

Harry Kim  
Mayor



Dixie Kaetsu  
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow  
Deputy Managing Director

## HAWAI'I COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION

C/O 25 Aupuni Street #217, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720  
Phone: 961-8316 ; Fax: 933-1521

### REGULAR SESSION – MINUTES AS AMENDED

February 8, 2006  
Liquor Control Conference Room  
Hilo Lagoon Centre

#### CALL TO ORDER

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

#### ROLL CALL

##### **PRESENT:**

James Browne  
Dale Fergerstrom  
Rudolph Hart  
Karen Kudlo  
Karen Maedo, Chair  
Glen Matsuda  
Wil Okabe

Excused: Neil Brazier

A quorum was present.

##### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Nick AhYo  
Tom Brandt  
Reuben Chun  
Laurie Kaneta  
Diane Noda, Deputy Corporation Counsel

Robert Bailey  
Kaycie Carter  
Pete Hoffman, Councilman  
Darryl Oliveira  
John Perry

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Commissioners: Neil Brazier, James Browne, Dale Fergerstrom, Rudolph Hart, Karen Kudlo  
Karen Maedo, Glen Matsuda, Wil Okabe

**STATEMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS** (Open to the Public)

None

**STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS** (Executive Session)

None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Hart moved to accept the January 11, 2006, regular session minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Okabe and unanimously carried.

**APPROVAL OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Commissioner Okabe moved to accept communication number 06-001. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hart and unanimously carried.

Commissioner Maedo presented a Certificate of Appreciation from the Mayor's Office to outgoing charter members Rudolph Hart and Dale Fergerstrom for their years of valuable service.

**CHIEF'S REPORT**

Chief Oliveira introduced Mr. John Perry, a student at the University of Hawai'i, who is doing a public education program internship with the County of Hawai'i.

The Fire Commission welcomed him.

**Budget**

- FY 2006/07: Met with the Department of Finance on January 13, 2006. They were receptive to the Systems Analyst, CIP Projects Manager, and Prevention Clerk/Auditor positions. A request was made to present a proposal for the other positions to the Mayor. A meeting was held with Mayor Kim on January 18, 2006; awaiting a response from him. The budget will be heard before the County Council on March 28, 2006, at 1:30 p.m., in the County Council Conference Room. Commissioners were invited to attend.

Chief Oliveira requested a budget presentation be placed on the Fire Commission's March 8, 2006, agenda.

**Alternative Funding and Grants**

- FEMA FY 2005 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: Firefighter Neil Yoshioka is continuing to research and work on a bid award proposal for

- vehicle emissions system. Captain Alex Almeida is working on National Historic Preservation requirements for Central and Kawaihoni Fire Stations.
- FEMA FY 2004 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: On February 10, 2006, Fire Equipment Officer Mike Hayashida met with the Department of Finance's Purchasing Agent Bill Gray regarding awarding a bid to Draeger Safety. A target date for the delivery of the burn trailer will be provided at the next meeting.

Chief Oliveira addressed Commissioner Matsuda's previous meeting inquiry on why the burn trailer procurement appeal is handled by the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. According to Deputy Corporation Counsel Diane Noda, the Hawaii Revised Statutes provides the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to set the standards, enforce all laws and rules, supervise the conduct of trades, business, and professions, and set the procedures for any protest and appeal.

- CDBG FY 2006 Grant Proposal: Assistant Chief Quince Mento submitted the Community Development Block Grant proposal for \$850,000 to purchase replacement apparatus for the Pahoa Fire Station and Pahala Fire Station.

#### Capital Improvement Projects – Report provided by Projects Manager Nick AhYo

- Kalaoa Fire Station: Received an offer from another developer to provide a site in that area. The site is larger and will accommodate the type of station that is necessary for that area. The department will be pursuing the offer. There is an understanding with the Mayor's Office that by next Wednesday a determination will be made, in order to let Mr. Bolton know whether the department will no longer require the use of his property.
- Pahoa Fire Station: The Department of Health identified a complication regarding the septic tank; therefore plans have been delayed. Also, the Building Department requested the architects include additional hardening of the facility to withstand hurricane forced winds. The final plans may be delayed to the end of February. Thereafter, the department will submit the bid in March.

Commissioner Fergerstrom inquired about the septic tank issue.

Mr. AhYo stated that it was necessary to submit the plans for the septic system to the Department of Health prior to getting the plans approved. However, since the department missed that step, they need to go back.

- Fire Administration & Support Facility: Completed the metric for the administrative portion in one building. The emergency dispatch will be in another building, and the metric for the training building recently began. Once this is completed, it will be sent out for design.

