we are close to realizing the extension of Ane Keohokālole Highway from Hina Lani Drive to Ka'iminani Drive. If that construction is going to go ahead, it is an ideal time to put in transmission lines both ways, a sewer line going south toward the treatment plant, and a recycled water line going north. Part of what he is saying there is we need to start thinking long term about where we need to be to move our wastewater – not only to sewage plants to but back from sewage plants to where the water can be utilized. The bottom line is we need to work with the new Department leadership, with the new mayor, and with our legislators and with a number of state agencies, and congressional representatives and senators to be sure that the money and the foresight, and the long-term planning necessary to solve this long-running problem can be coordinated and undertaken.

Speaking next was Commissioner Adams (Council District 9), who recommended having a standard report from Director Mansour on the progress against the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan, once it is approved and accepted by the Council. The Committee had laid down a number of recommendations, and picked six priority areas – one being education and outreach, and the others being reworking the contract with Waste Management for the only landfill on the island, having more household hazardous waste collections, changing the County Code to have businesses be able to use transfer stations, and lastly considering the life cycle of the alternatives we are looking at. One of the things we supported was composting, because

we should focus on our highest volume waste going to the landfill, which is organics. Construction demolition debris is another high volume category, followed by plastic and paper, so as the Commission we should hold the Department responsible for addressing the recommendations that are in that waste management plan, and making sure progress is being made. She particularly liked the idea of having an innovation hub. We need to have integrated planning; we need to involve all sorts of organizations in the County, as well as public and private and state and federal levels need some fora (plural of forum) to talk about all the complicated pieces that go into a sustainable standpoint. How can we make it work and eliminate a lot of the barriers that we have in place right now. There is an excellent opportunity with Director Mansour and Mayor Roth to have the upcoming Sustainability Summit, about which she would like to know more information. She would like to see the Commission involved in that and contribute. In general, when she looks at the issues of solid waste and wastewater, she would rather quit thinking of those things as waste management and more of resource management. It's pitiful to put our resources buried under the ground or into the ocean. How can we reuse materials and not lose them in the first place should be our primary focus from a wastewater standpoint. We need to be thinking about water management rather than wastewater management. We can do a lot with where the water is going. We can do a lot with education to reduce the amount of waste that we are putting into our waste system. And she could also support the issue of looking at the Konno decision, and is it really a barrier? And so we can execute practical solutions. She would like to have an innovation hub to address issues such as solid waste reduction, source reduction and recycling. Regarding the idea of getting solid waste stakeholders involved and whether the Commission can support it or whether the Department can, or something we can drive before the Council, it would behoove us to pull together all the different parties in planning, and thinking long term. The sea level is going to be rising; we'd better plan for it. More people are going to move here; how do we work together? Commissioner Adams added she was hearing from others that these are cross-jurisdictional issues, and we have to figure out we are going to deal with that. And she asked as the incoming Chair how can we interact with other commissions, how can we encourage discussions with other agencies that exist, as well as working with representatives here and in the State, and on the national level – just how do you accomplish that coordination. She invited questions and comments from commissioners.

Commissioner Cardwell asked if it would be appropriate to invite people from these different departments to Commission meetings – someone from the Department of Transportation or the Department of Health – so that we could compile a list of our questions and get the dialogue happening. Hearing all these different presentations, she said it is a common theme that we have all these different departments in charge of different things, and there has to be some dialogue happening.

Commissioner Adams agreed that the Commission could have people come in and make presentations. One of the things that need to be figured out is, what are the fora that already exist that we could leverage, or are there other ways to bring that story together? Presumably as a new administration, they're going through and identifying who is working on what, and what are the hot issues coming out of what area. We might be able to take advantage of that

summary work that is being done to understand, OK, we've got the same issue, how do we get together and talk? She asked the Director and Deputy to keep the Commission informed on other areas to chime in.

