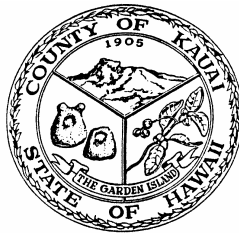


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Līhu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766-1371

July 26, 2006

The Honorable Randall Nishimura
Chair, Planning Commission
County of Kaua'i
Līhu'e, Hawai'i 96766

Dear Chair Nishimura and Members:

We are writing as the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee of the County Council to express our deep concern about the state of planning on our island and to ask your assistance in remedying the situation.

As chair and vice chair of the Council's Planning Committee, we accept some responsibility for the state of planning on the island. The County Council adopts the general plan and development plans, and with the mayor has final say on re-zonings and general plan amendments. We also fund the operations of the Planning Department and Commission. We also have the power to introduce and pass a moratorium. However, much of our work, as yours, depends on the provision and quality of information, research, the framing of the issues, the recommendations, and the implementation of programs and enforcement of planning laws by the director and staff of the Planning Department.

We believe that the quality of planning for Kaua'i is primarily your responsibility as assigned by County Charter, Section 14.02A, which states that the Planning Commission shall "advise the mayor, council and planning directors in matters concerning the planning program for the county," and Section 14.04 which states that "the Planning Director shall be appointed and may be removed by the commission."

It is very clear to many of our constituents on Kaua'i—perhaps to you, also—that something is wrong with planning on this island. We are not in control of growth or development as we should be. Clear standards and requirements are not in place to ensure that any growth or development that happens on Kaua'i addresses, first and foremost, the needs of the community, including the need for affordable housing, for public access and open space preservation, for adequate transportation capacity, sewers, roads and other infrastructure, for protecting and perpetuating the rural quality and aloha that Kaua'i is known for.

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Developers and landowners are hurt by the lack of good planning, too. Because there are not clear standards and certainty as to what is required, the process becomes arduous and lengthy—a highly expensive and stressful proposition for permit applicants. So nobody wins.

Development should be at a pace, of the kind and to the level that will be best for our residents and future generations. The level and location of desirable growth and the techniques and planning mechanisms to achieve those locations and level need to be clear and well established, but they are not.

We believe that it is the primary job of the Planning Department to provide this information to the Planning Commission, the Mayor, the Council and the public. It is also the Planning Department's responsibility to design and implement community planning processes that involve a broad range of the community in an orderly and inclusive fashion that results in clear, enforceable plans reflecting the community's values and wellbeing.

We see the responsibilities of the Planning Commission as very similar to that of a board of directors of a corporation. Using this analogy, the Planning Commission is responsible for the success of planning by virtue of its power to set policy and hire the Planning Director who is the overall manager of the department staff, programs, and activities. The Planning Commission is expected to set broad goals and guide, evaluate and hold the Planning Director accountable in the achievement of such goals.

Based on this understanding, one idea that seems appropriate is for the Planning Commission to direct the Planning Director to produce a strategy for planning on Kaua'i. He could develop an inclusive process (bring together the Planning Commission, the Mayor, the Council and the Planning Director and staff) to establish the vision, mission, goals and timelines for the Planning Department. Such goals would include planning goals for the island and capacity building goals for the department. Once such a plan exists, the Commission could review monthly progress reports from the Planning Director regarding achievement of the goals. Having such a plan in place and tracking its progress could be complimented by other management tools such as an upward appraisal, a performance audit, an employee survey, and of course, a periodic performance review of the Planning Director.

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We are deeply committed to the success of planning on Kaua'i and it is our sense that our colleagues as well would stand by to assist in whatever way possible. In that spirit, we respectfully request time on your next agenda to further discuss this matter with you. We look forward to a constructive dialogue. Mahalo nui loa.

Sincerely,

JOANN A. YUKIMURA
Chair, Planning Committee

JAY FURFARO
Vice Chair, Planning Committee

JY/ao

cc: The Honorable Mayor Bryan Baptiste
The Honorable William Kaipo Asing and
Members of the County Council