



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

Build Beyond Barriers Working Group (BBB)

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

2:30 P.M.

MEETING MINUTES

MEETING RECORDING: <https://www.facebook.com/olelocommunity/videos/live-build-beyond-barriers-working-group-meeting/907905370274185>

I. Call to Order [00:08:55]

Mary Alice Evans, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:39 P.M. and outlined meeting protocols for the virtual Zoom meeting. She emphasized the limitations on testimony time and stressed the importance of maintaining virtual meeting etiquette.

No written testimony was received for this meeting.

II. Member Roll Call [00:11:10]

Chair Evans conducted the roll call to establish a quorum.

No.	Representatives	Name
1	Office of Planning and Sustainable Development	Mary Alice Evans, Chair
2	Department of Business Economic Development and Tourism	Absent
3	Hawaii Housing Finance Development Corporation	Dean Minakami, Co-chair
4	Department of Land and Natural Resources	Dawn Chang
5	State Historic Preservation Division	Absent
6	Commission on Water Resource Management	Absent
7	Land Use Commission	Scott Derrickson
8	Department of Health	Absent
9	Department of Transportation	Absent
10	Hawaii Public Housing Authority	Hakim Ouansafi, Co-chair
11	Department of Budget and Finance	Luis Salaveria
12	Island Burial Council, Hawai'i	Absent
13	Island Burial Council, Kaua'i/Ni'ihau	Absent

No.	Representatives	Name
14	Island Burial Council, Maui/Lānaʻi	Absent
15	Island Burial Council, Molokaʻi	Keomailani Hanapi Hirata
16	Island Burial Council, Oʻahu	Kamanaʻo Mills
17	Chair of legislative subject matter committees relating to housing	Rep. Micah Aiu
18	Chair of legislative subject matter committees relating to housing	Sen. Stanley Chang
19	Mayor, City & County of Honolulu	Absent
20	Mayor, County of Hawaiʻi	Absent
21	Mayor, County of Kauaʻi	Absent
22	Mayor, County of Maui	Absent
23	County Office of Housing & Community Development, Hawaiʻi	Susan Kunz
24	County Planning Department, Hawaiʻi	Zendo Kern
25	County Department of Public Works, Hawaiʻi	Malia Kekai
26	City and County Department of Planning and Permitting, Honolulu	Absent
27	City and County Office of Housing, Honolulu	Absent
28	County Housing Agency, Kauaʻi	Adam Roversi
29	County Planning Department, Kauaʻi	Absent
30	County Department of Housing and Human Concerns, Maui	Lori Tshako
31	County Planning Department, Maui	Absent
32	County Department of Water Supply, Hawaiʻi	Keith Okamoto
33	Board of Water Supply, Honolulu	Absent
34	County Department of Water Supply, Kauaʻi	Joe Tait
35	County Department of Water Supply, Maui	Absent
36	Hawaiian Electric Company	Absent
37	Kauaʻi island Utility Cooperative	Absent
38	Honua Consulting	Trisha Watson [Left at 2:55 P.M.]
39	The Executive Director of Housing Hawaiʻi's Future	Sterling Higa
40	Economic Research Organization at the University of Hawaiʻi	Carl Bonham
41	The Executive Director of the Sierra Club of Hawaiʻi	Wayne Tanaka
42	The Executive Director of the Land Use Research Foundation	David Arakawa
43	Department of the Attorney General	Linda Chow
44	State Housing Team	Scott Glenn

III. Approval of the August 29, 2023, Build Beyond Barriers Meeting Minutes [00:20:53]

Chair Evans called for a motion to approve the August 29, 2023 meeting summary.

Member Kern made a motion to approve the August 29, 2023 meeting summary. [00:21:19]

Member Arakawa seconded the motion.

Public Testimony: None.

Member Discussion: [00:21:35]

Member Hirata expressed concerns about the format of the meeting minutes, questioning whether they should be detailed transcriptions or summaries. She also raised issues regarding the listing of testifier names and details of member discussions in the minutes.

Chair Evans clarified the current format follows the Sunshine Law, allowing for meeting summaries and timestamps for compliance.