Director Mansour replied that Environmental Management had met with Planning to figure out their General Plan amendment so we could at least align ourselves with a wastewater and solid waste infrastructure and growth with their master planning. In addition, he said, we are going to be recruiting for a planner in our Department to assist us on laying out a master plan for the entire island when it comes to a wastewater and solid waste infrastructure, identify the services, and hopefully move toward a better system. But as you all know, it's really about our finances. How can we finance our system? We need your support, he said. The Department would be going to the Commission on strategies as they do the master planning and identifying the sources of funding. We need to look at a system; how can we generate the fees? These things have been proven in other counties, other cities around the nation. So all we have to do is use the Commission, and use public information officers, we need to set up the fee that could support the system, so we could use composting, so we could start doing collections, so we can start doing everything that we ought to do. When he first came in, he looked at the budget, how we are going to for all these services. Unfortunately, as a government we have been giving a lot of free services. And that needs to look at and revise. Because we cannot sustain as a government having free services, while we still need roads to be fixed, fire protection that needs to be funded, and so forth, he said. So we need to be able to allocate certain funds to these services. We are going to have, eventually, a master plan for wastewater and solid waste not just one or the other, because they all go hand in hand. They all come hand in hand. He agreed with Commissioner Adams' comment: We are not waste management. We are resource management. The EPA is trying to rebrand these wastewater facilities as resource recovery facilities. So definitely, we need to recapture everything we generate and put it back into the community in some fashion or another, and there are a lot of opportunities. The Director listened to all everything that was said and there are great minds at work. We just need to get together, come up with a unified master plan, and the number one priority is the funding. Any business plan you work on, you need to identify the dollar figure, and you also need to recoup that investment. The return on investment needs to be calculated.

Commissioner Adams said one of the things we need to get across in the solid waste management plan is about the total cost of waste management. Nothing is free. You are paying for it in lots of ways, in lost resources, and buried in the General Fund and lots of places. She said we do need more transparency about how much is this really costing in dollars, environmental impact, public safety impact, and jobs. She said we need to consider the full cost of our current systems, and why we need to change them, and why we need to pull out funding mechanisms and agree that is worth spending money on.

Director Mansour said he agrees with the Commissioner. He had just finished a meeting the previous day with his senior staff, and that was number one, how can we start the public education, and start bringing people on our side, so they know what would it take to recycle, what would it take to compost, what would it take to design a landfill. So all of that comes

through the public education. He was going to tap into the Mayor's public information officer, and the Deputy Director was going to look at grants for public education. Our solid waste is 50 percent funded by the General Fund. He had a lengthy meeting with the Finance Director trying to wrap his head around the finances. He assured the Commission that he hears the concerns. We just get a \$19 million subsidy that comes straight from the General Fund. That's half of our solid waste funding that comes straight from the General Fund. So definitely, there is a lot of work ahead of us and we need to define and find ways to be sustainable financially, so we can provide the services that every other city and county provides.

Chair Pequeño (Council District 2) said that although he would be leaving the Commission, something he hopes will be revisited that was touched on during his term is the amount of storm runoff and human waste in our nearshore waters. He felt that certain techniques used by the Department of Water Supply can be used for treatment plants. Whenever there are heavy rains in Hilo, they overload our sewer system, which then overwhelms our wastewater treatment plant, and what ends up happening is untreated water and runoff goes into Hilo Bay and the beaches, which makes it dangerous for those who die from infections. The Department of Water Supply has pumps and storage tanks all around the island downslope from wells, to store water for whenever it is needed throughout the days or backup when the well experiences difficulties, malfunctions, or needs time to rest. Maybe a simple solution would be to create storage tanks around Hilo or the east side that instead of fresh water would be for wastewater. When we know heavy rain is coming, it could store wastewater for a separate time when the sewer transmission lines are not overwhelmed and we can process it at a later date. Even if could prevent portion of waste during heavy rain. This is something that could be explored to stop waste from going in.

Chair Pequeño thanked the Commission for indulging this discussion and he hoped it was informative and maybe even catalytic in terms of decision-making for the Council members and the Department, in terms of what we are looking at and are passionate about, and also what things are possible. All of these discussions that we have had so far are things that can be addressed, and hopefully with the economic packages coming through this year a few that can be acted upon. He told commissioners that these are things that they are able to push.

7. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

The Director's Report will resume at the February meeting. Chair Pequeño said he would work with incoming Chair Adams to ensure that everything that has been on the wait list will be back on there, and that he would keep Director Mansour informed what is on there and what the expectations are.

Commissioner Fulton cited the idea of SMART goals ("Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound"). She had asked the previous director to include in his report parameters for water quality that are measured at the wells, and this is an indirect way to measure progress toward controlling leakage of sewage, and she would like to ask Director

Mansour to continue that practice, and to give him a written itemization as a part of his report. She would like to see the data that is collected.

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chair Pequeño said anyone who would like to suggest an item may do so, or can email incoming Chair Adams, who would put them on the agenda.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting will be held on February 24, 2021, likely on WebEx. Chair Pequeño spoke in favor of continuing online meetings and thanked members of the public for their participation.

The Chair also reminded Commissioners to submit their financial disclosure forms.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion, second, and vote. Commissioner Fulton moved to adjourn, Commissioner Gaffney seconded the motion, and all commissioners voted aye.

The meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Approved: February 24, 2021



Peter Sur, Secretary