

Notes from Kailua-Kona Community Update Session  
West Hawai'i Civic Center  
Monday, August 7, 2023  
5:00 – 6:00pm

Number of Community Members Attending: 5 in-person, 6 on Zoom

### Speakers

- Director Doug Adams, Research and Development (R&D)
- Council Member Holeka Inaba
- Council Member Rebecca Villegas
- Deputy Director Michelle Hiraishi, Parks & Recreation
- Dave Kurohara, Hawaiian Electric
- Glenn Sako, Economic Development Specialist – Agriculture Program, R&D
- Riley Saito, Economic Development Specialist – Energy and Infrastructure Program, R&D

### Agenda and Notes

#### I. Introduction, Director Adams

#### II. Parks & Recreation Updates

- Higashihara Park – working closely with the Friends of the Park on various initiatives, including controlling feral pigs.
- Kahalu'u Beach Park – model parking project runs through December, and it has been successful so far. Kohala Center is working with Army Corps of Engineers in infrastructure susceptible to sea level rise (including the pavilion).
- Kohanaiki Beach Park – hale roof will be rethatched. The bathrooms are also a priority for improvements.
- Kailua Park (Old Airport) – working on resurfacing center asphalt. Hired a consultant to design a new comfort station. Plan to demolish old building and build new bathrooms and concessions space.
- Kona Aquatics Center – with help from Friends of the Park, replacing video board and adding a shade awning for bleachers. Adding pickleball courts at spot of old basketball courts.
- Kealakehe Regional Park – master plan is being revised, with special attention directed to water issues.
- La'aloa Park – working on issues of water, signage, and landscaping. After changes are completed, State Historic Preservation Division must accept them. ADA improvements were successful.

#### III. Hawaiian Electric Updates

- Cost of oil has recently decreased, resulting in reduced electricity rates.
- For delays in service or payment assistance plans, [contact Hawaiian Electric](#).
- [Energy savings resources literature](#) is available online.

- Renewable energy portfolio percentage is now calculated as energy generated, not sold, totaling roughly 50%; Waikoloa AES solar project is online effective 04/23.
- Kalaoa Solar, Na‘alehu Solar estimated completion dates are 2025; will operate with shares for LMI households. They are community solar projects, which you can lease a portion of without adding solar to your house. The monthly net benefit would be \$15-25.
- Beginning in 2018, wrote an Integrated Grid Plan to expand choices, stabilize rates, and engage communities. The most important concerns of community were affordability, reliability, and resilience.

#### IV. Agriculture Updates, Glenn Sako

- Big Island Feral Pig Control Project model initiated by Malama o Puna with R&D funding; first project-based plan that R&D received.
- Setting up a website to inform hunters of sightings; creating a hunter code of conduct, including a ban on snares; organizing workshops for education on hunting, butchering, and cooking to prevent disease transmission; promoting value-added products and creating a system to distribute pigs for household consumption.
- Agricultural theft is a top concern of producers, but there are limited statistics. Theft should be self-reported to save time, assist limited police resources, and collect statistics.
- R&D is generating a Self-Reporting Agricultural Theft/Trespass form, which will be on the website and distributed to police.
- Through community forums, R&D will try to publicize the identities of those who are known agriculture thieves.

#### V. Broadband Updates, Riley Saito

- R&D is invested in digital equity (how to access and utilize the internet), with an emphasis on underserved communities. The Hawai‘i Island Digital Equity Coalition (HIDEC) provides a space for the County and partners to collaborate on digital equity.
- With federal funding, internet service providers will build new infrastructure, but they are more focused on profit in high-consumption areas.
- R&D created an [ArcGIS Story Map](#) showing social vulnerability index (underprivileged populations) and areas desperately needing internet access.
- Underwent a process of determining where internet access was lacking on the island, and will focus on equity of delivery of broadband as new infrastructure is created; they are targeting the unserved, underserved, and community anchor institutions.
- Households can receive digital services (Wi-Fi expenses, one-time computer purchases, etc.) rebates through the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#).

#### VI. R&D Updates, Director Adams

- Hawai‘i Energy occasionally joins these discussions to promote their energy savings opportunities. [Previous meeting recordings](#) are on the R&D website.
- Hawai‘i Island will host Queen Liliu‘okalani’s Canoe Races in late August and early September in Hilo. The first-ever women’s-only Ironman World Championships race will be mid-October in Kona.

## VII. Council Updates, Council Member Inaba

- Bills on Real Property Tax and Agriculture recently passed. Bill 28 provides property tax relief to those with non-dedicated agriculture lands. Bills 57 and 58 will sunset the non-dedicated agriculture program and replace it with a community sustainability benefit to offset real property tax assessments. Real Property will notify owners via mail of changes affecting them.
- The Office of Sustainability, Climate, Equity, and Resilience was recently created.
- Makalei to Keahou (including Kahalu‘u, Kealekehe, and other areas) are on a mandatory 25% water restriction due to the failure of the Honokōhau Deepwell. Please kōkua until a new well comes on line in roughly two weeks.
- Vacancies on boards and commissions exist and can be found on the County website. There is a District 8 vacancy on the Fire Commission, for example.
- Bill 63 attempts to address maintenance and repairs of private roads. There will be an opportunity for public input soon.

## Comments

- With ACP, Hawaiian Telcom is offering internet services for free via Fiopitics internet, at no cost to consumers.
- With respect to emergency services, will communication be improved by fiber optics? Someone noted that natural disasters in remote places along the ring can make some island communities very susceptible to internet access being lost.
  - The ring ensures that accessibility will remain, given the ring will remain intact from at least one direction. Communication between emergency response agencies will remain functional at all times.
- Can the broadband approach/map be expanded to include emergency shelters and other non-County-owned sites?
  - The approach to broadband expansion emphasizes connection for matters like disasters and health equity, not just for commonly understood internet uses (like streaming).
- Is the County working with other internet service providers in broadband expansion?
  - Yes, the County is working with Hawaiian Telcom on its Middle Mile infrastructure, with HIEMA and FEMA on emergency communications concerns, and with other groups. The vendors are building more robust infrastructure in the population hubs of Hilo and Kona.
- Can the County provide public information sessions (like trainings and workshops) to assist property owners with the upcoming changes to Real Tax Property laws?