

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
COUNTY OF HAWAI‘I**

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 27, 2024
9:31 a.m. to 12:27 p.m.
Hawai‘i County Building, Hilo, and Zoom

A video recording is made part of these minutes, which is available at <https://youtu.be/sPaFr2GMEWU>

Timestamps are provided for reference in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 92, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes.

Commissioners present:

Georjean Adams, Chair; Dorothy Norris, Vice Chair
Laura Acasio, Jim Beets, Dell Otsuka, Erica Perez, Lee McIntosh

County staff present:

Mitch Roth, Mayor; Ramzi Mansour, Director; Craig Kawaguchi, Recycling Coordinator; Alex White, Recycling Specialist; Chris Sparber, Acting WWD Chief; Shelise Lamb, Project Coordinator; Kelly Hartman, DEM Planner; Peter Sur, Secretary; Sinclair Salas-Ferguson, Deputy Corporation Counsel

Others present:

Steve Holmes, others.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 00:15]*
Mayor Mitch Roth stopped in at the beginning of the meeting to thank the EMC for its work. Chair Adams, in turn, thanked him and DEM for their accomplishments.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 30, 2024

1. Executive Meeting Minutes (October 30, 2024): Motion to approve by Commissioner Acasio; seconded by Commissioner Beets. Decision: Approved unanimously (Ayes: 7). *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 06:54]*

2. Regular Meeting Minutes (October 30, 2024): Motion to approve by Commissioner Acasio; seconded by Commissioner Beets. Decision: Approved unanimously (Ayes: 7). *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 07:34]*

III. STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Adams commended the strong foundation established within DEM to address AOCs, emphasizing that these operational procedures will ensure continued progress regardless of potential changes in federal administration priorities. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 08:48*]

IV. PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Steve Holmes:

Expressed appreciation for the commission's work and emphasized the importance of continuing progress on legal actions and AOCs (Administrative Orders on Consent). Urged commissioners to maintain momentum and avoid setbacks. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 09:58*]

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 11:56 – 1:27:40*]

Discussion on Wastewater Division's Working Draft – June 17, 2024, of the proposed new Chapter 21 of the Hawai'i County Code relating to Wastewater Management¹.

Director Ramzi Mansour:

Emphasized the importance of ongoing efforts to prevent deferred maintenance, noting that past neglect led to significant costs (e.g., Hilo wastewater initially projected at \$334M).

Highlighted recent achievements, including equipment upgrades and solid waste improvements. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 12:49*]

Key Discussions:

NPDES Permit updates: Public comment period on Hilo Wastewater Treatment Plant starts December 19, 2024, and ends January 17, 2025.¹

Chris Sparber noted that a lot of the pretreatment language in the draft code is driven by federal requirements. The County's biggest challenges come from FOG (Fats, Oils, Grease) clogging up our sewer systems and DEM will need to work with the public to explain these regulations and pretreatment requirements.

Fee structure and how the integrated wastewater management plan roadmaps fit with the code to support public sewer connection priorities. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 18:17*]

Commissioner Perez:

requested written documentation for clarity on injection wells and wastewater facility classifications. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 32:08*]

Chair Adams:

Noted the importance of clear communication regarding fees and exemptions to prevent public confusion. Suggested, using the draft code to proactively set up criteria and processes for DEM decision-making on fees and exemptions. [SEE YOUTUBE *TIMESTAMP 53:14:890*]

¹ <https://health.hawaii.gov/cwb/active-public-notice-and-upcoming-public-hearings/notice-of-clean-water-branch-recommendations-for-water-pollution-control-permit-for-hilo-wastewater-treatment-plant-hi-0021377/>

DIRECTOR RAMZI MANSOUR:

Described the department's vision and how DEM will be sharing the Integrated Wastewater Management Plan, along with necessary policies and code changes with EMC and Council and the public as these working drafts are developed. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:03:06]

VI. NEW BUSINESS [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:28:58- 1:53:40]

1. Discuss possible policy recommendations for 2025 legislation, county ordinances. Chair Adams: Emphasized the importance of addressing the ongoing challenges related to funding. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:29:29]

Commissioners' Comments: Commissioner Perez suggested aligning county plans with ICAP (Integrated Climate Action Plan) goals for wastewater reuse and water security. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:29:55]

Commissioner Acasio raised concerns about countywide landfill diversion efforts, specifically emphasizing the need to address construction and demolition waste, as well as fast-moving consumer goods. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:52:58]

2. Discussion regarding coping with reduced DEM staffing levels.

(The Commission will discuss advice it could provide DEM related to the redesign of programs to reduce the need for additional County employees, such as automation, appropriate scaling of equipment, applying logistical optimization tools, outsourcing, resource sharing with other islands, revised prioritization, renegotiation with agencies and contractors, and other tactics to ensure DEM carries out its duties in the face of chronic staffing shortfalls. This agenda item does not include advice on DEM's management of its human resources.)