- Central Fire Station: Presently, acquiring the site from Lanakila. The Mayor's Office requested a survey of the site that will define the amount of property that will be needed and to provide an estimate of the fair market value.
- Central Fire Station-Retrofit Project: Sent out for bids last month. Bid was supposed to open on February 4, 2006; however, not all of the bidders submitted the correct questionnaire back so it is delayed until February 16.

Commissioner Browne questioned the timeline of completion if it is necessary to relocate the Kailua station.

Chief Oliveira stated that the first step would involve acquiring the property. Although there was another offer, it is not clear whether it is a sale or a gift to the County. Currently, discussions are taking place between the Mayor's Office and the property owner. Once the acquisition of the property occurs, the department will be allowed entrance to the property and may begin plan designs.

Chief Oliveira reported that he was contacted by the media to discuss this project. He explained to the reporter that the department's intention is to make the project work well for the community and not to point blame on anyone. He requested that the reporter delay her article until the following week, so that all the members of the project could be present at the meeting and explain what was happening. Those members include Project Manager Nick AhYo, the Office of the Corporation Counsel, the Developer, and Council Member Angel Pilago. The meeting was then held with the reporter and her editor. It was communicated to them that no one could have anticipated and foreseen the problems associated with the current property. Everyone seemed to have left the meeting feeling positive. Issues discussed involved the site distance, a lien that was put on the property, and numerous other issues. Although it seemed that meeting was positive, the newspaper article was perceived total contrary.

Chief Oliveira stated that this was a lesson learned. It is wise to be more cautious when dealing with the media. This is something he would like to share with the commission, because its members will also be approached by the media.

Commissioner Browne stated that he received a call from the media and, thanks to Commissioner Fergerstrom's advice, he was able to separate himself from the commission and advised the media that he was speaking as a private citizen. As a result, this is the way his comments were published.

Commissioner Fergerstrom commented that the media has contacted him in the past, and they now know what his answers are going to be.

Therefore, they approach other commissioners who they believe will provide them information.

Chief Oliveira stated that a previous article published was an excellent article and was very informative for the public. However, he was disappointed with the subsequent one because it was basically looking to point a finger and blame as to why this project was not happening. Also, he believes that the truth was not conveyed to the public.

Commissioner Kudlo questioned the size of the new property.

Chief Oliveira stated that the department is looking at least an acre to an acre and a half. According to him, "What's nice about the new site, on our preliminary assessment is the topography would allow for total use of that side. If you look at the existing property, although we may be getting 39,000 square feet it is on a significant slope. So when creating retaining walls you're gonna shrink your buildable space significantly." The developer was very upfront at the meeting with the media regarding this issue. He realized how much the retaining walls would really limit the building of the station there. The developer supports the department's intent to consider alternatives.

Commissioner Kudlo questioned the approach of the second property owner.

Chief Oliveira replied that the property owner approached the Mayor's Office because he has a larger project being developed. As a partner with the community, the developer wants the county to include the needs of the community in our project development.

Commissioner Matsuda asked whether there were any distance issues regarding the location of the new site.

Chief Oliveira replied that there was not.

- CIP Six Year Program: Copies of the draft submittal was provided to the commission. (see Attachment "A") Note: Correction to Pahoehoe Fire Station, the total funding for that project is \$4.3 million. Last year, the department had nine projects on the six-year program. This year it was increased to fifteen. The rationale that was developed within the Fire Department is to try to put in what is foreseen for the future. Due to the development in Kona, there is a need for two additional fire stations. The Fire Department is taking a proactive stand on the way it budgets these stations.

Commissioner Browne asked whether Kukio was approached.

Chief Oliveira answered that since the current administration came on board, they have been involved in numerous meetings with the various property owners. These include Kukio, Four Season Development, owners of the Kona Village project, all the different major landowners, property owners, and developers in the area. Every meeting is very positive, but nothing solidified, because the property owner's positions change when discussing the cost. The Fire Department supports them in their plans to try and get ambulance service. They wanted it primarily for their own community. The department advised them that if there were a partnership it would be for the greater community, not just for the resort area. If they were looking for service strictly for on-site, it would be in their best interest to partner with a private ambulance company. The local company is AMR, with which the HCFD has a great working relationship; some of the HCFD's personnel work for them part-time. They are currently discussing what the cost would be with putting a private ambulance service.

Commissioner Okabe questioned the timeline on when these projects would be breaking ground.

Projects Manger Nick AhYo replied that the Pahoa Fire Station would be breaking ground this year.

#### Promotions and Hiring

- Internal Recruitment: Presently conducting open recruitment for Fire Radio Dispatchers and Fire Mechanic positions. There are currently three dispatch vacancies and one mechanic vacancy.
- Captain, FEO, and Prevention Inspector Recruitment: Recently notified the candidates of their scores on the written examination. Due to a limited number of successful candidates, the department is in the process of scheduling another recruitment. Assessment Centers will be scheduled for the candidates who passed the initial benchmarks.
- Firefighter Recruit: A pool of 100 candidates from both agility tests will be selected to identify the 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> recruit class. The 34<sup>th</sup> recruit class is tentatively scheduled to begin in April 2006 and the 35<sup>th</sup> recruit class to begin in September.

