

**William P. Kenoi**  
Mayor



**William T. Takaba**  
Managing Director

**Walter K.M. Lau**  
Deputy Managing Director

## HAWAI'I COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION

C/O 25 Aupuni Street #217, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

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### **REGULAR SESSION - MINUTES** **January 14, 2009** **Aupuni Center Conference Room** **Hilo, Hawai'i**

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Okabe at 10:00 a.m.

#### **ROLL CALL**

#### **PRESENT:**

John Bertsch  
Stephen Bowles  
Wil Okabe  
Henry Pomroy, Jr.  
Kaloa Robinson  
Bill Rosehill

Excused: James Browne  
Karen Kudlo

A quorum was present.

#### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Molly Lugo, Deputy Corporation Counsel  
Tom Brandt  
Kaycie Carter  
Glen Honda  
Laurie Kaneta  
John Kapsky  
Darryl Oliveira, Fire Chief  
Noni Sanford

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Commissioners: John Bertsch, Stephen Bowles, James Browne, Karen Kudlo,  
Wil Okabe, Henry Pomroy, Jr., Kaloa Robinson, Bill Rosehill

## **STATEMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

None

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Bertsch moved to accept the December 10, 2008, regular and executive session minutes. Commissioner Rosehill requested that a correction be made to the regular session minutes. CORRECTION: Page 6, the date below announcements should be January 14, 2009 instead of February 11, 2009. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pomroy and unanimously carried.

## **APPROVAL OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Commissioner Bertsch moved to accept communication No. 08-08. Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

## **CHIEF'S REPORT**

Budget

- FY 2009/10 Budget: The Fire Department presented its budget to the Department of Finance on January 12, 2009. The supplemental items are not being considered due to the present status of the economy and the unknown status of the real property tax revenue. All departments were asked to identify and consider an approximate 5 -10 percent reduction within its OCE (other current expenses). The Fire Department was given a deadline of January 21, 2009, to submit suggestions for possible sources on cost reductions. An update will be provided at the February meeting.

Commissioner Bowles questioned whether the Fire Department anticipates any reductions from the State.

Chief Oliveira answered that he was not informed of any budget cuts. However, every fiscal year the State administers a standard five-percent withholding on its provider's vacant positions. Although it was communicated to the State that the Fire Department differs from other providers (because it does not have vacancies), the State continues to withhold five-percent from its EMS contract.

Alternative Funding and Grants

- FEMA FY 2007 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: (Video Teleconferencing Equipment) The Department of Finance's Purchasing Division will be awarding the bid. The quotes given were higher than expected. As a result, the number of units was reduced from 16 to 14.

Once received, the Fire Department will provide the Polycom prices to Commissioner Bowles.

- FEMA FY 2008 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: (health/wellness program, total budget is \$531,203) Fire Rescue Specialist Garrett Kim is working with the Purchasing Division on bids for equipment and medical screening.

#### Capital Improvement Projects

- Makalei Fire Station: County Council adopted Resolution 824-08 which accepted the donation of 2.802 acres of property from GKK Makalei. Details of the dedication deed are still being worked on through the Office of the Corporation Counsel and attorneys representing the owners. Once the property is deeded to the County, the special use permit application will be submitted to the Planning Department for review/approval.
- Pahoia Fire Station: Retrofit of the exterior walls is completed. Working on the interior paint and finish work. Councilmember Emily Naeole and Representative Faye Hanohano were offered a site inspection of the facility. The target date for completion is February/March. Chief Oliveira distributed a compact disc containing a PowerPoint presentation. Pictures of the Pahoia Fire Station are included. (A copy will be provided upon request).
- Fire Administration and Support Facility: Design development is continuing.
- Central Fire Station: Final demolition and landscape inspection was conducted on December 19, 2008. Still awaiting word from the State Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on the disposition request.
- Captain Cook Fire Station: Moving forward on HazMat abatement project. Currently working on the parking lot drainage and asphalt improvements. ADA compliance improvements are being worked on in the bathroom. A new drywell will be installed at the driveway entrance with excavation beginning January 5, 2009.

#### Promotions and Hiring

##### Open-Competitive Recruitment

- Ocean Safety: Seasonal Water Safety Officer Positions will be terminated this month.

##### Internal Recruitment

- Fire Equipment Operator: Assessment Center exercises were conducted on December 6 and 7, 2008. Promotions effective January 16, 2009.
- Fire Captain: Internal recruitment opened January 12 and will close January 23, 2009. In the process of arranging the written exam and assessment center. The Fire Commission will be notified of the dates.

### Emergency Operations Division

- Battalion Chief's Station Visits: In order to improve communication, the Battalion Chiefs will be conducting routine station visits. This will allow them to be more accessible to the rank and file.
- New MICT's are on-line and are being utilized as floaters for vacancies within the Battalions.
- Maintenance vehicle repair section is developing a fleet management program. The project will develop a vehicle replacement schedule and track maintenance issues.
- Five personnel are attending a hazmat chemistry class on Maui to get certified as HazMat Technicians.

