

THE HAWAII COUNTY COUNCIL & COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

ROLE AND DUTIES

The Hawaii County Council, consisting of nine elected members, is vested with the legislative powers of the county. Its primary function is legislation and public policy formulation. Council members serve a term of two years and are elected from nine single member districts and must reside within the district. Current council members are:

Dominic Yagong District 1, Hamakua, North Hilo, and portions of South Hilo (Hakalau, Honomu, Pepekeo, Papaikou, Kaiwiki)

Bobby Jean Leithead-Todd District 2, South Hilo (Amauulu, Puueo, portions of Downtown Hilo, portions of Lanakila, Waianuenu, Kaumana, Ainako, Piuhonua, portions of Waiakea Homesteads)

James Y. Arakaki District 3, South Hilo (Waiakea Homesteads, Waiakea-Uka) and Puna (Keaau)

Aaron S. Y. Chung District 4, South Hilo (Keaukaha, Panaewa, Waiakea Houselots, portions of Downtown Hilo, University and portions of Waiakea Homesteads)

Gary Safarik District 5, Puna (Orchidland Estates, Hawaiian Paradise Park, Ainaloa, Hawaiian Beaches, Paho Village, Nanawale, Kapoho, and Kalapana)

Julie Jacobson District 6, Puna (Kurtistown, Mt. View, Volcano), Kau (Pahala, Naalehu, HOVE) and South Kona (Milolii, Hookena, and portions of Honaunau)

Nancy Pisicchio District 7, South Kona (portions of Honaunau, Capt. Cook, Kealakekua) and North Kona (Kainaliu, Keauhou, Kahaluu, Holualoa)

J. Curtis Tyler, III District 8, North Kona (Kailua, Kealakehe, Kalaoa, Puuanahulu)

Leningrad Elarionoff District 9, North and South Kohala (Waikoloa, Waimea, Hawi, Halaula)

The Office of the County Clerk, which is composed of six divisions, supports the County Council.

The Council Services Section is responsible for providing clerical and stenographic support to all council meetings, special meetings, public hearings, committee of the whole meetings and executive sessions. Its duties include processing, tracking, archiving and retrieving legislative information; filing of land documents in which the county is grantee, executive

orders, financial disclosures of elected and appointed officials, personal interest and gift disclosures of elected officials, and departmental administrative rules and claims.

The Committee Services Section is responsible for providing clerical and stenographic support to all the council's committee and subcommittee meetings, special meetings, public hearings, and workshops.

The Council Aides Section is primarily responsible for providing assistance to council members in serving their constituencies.

The Reprographics Division is responsible for reproducing, binding and mailing documents from all county departments and agencies.

The Legislative Auditor's Office provides comprehensive research, drafts legislation as requested, supports council committees by conducting research and writing committee reports, assists in the oversight of the independent audit, prepares special studies and limited-scope performance reviews, and serves as a legislative reference for state legislation. Personnel and accounting functions are performed out of this Office.

The Elections Division is responsible for all election activities in the County, including the administration of State and County elections, registration of voters, voter education, conducting absentee voting, establishing new polling places, recruiting and training all Election Day officials, tabulating ballots, redefining district boundaries during reapportionment, proposing election legislation, verifying signatories on petitions and nomination papers, and maintaining the voter register. The Division also acts as an agent for the State Campaign Spending Division and the Ethics Commission by taking receipt of reports required to be filed by these agencies. It assists the Office of Elections in State election matters.

STAFF

The Office of the County Clerk operates with a permanent staff of 42 and in election years increases to 14 full-time temporary election personnel. Department heads are County Clerk Al Konishi, Deputy County Clerk Donald Ikeda and Legislative Auditor Connie Kiriu.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACTIVITIES

PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY AND NOTICE

The Council and Committee meetings are now televised on public access channels in East and West Hawai'i with captioning for the hearing-impaired. Following a change approved by the voters, the Council began meeting once per quarter in West Hawai'i. Also videoconferencing equipment was installed which when fully operational will permit West Hawai'i residents to participate in Council meetings in Hilo.

During the year the Council held 24 regular meetings and 4 public hearings. The Council's Committees conducted a total of 68 regular meetings, 3 special meetings, and 2 workshops.

During this period, the Council processed approximately 1,600 public communications, approved 332 resolutions and enacted 168 bills into law.

The County Council hosted the National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Region (WIR) conference from May 23-26, 2001 at the Hilton Waikoloa Village Resort. The conference attracted over 600 delegates from 15 Western states as well as other states throughout the nation. The conference took aim at federal actions on public lands and their implications for counties, as well as the impact of population growth in the West.

Subsequent workshops explored issues such as endangered species listings, growth and open lands management in rural counties, and fire codes that help protect life and property from wild fires. Mayor Harry Kim was the keynote speaker and asked that delegates come to experience Hawai'i as a place of "extreme tolerance." The county reaped significant direct and indirect economic benefits from sponsoring this particular conference.

The numerous meetings, public hearings and workshops held in the past year are indicative of the Council's desire to provide meaningful participation in the formulation of legislative policy and program development of its citizens.