Postponed at the suggestion of Chair Adams. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:50:42]

VII. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:53:53 – 2:46:00]

- Director's Informational Report [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:53:53]

1. Legislative update: none

2. Solid Waste Division Projects and Updates [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:17:16]

1) Recycling, Greenwaste, and Landfill Diversion updates

Craig Kawaguchi reported that there were no significant updates on recycling. Plans are underway to finalize dates for four household hazardous waste events in February and March, with an additional tire collection event planned for Kona. Appreciation was expressed to Director Mansour, Brenda, Chair Adams, and Peter for their leadership and hard work behind the scenes.

2) Solid Waste Operational Analysis Update: Shalise Lamb reported that the next version of the Solid Waste System Operational Analysis was received as scheduled and distributed by Acting Chief Mike Kaha. The team has not yet reviewed the document, and Chief Kaha will be meeting with the new administration to determine the next steps.

3. Wastewater Division Projects and Updates *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:19:54]*
 Acknowledgment was given by Chair Adams for the significant progress made on wastewater initiatives, with commendations for the team's efforts. No additional updates to this topic were provided beyond those earlier on the agenda.
4. Status of existing staff vacancies and recent hires. *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:56:46]*
 Director Mansour shared that an offer was made for an outside hire for Solid Waste Director but was not accepted. Due to a lack of HR resources, there has been no action.
5. Questions from Commissioners: *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:21:04]*
 - 1) Is there a plan for the Department of Research and Development putting together a Request for Proposal for Waste to Energy and what is DEM's participation in the RFP? (Adams/Acasio)
Director Mansour: The department is exploring innovative solutions, including extracting hydrogen from wastewater and creating soil by mixing mulch with biosolids and effluent. However, regulatory challenges have arisen due to conflicting guidance from the Department of Health regarding recycling biosolids. Efforts are ongoing to align stakeholders and address contaminants, with continued collaboration with R&D and researchers to advance treatment technologies and resource recovery.
 - 2) Does DEM have any update on the Mālama One recycling plant? (Acasio)
Craig Kawaguchi: There were no updates available from the department and attempts to connect with Nick Doyle for more information is ongoing.
 - 3) What are thoughts on DEM rules being amended to prohibit all tobacco use at SWD facilities, instead of only smoking? (McIntosh)
Director Mansour: The issue of smoking under DEM was noted but remains unclear if DEM has jurisdiction.
 - 4) Is there an update on what the department learned from the scrap metal vendor regarding accepting metal from vehicles since they accept mower parts? (McIntosh)
Craig Kawaguchi: The discussion on scrap metal focused on ensuring correct language on-site regarding acceptance of car parts, with clarification needed on handling liquids.
 - 5) Request for Material Safety Data Sheets resins used in Cured In Place Pipe (CIPP) repairs. (Adams)
Chair Adams: Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for the CIPP were not included in the packet; a follow-up will be made with Chris Sparber to obtain them.
- Report by Georjean Adams on Sustainability Summit Solid Waste Reduction Workgroup follow up meetings. *[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:34:10]*

Chair Adams: The Sustainability Summit Solid Waste Reduction Work Group focuses on three areas: 1) developing a resource recovery park, which would process clean recyclable materials and commercial reusables, while offering entrepreneurial and educational spaces; 2) advancing a bill to ban landfilling recyclable materials, with meetings scheduled to explore turning the draft into a county ordinance to extend the landfill's lifespan; and 3) a potential lead for distributed composting initiatives is being identified to address the growing demand for food waste management, complementing existing green waste efforts.

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:46:35-2:47:00]

1. Follow up on action items determined today.
2. Other (Commissioners may suggest items they would like placed on the next agenda.)

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:47:00 -2:48:46]

1. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2025, at the Community Meeting Hale, West Hawai'i Civic Center, Kailua-Kona, and via Zoom. Please contact the Board Secretary or review the agenda posted on the County Calendar within six days of the next meeting for confirmation.
2. The Commission will elect its officers at its next meeting.
3. EMC Commissioners thanked Ramzi Mansour for his leadership of DEM. Commissioner Perez: [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:25:09]

"I'm so excited Ramzi that you are going to continue your passion and drive within this space as a private sector. And I think you know, just of all Conversations that I know you and I have been in the rooms about, about breaking silos and trying to have department not only interdepartmental conversations, but then also just between divisions and private sector and public sector. But I just really hope that you're able to share your mana'ō and continue kind of navigating that space and the challenges around it in getting those silos broke. Because I think it is the most critical thing in advancing our work and making sure that our future environment as well as our communities are safeguarded. And you having a very unique position of being on all sides of that work is going to be a lot of insight and I think that it will be really great to have you still within this space."

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to approve by Commissioner McIntosh; seconded by Commissioner Acasio. Decision: Approved unanimously (Ayes: 7). Meeting adjourned. [SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 02:48:55]

Respectfully submitted,

Tiffany Wallace, Secretary