### Ocean Safety Division

- Report provided by Captain John Kapsky.
- Internal recruitment: Presently, there are no vacancies in East Hawai'i. There are three half-time vacancies in West Hawai'i which involves advancing two positions to full-time.
- Surveyor Towers: Battalion Chief Clint Coloma was informed that there was a delay and all three towers will be delivered in March. One tower will be placed in West Hawai'i at Laaloa (Magic Sands), and another at Spencer Beach Park. The third will be assigned to Isaac Hale Beach Park (Pohoiki).
- Punalu'u Beach Park: Captain Kapsky and BC Coloma met with Councilman Guy Enriques to discuss consideration of lifeguard service at Punalu'u Beach Park. It is necessary to provide service there because of several increased incidents.
- Reorganization of Ocean Safety: At the present time, Captain Chris Stellfox oversees West Hawai'i and Captain Kapsky oversees East Hawai'i. In order to improve service in the future, there is consideration to divide the island into four districts.

Commissioner Bertsch questioned whether it is necessary for the County to receive State approval in order to implement service at a beach.

Captain Kapsky answered that the County needs State approval if it is a State beach.

Commissioner Bertsch expressed his concern regarding the need for lifeguard service at Kua Bay.

Captain Kapsky replied that because Kua Bay is a State beach, the State would need to fund operations.

Captain Kapsky explained that in the past Ocean Safety was contracted by the State to service three parks. These parks were Hapuna Beach,

Kona Coast State Park (Mahai'ula Beach), and Old Kona Airport Beach. Presently, the only contract that remains is with Hapuna Beach.

According to Captain Kapsky, a meeting was held with the Department of Land and Natural Resources Director of State Parks Dan Quinn. The discussion involved the need for operations at various State beaches. Kua Bay was identified as the top beach requiring lifeguard service. However, because it is a State beach the County does not have jurisdiction and cannot assign someone there.

Commissioner Bowles inquired on the expense involved when establishing service at a park.

Captain Kapsky answered that the start up cost at Pohoiki was approximately \$300,000.

Chief Oliveira added that the expense involves equipment, the tower, and salary and wages for four positions.

Commissioner Bertsch suggested that the County request State funding for weekend coverage.

Captain Kapsky stated that Ocean Safety will initially propose seven-day coverage and weekend/holiday coverage will be proposed as an alternative.

Chief Oliveira commented that there are existing beaches that are guarded only on weekends/holidays. Ocean Safety is presently trying to increase service at those beaches because they are busy during the week and should be guarded seven-days.

Captain Kapsky identified the existing beaches as James Kealoha ("Four Mile"), Onekahakaha, Carlsmith, Leleiwi in East Hawai'i, and Spencer Park in West Hawai'i.

#### Support Services Division

##### Emergency Medical Services Bureau

- MICT class: Personnel completing class, receiving assignments, and filling vacancies on a temporary basis.
- Meeting held with representatives from Hawai'i Air Ambulance (HAA) and American Medical Response (AMR) regarding mutual-aid and interagency response. Hawai'i Air Ambulance will be providing inner-facility transportation across the islands. The Fire Department will be transporting patients, and providing fire protection. Presently, HAA's role is primarily inner-facility transportation. However, there is a possibility that they may eventually be incorporated into the 911 system.

## Fire Auxiliary Services Communications Section

- Pictometry maps uploaded into dispatch positron mapping system.
- Received new computer equipment.
- Continuing to work with the Civil Defense Agency on emergency procedures/protocol.
- Tsunami Exercise Drill: Scheduled for January 27, 2009. Will involve numerous agencies. In the event of a tsunami, the Dispatch Division will need to relocate to the Civil Defense Agency. Therefore, they will participate in the tsunami evacuation exercise. Also, participation from Waiakea and Central Fire Station personnel is necessary because both locations require evacuation.

Commissioner Bertsch recommended that the volunteers participate in the exercise.

## Warehouse Section

- Received and distributed island map booklets to all station's primary front-line engines and medics. Fire Administration encourages new station personnel to familiarize themselves with their working district.

## Maintenance Shop

- 109 total repairs/service in December 2008. Of the 109 repairs, 17 were road service/trouble calls.

## Training Bureau

### Recruit Training:

- 38<sup>th</sup> Firefighter Recruit Class: Presently completing Firefighter Essentials and Wildland Firefighting.
- 37<sup>th</sup> Firefighter Recruit Class: Completed their EMT-I portion. Will be completing their driver training requirements before receiving permanent assignments in the field.

## Volunteer Section

- Report by Volunteer Fire Chief Tom Brandt.
- Company 7B completed its Fire Essentials.
- Polo Shirts arrived. However, the iron patches were returned to the vendor because they did not have the adhesive to iron onto the shirts. Anticipating a new set of patches by March.
- Volunteer Fire Chief's Meeting: Scheduled for February 21, 2009, at Laupahoehoe Station, at 10:00 a.m. Commissioners are encouraged to attend.