Member Hirata sought clarification on the decision-making process for the structure of the minutes and suggested improvements for future minutes, including the identification of testifiers and more details on the member discussions. She also inquired about the current status of the lead housing officer position and requested the new leads to identify themselves.

Chair Evans confirmed there is no current lead housing officer and introduced the team that would lead the Build Beyond Barriers Working Group comprising herself, Dean Minakami, and Hakim Ouansafi.

Member Kern suggested a future briefing for members on parliamentary procedures for a better understanding and smoother meeting operations.

Member Tanaka requested that the issues he raised ~~during the member discussion between himself and Member Higa~~ at the August 29, 2023, meeting [regarding the foundational groundwork of the group, such as rules of procedure, conflicts of interest, and working group enforcement] be included in the minutes.

Call for a Vote: [00:30:24]

Chair Evans conducted the vote by roll call.

The motion to approve the Build Beyond Barriers, August 29, 2023, Meeting Summary was carried by a roll call vote.

Roll call vote: Ayes, 15; Ayes with reservations, 3: Arakawa, Mills, Tanaka; Noes, 1: Hirata; Abstain, 1: Kekai.

IV. Hawai'i County Planning Department and Department of Public Works request for suspensions to chapters 76, 86, and 86C, Hawai'i Revised Statutes to hire a total of 19 full-time

The minutes of this meeting were approved as corrected at the December 20, 2023 meeting.

positions (Hawai'i County Planning Department – 9 full-time, and Department of Public Works – 10 full-time positions) [00:35:58]

Summary of the application by Hawai'i County Planning Department and Department of Public Works [00:37:40]

Member Kern discussed the challenges the planning department is facing due to staff shortages and the challenges in recruitment and retention due to long hiring processes and staff turnover caused by burnout. Both departments are understaffed by 25%. He emphasized both departments focus on various permit-related activities, prioritizing affordable housing and climate-related projects.

Member Kekai highlighted the importance of having a reliable permitting system and echoed similar challenges in recruitment and staffing. She pointed out difficulties in filling positions historically and expressed hope that the suspension would assist in improving the situation.

Member Arakawa made a motion to accept the request of the Hawai'i County Planning Department and Department of Public Works for suspensions under chapters 76, 89, and 89C, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, to hire 19 full-time positions. **[00:40:54]**

Member Okamoto seconded the motion.

Public Testimony: [00:41:38]

Vernelle Oku expressed concerns about the idea of lowering the standard of construction, suggesting that it may not be a good idea due to potential consequences, emphasizing the importance of maintaining standards to avoid negative outcomes or repercussions in the future. **[00:42:43]**

Member Discussion: [00:43:44]

Member Hirata requested clarification on the necessity of suspending specific chapters of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes and questioned if such a broad suspension was beneficial. She expressed concern about the implications of suspending large portions of the statutes and inquired about the specific challenges in the recruitment process.

Member Kern explained the difficulties in finding qualified applicants and the lengthy, bureaucratic process, often leading to losing potential hires to other job offers.

Member Kekai added that the pre-screening process sometimes filters out good candidates due to technicalities in the application process. She reassured the members that the qualifications standards for the positions would not be compromised.

Co-chair Ouansafi strongly supported the county's initiative, citing multiple reasons. He described the hiring process as overly complicated and time-consuming, often taking three to six months. This delay leads to potential hires accepting jobs elsewhere. Staffing shortages create bottlenecks in various departments, hindering progress in housing and related areas. He argued for the need to expedite the hiring process, suggesting that the counties, like their state partners, should be allowed to proceed under the proclamation for recruitment and procurement automatically. Co-chair Ouansafi shared an example of a recent hiring event led by his Department, Hawai'i Public Housing Authority, where 57 people were interviewed in four hours, ultimately leading to 22 conditional job offers. This event highlighted the efficiency gains possible through the process. He clarified that the intention is not to reduce requirements or qualifications, but to improve the speed and efficiency of hiring qualified personnel. Also, he expressed hope that future iterations of the proclamation would automatically exempt counties from the standard civil service hiring process enabling them to serve public needs.

Member Tanaka expressed uncertainty about the specific role of the group in approving suspension not directly connected to particular projects. He emphasized the need for these approvals to support only affordable housing initiatives.