LEGISLATION

The biggest challenge grew out of the massive damage caused by the November 2000 flood. The Council responded to this natural disaster by approving measures to expedite the repair of flood damage to roads, bridges, flood channels. The Council continues to work with administration on long-term flooding solutions.

The Council and the new administration worked to adopt a balanced County operating budget, the most important legislation considered every year by the Council, totaling \$175,769,492. Public safety remained a high priority, receiving almost one-third of the total funding.

A part of the budget, the Council appropriated \$900,000 to a broad range of human service programs throughout Hawai'i County. Funding was sustained to over 40 nonprofit organizations providing drug treatment, homeless and spouse abuse shelters, seniors transportation, adult day care, assisted living for the disabled, mediation services, youth recreation, sexual assault services, AIDS care and prevention, hospice care, food bank operations and medical and dental mobile care. Newly-funded services included a diabetes prevention project in Ka'u, transportation for Hamakua Health Center patients, West Hawai'i's Special Olympics program, and the newly built Kohala Intergenerational Center.

Funds generated from the fuel tax continued to pay for the maintenance and repair of roads and bridges throughout the County. This year, the County designated half of the funding to be leveraged for federal aid projects. More than \$5,800,000 was appropriated for the fiscal year.

Other noteworthy laws include establishing a volunteer disabled parking enforcement program, adopting a more restrictive fireworks code, and advocating for the County's rightful share of the public service company tax, which has historically been paid to the state.

In its review of proposed development projects, the Council balanced its decisions of allowing quality growth with the opportunities created for jobs, affordable housing and improved infrastructure. The Council also recognized that the expansion of the County's real property tax base as a result of increased assessments for highest and best use through zoning would support, in part, the demands placed on the delivery of services to residents. Over 160± acres of land were rezoned to accommodate various agricultural, residential, resort, commercial and industrial projects in the county. Every project was reviewed on its merits and against goals, policies and objectives in the General Plan. Those change of zone applications that were approved contained conditions addressing water, traffic, solid waste, drainage, parks, police, fire, historic sites and affordable housing.

Additionally, more than 50 acres were reclassified from State Land Use Agricultural to Urban or Rural Districts.

The Council adopted a resolution encouraging the Waimea community to work with the landowner of a commercial property which was to be developed as a service station/fast food mart. The Waimea community collaborated with Keck Observatory to seek a foundation grant to acquire the property for an educational visitor center. The grant was matched with monies raised by the community. This win-win solution is a promising example of effective partnerships.

The Council also appropriated major funding for capital improvement projects in every district. Projects included, but were not limited to:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Palani Road Safety Improvements

Various sewer projects (Kaumana Gardens Sewer, Kealakehe Sewage Effluent, Pahoehe Sewage Pump Station)

West Hawai'i Drainage Improvements

Kailua Kona Flood Control Improvements

Hilo Landfill Closure

Puainako Street Extension

Mamalaho Highway (Palani Road to Keauhou)

East/West Hawai'i Office Renovations

POLICE DEPARTMENT

800 MHz Communication System

Kona Police Evidence Warehouse

District Station Holding Cell Improvements

Capt. Cook Police Station Improvements

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Honaunau Rodeo Arena
Honokaa Pool
Waimea Community Center
Laupahoehoe Pool
Kahuku Park
Edith Kanakaole Stadium Improvements
Hilo-Puna Trail System
Waiakea Uka Community Police Substation

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Fighting, Rescue & Haz-Mat Training Facility

The Council requested and received a report from the Legislative Auditor's Office entitled *Special Study on the Status of Animal Control in the County of Hawai'i, October 2000*. The report investigated the history of animal control in Hawai'i County, common functions of animal control programs nationwide, the County's contract with the Hawai'i Island Humane Society, and comparative national standards reflected in the programs of other municipalities and humane organizations. Among the *Study's* recommendations, subsequently adopted by the Council, was a call for an independent, third-party evaluation by an established national animal welfare organization. A request for proposals was prepared and the Council selected the National Animal Control Association (NACA) to perform the independent evaluation. NACA's two-person evaluation team conducted an 11-day site visit to Hawai'i County in June 2001 and the final report is expected in the fall.

VOTING INFORMATION

During the 2000 elections cycle, 35,867 votes were cast at the primary election and 51,332 votes were cast at the general election. The Elections Division recruited and trained 525 election day officials to conduct the elections, processed 26,277 transactions to the voter register and 20,100 application for absentee ballots.

The Election Division conducted Voter Education Programs with community organizations throughout the county. Deputy Voter Registrar classes were scheduled in all districts. A total of 65 registrars were deputized. To obtain house numbers and street addresses, 4,000 letters were mailed to voters in rural areas. There were 3,200 responses and updates were made to their records.

To be in compliance with the National Voter Registration Act, 14,655 notices were mailed to voters with questionable addresses. There were 7,336 notices processed, which included 1,500 voters who updated their addresses.

One new precinct was authorized in Puna for the 2000 elections. The County of Hawai'i now has 60 polling places serving its electorate.