## Prevention Bureau

- Fireworks: The Fire Department will again propose changing the fireworks ordinance at the next Legislation session. It is necessary to allow the County to enforce stricter ordinances. The current HRS statute does not allow the County to do so. Representative Hanohano will support and draft the proposed bill. Met with Big Island delegates to discuss the home rule for fireworks Legislation proposal, land use issues, and EMS contract.
- Fireworks permits: Sold 1,437 permits this year as compared to 1,797 last year.
- Fireworks imported to Big Island (cases):  
Novelties: 18,842 this year vs. 23,367 last year. (20% decrease)  
Firecrackers: 365 this year vs. 729 last year (50% decrease)

Chief Oliveira stated that incidents directly attributed to fireworks have no correlation to the permitted fireworks. It is the novelties and unpermitted fireworks that are causing fires/injuries.

Commissioner Bertsch inquired on number of emergency responses.

Chief Oliveira reported that there was a decrease from 274 calls last year to 205 this year. Also, there was a decrease in the purchase of fireworks. There is a possibility that people are becoming more aware of the hazards with fireworks.

Commissioner Bertsch praised the Fire Department for promoting public awareness and educating the community on fire prevention.

Chief Oliveira stated that the Fire Department is reaching out to the public and the business community in order to improve fire prevention.

## New Projects/Business

- 2009 State Legislature: Meeting with Representatives and Senators regarding home rule for fireworks, land use, etc.
- Warehouse/dispatch visit: Following the meeting, the Fire Commission will visit the Fire Department's Warehouse Section to observe operations.

## Employee/Public Relations

- Station Decorating Contest: Several stations participated and since they all did a great job they all received a cash prize award.
- 12<sup>th</sup> Annual American Heart Association Heart Walk: Scheduled for Saturday, February 14, 2009, at 8 a.m., at Liliuokalani Gardens.
- Firefighter Keoni Reich participated and set a new world record in the law/fire division at the World Association of Benchers and Deadlifters in Las Vegas in November 2008. Firefighter Reich deadlifted 722 lbs.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Election of Officers for 2009.

Commissioner Rosehill moved to nominate Commissioner Bertsch as the Chairman for 2009. Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

Commissioner Bertsch moved to nominate Commissioner Bowles as the Vice-Chairman for 2009. Commissioner Bowles declined the nomination. Commissioner Bertsch moved to nominate Commissioner Rosehill as the Vice-Chairman for 2009. Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

Chair Bertsch commended Commissioner Okabe for his years of service on the Fire Commission and for doing a great job as the Chairman in 2008.

- Consideration of purchasing new recording equipment.

Fire Commission Secretary Kaycie Carter explained that the present recording equipment is malfunctioning and breaking apart. Since the Fire Commission's equipment is property of the Fire Department, the new equipment will be purchased by the department. Fire Commission Secretary Kaycie Carter will research the purchase of new recording device.

## **MOTION TO GO TO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Commissioner Bowles made a motion to consider a continued evaluation of an employee of the Hawai'i County Fire Department where consideration of matters affecting privacy will be involved and a closed session is requested, and to consult with Corporation Counsel on questions and issues pertaining to the commission's powers, duties, privileges, immunities, and liabilities. (Pursuant to HRS 92-5 (a)(2) and (a)(4) Hawai'i County Charter Section 13-20(b).

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Okabe and unanimously carried.

The regular session ended at 11:10 a.m.

The regular session convened at 11:42 a.m.

## **ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION MATTERS**

The Fire Commission requested that Fire Chief Oliveira ensure that newly appointed commissioners receive introduction information such as the strategic plan, an organizational chart, maps, and other relevant material.

Chair Bertsch suggested that Fire Department personnel brief new members on the budget.

Deputy Corporation Counsel Lugo explained to the commission that its scheduled warehouse visit on the agenda must inform the public of the actual location.

Commissioner Okabe moved to postpone the warehouse visit and inform the public on the February agenda. Commissioner Pomroy seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Budget and Finance (Browne) Commissioner Bowles met with the Fire Chief to review the budget. Commissioner Bowles believes the Director of Finance underestimated the tax reduction. He cautioned that the County is headed for difficult times. Therefore, the Fire Department's line items may be scrutinized. Commissioner Bowles is preparing an analysis and will provide a report at a future meeting.

Office Management and Staffing (Bertsch) Fire Commission Secretary to look into purchasing new recording equipment.

Rules and Policies (Rosehill) No report.

Public Relations (Pomroy/Bertsch/Browne) No report.

Training and Education (Kudlo) No report.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 11, 2009, at 10:00 a.m., in the Aupuni Center Conference Room, Hilo, Hawaii.
- Set agenda for February 11, 2009, meeting.
  - Chief Oliveira requested that recommendations on responding to vague and nonspecific complaints be agendaized for the February meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

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KAYCIE A. I. CARTER  
Secretary