

The Hawaii County Council and 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, Pepeekeo, Papaikou, Kaiwiki)
Bobby Jean Leithead-Todd	District 2, South Hilo (Amauulu, Puueo, portions of Downtown Hilo, portions of Lanakila, Waianuenue, Kaumana, Ainako, Piihonua, 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, Pahoia 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 Pisticchio	District 7, South Kona (portions of Honaunau, Capt. Cook, Kealakekua) and North Kona (Kainaliu, Keaouhou, 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 County Council is supported by the Office of the County Clerk, which is composed of six divisions.

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 individual 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. In election years the staff increases to 14 full-time temporary election personnel. Department heads are County Clerk Al Konishi, Deputy County Clerk Jay Mende and Legislative Auditor Connie Kiriu.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES

During the year the Council held 25 regular meetings and 4 public hearings. The Council's Committees conducted a total of 88 regular meetings, 3 special meetings, 1 subcommittee meeting, 2 workshops, and 3 public hearings. During this period, the Council processed approximately 1,500 public communications, approved 128 resolutions and enacted 144 bills into law.

While the tragedy of September 11, 2001 affected our citizens, the challenges that grew out of its impacts strengthened our resolve and the democratic principles on which our nation was founded.

LEGISLATION

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

Noteworthy legislation included: the adoption of a balanced operating budget of \$196,190,529; the reappropriation of over \$1,748,506 in fuel tax monies for numerous road and bridge maintenance projects; the adoption of a comprehensive revision to the Streets and Sidewalks chapter of the Hawai'i County Code that clarified county responsibility over maintaining and regulating its streets and sidewalks; the streamlining of the improvement district law; the addition of bus routes to Keahole; the prohibition of materials from outside the County into any County solid waste facility; and the rise in minimum property tax rates except under certain circumstances.

As 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 43 nonprofit organizations providing supportive living and day care for the elderly and disabled, transportation, substance abuse treatment, family support services, youth recreation, homeless and spouse abuse shelters, AIDS care and prevention, hospice care, and mediation/dispute resolution

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, as necessary, addressing water, traffic, solid waste, drainage, parks, police, fire, historic sites and affordable housing.

Additionally, more than 37 acres of land were reclassified from the State Land Use Agricultural to Urban or Rural Districts by the council, and more than 20 acres of land were reclassified down from the Urban to the Agricultural District.

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

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Kilauea Corridor Traffic Signal Upgrade
Ainaola Drive Curve Improvement
Palani Road Safety Improvements
Lako Street Extension
Kawailani Street Bridge Replacement
Kealakehe Sewage Effluent Construction
Lunapule Collector Sewer
Ainako-Aina Nani Subdivision Sewer
Hilo Landfill Closure
Ocean View Transfer/Recycling Center

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Naalehu Fire Station
Kalaoa Fire Station
Honokaa Fire Station

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Puna Police Station

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

ADA Compliance
Honokaa Pool
Kailua Park Repairs
Konawaena Pool Improvements
Kawananakoa Gym

The Council initiated its first Water System Improvement District to replace private water systems in the Kona Coastview and Kona Wonderview subdivisions. The project, estimated at \$4.6 million, will be financed by an outright \$1.8 million grant and \$2.8 million loan from the US Department of Agriculture" Rural Utilities Service. The Council has passed a final "go-ahead" resolution for the project and, upon receipt of bids, a subsequent general obligation bond ordinance. The improvement district will furnish a county-standard water delivery system and enhance fire protection for some 435 Kona residents.

To implement one of the recommendations of the Legislative Auditor's Office, "*Special Study on Animal Control in the County of Hawai'i*" dated 2000, the Council selected the National Animal Control Association (NACA) to perform the independent evaluation of the County's animal control program. NACA's two-person evaluation team conducted an 11-day site visit to Hawai'i County in June 2001. In its report "*Independent Evaluation of the Animal Control Program of the County of Hawai'i*," NACA made over 132 recommendations in nine categories including administration, communications, shelter operations, field operations, occupational safety procedures, licensing, employee attitude survey, community/interagency relations and ordinance review. The recommendations, which were given priority ratings, are being reviewed and implemented as feasible by the Hawai'i Island Humane Society and the County.

The Council and the other counties successfully lobbied the state legislature to adopt state law that provides immunity to the counties against beach liability cases.

In June 2002, North Kona Council Member J. Curtis Tyler, III was elected President of the Hawai'i State Association of Counties (HSAC), a nonprofit corporation, organized to advance state legislation supported by the four counties and to generally improve the conduct of county government.

ELECTIONS

Technical support was provided to the 2001 Reapportionment Commission. Nine proposed council district maps were drawn. Seven reapportionment meetings were held and eight public hearings were conducted in all districts.

Boundary descriptions were written for the nine county council districts. Precinct boundaries were drawn and boundary descriptions written for 67 precincts in the County of Hawai'i.

Seven new precincts were established in the County for the 2002 elections. The County of Hawai'i now has 67 polling places serving its electorate.

The Elections Division scheduled Deputy Voter Registrar classes in all districts. A total of 102 registrars was deputized. To obtain house numbers and street

addresses, 2,460 letters were mailed to voters in rural areas. There were 800 responses and updates were made to their records.

Eight high schools participated in the high school voter education and voter registration program. 700 students registered during that drive.