Linda Chow, Deputy Attorney General, clarified the supportive role of agencies hiring staff to facilitate affordable housing projects, indicating that it aligns with the BBB's objectives.

Member Tanaka raised concerns about focusing only on affordable housing projects and compliance with the provisions of the proclamation. He suggested an amendment to ensure the new positions would concentrate solely on affordable projects outlined in the proclamation.

Chair Evans requested member Tanaka to propose an amendment to be considered formally.

Member Tanaka made a motion to amend the main motion to require that the hired staff focus would be on affordable housing projects. [01:04:46]

No member seconded the motion. Chair Evans returned the discussion to the main motion.

Member Arakawa referred to the emergency proclamation's language regarding chapters 76, 89, and 89 C, highlighting the provision for hiring qualified personnel or contractors involved in housing. He proposed amending his motion to align with the emergency proclamation, specifying the necessity of hiring personnel directly involved in housing.

Member Arakawa amended his original motion: Subject to the applicable emergency proclamation and to the extent necessary to allow for qualified personnel or contractors to be hired that would be directly involved in housing, we would approve Hawai'i County Planning Department and Department of Public Works request for suspensions to chapters 76, 89, and 89C, Hawaii Revised Statutes to hire a total of 19 full-time positions (Hawaii County Planning Department — 9 full-time, and Department of Public Works - 10 full-time positions). [01:06:25]

Seconded by Member Okamoto.

Member Hirata expressed gratitude for the changes. She asked about the possibility of seeking temporary assistance from other counties for staffing shortages.

Member Kern acknowledged the question and noted that all counties seem to be facing similar situations, and hence, no such requests for assistance have been made.

Member Hirata inquired about backlogs in the Planning Department due to staffing shortages and the occurrence of violations or after-the-fact permitting.

Member Kern spoke about the backlogs and operational challenges, while Member Kekai addressed issues with as-built permits. Member Hirata recommended developing a system to track such issues.

Member Hirata noted that the hiring challenges are not limited to specific departments but are widespread across state and county levels, affecting various areas, including planning and building inspections. She expressed concern about the effects of staffing shortages on the preservation of historical and cultural sites, particularly burial sites. She emphasized the importance of having sufficient staff to ensure that these sites are not compromised in the name of progress and development. As a chair of the burial council and a planning commission member, Hirata underscored her responsibility to ensure proper checks and balances are maintained in project approvals. Member Hirata thanked the participants for the discussion and their efforts to address the hiring challenges, highlighting the importance of filling all positions to maintain a balance in preserving cultural and historical integrity.

Call for a Vote: [01:24:39]

Chair Evans called a vote for the amended motion.

The amended motion: Subject to the applicable emergency proclamation and to the extent necessary to allow for qualified personnel or contractors to be hired that would be directly involved in housing, we would approve Hawai'i County Planning Department and Department of Public Works request for suspensions to chapters 76, 89, and 89C, Hawaii Revised Statutes to hire a total of 19 full-time positions (Hawaii County Planning Department — 9 full-time, and Department of Public Works - 10 full-time positions) was carried unanimously.

V. Announcements [01:24:55]

Chair Evans made the following announcements:

- **Next meeting:**
 - o The next meeting date and time will be posted to the Governor's Housing Team website at <https://hale.hawaii.gov>.
- **Housing Pipeline:**
 - o The housing team is developing a comprehensive database to efficiently manage and monitor various projects promoting affordable housing in the state. This database will be made available online as soon as it is ready.

- **PRO Housing Grant:**
 - o The state of Hawai'i has submitted a significant proposal to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development under the "Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing" grant program. The application requests \$9.9 million to address eight critical barriers to affordable housing production and establish a statewide infrastructure bank. The grant aims to unlock 10,800 housing units statewide. If awarded, the project is anticipated to start in late February. Updates on this initiative will be provided as they become available.

VI. Adjournment [01:27:48]

Chair Evans called for a motion to adjourn the BBB meeting.

Co-chair Ouansafi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **[01:27:50]**

Seconded by Member Mills.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was carried unanimously.

The BBB meeting adjourned at 3:57 P.M.