Commissioner Fergstrom questioned the number of candidates in each class.

Chief Oliveira replied that there were 20 candidates for each class.

#### Emergency Operations Division

- Battalion Chief Robert Bailey reported that recently there were a few brush fires in the Kau District wer of suspicious circumstances. The HCPD received a report that a vehicle was seen leaving the area of the first brush fire. An investigation showed that there was an attempt to set multiple fires in the area. There were four major fires; three are cold at this time. The remaining fire, called a forest line fire, had gone into an inaccessible area. Therefore, a bulldozer was used to provide a roadway and the fire is now contained. However, personnel are still working on the hot spots within that burn area. In addition to those brush fires, on February 6, 2006, another fire was reported near the 49 to 50 mile markers. The personnel were able to quickly extinguish that fire.
- Battalion Chief Reuben Chun reported that there was a fire that took place at the Kawaihae Industrial Complex area. The nature of the fire is still unclear. There is a possibility that a nearby pile of macadamia nuts may have been ignited spontaneously. Due to heavy winds, brush was ignited and impacted a boathouse below the Macadamia Nut Production facility. The fire, which threatened homes, grew along a channel that had mechanic material, brush and shrubbery, which threatened homes. Fortunately, responding units were able to extinguish the area. The Macadamia Nut Production facility received some structural damage. Also, a business owner informed him of a domestic altercation in the area. Battalion Chief Chun will be contacting Inspector Yagi to discuss the investigation further.

Commissioner Kudlo asked whether the Fire Department had a team of arson investigators or if it was handled by a Federal agency.

Chief Oliveira replied that the Fire Department's investigators coordinate with the Police Department. It is possible to request assistance from ATF if it involved large property losses or if there was a casualty or fatality.

Commissioner Matsuda asked Battalion Chief Chun if his investigation concluded that the fire was started by the Macadamia Nut pile.

Battalion Chief Chun answered that investigation is ongoing. The origin point is still not determined. There are other possibilities, such as a husk catching fire in the holding tank, which has happened in the past. Also, the altercation reported may be considered suspicious.

Commissioner Okabe asked whether these types of fires were a common occurrence at the macadamia nut farms.

Chief Oliveira replied these fires occur when there are natural products being stockpiled with little ventilation.

Commissioner Okabe asked whether there were any preventive measures that the department could provide that would caution these companies.

Chief Oliveira stated that the department has recommended that their material be circulated.

Commissioner Okabe asked if a spontaneous fire could occur at the Hilo landfill, where the mulch is grounded.

Chief Oliveira replied that it was possible. Fortunately, the rainfall in Hilo prevents it from occurring.

- Visitor Arrival Data: Commissioner Browne provided a research study on annual visitors to District 8 and 9. (See Attachment "B") Copies were distributed to commissioners. This report will assist the department in planning. There is a population increase that needs to be measured. Also, there is a need to work on gather data on hotels such as the King Kamehameha Hotel. The Kona Resort Community gathers the data mainly for resorts with golf courses.

Commissioner Browne stated that he received the data from the Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce. The figures shown are conservative. The King Kamehameha Hotel did not qualify in his criteria as a resort, therefore, he placed it separately.

Commissioner Maedo thanked Commissioner Browne for his extensive report.

Chief Oliveira stated that he would like to share Commissioner Browne's report with the Department of Research and Development.

Commissioner Browne commented that destination Kona Coast is going to almost double visitor arrivals in 2006.

Commissioner Browne mentioned that it is necessary to account for the number of individuals attending the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

Chief Oliveira stated that Battalion Chief Chun is working on an assessment of the number of incidents associated with cruise ships.

- Ocean View Fire Station: February 16, 2006, is the target date to upgrade the ambulance service from Basic Life Support to Advance Life Support. A challenge faced was that there were only five graduates from the MICT class and there were 8 vacancies. This involved a shortage in overtime and trying to assign personnel.

## Support Services Division

- Prevention Bureau: Submitted a substantial legislative package regarding fireworks issues. The bill that will authorize the County to designate vendors to sell fireworks permits was amended and the department is waiting to see what those amendments were. Hoping for support from the Department of Health regarding the Air Medical Bill.

Commissioner Okabe questioned whether the Fire Chiefs across the state meet to discuss legislation, and what the process was in tracking the bills.

Chief Oliveira stated that the bills submitted were previously discussed and endorsed by the State's Fire Council Office, which is comprised of the four County Fire Chiefs. The testimony is submitted on behalf of each County Chief or department, as well as a letter coming from the Chair of the State's Fire Council, stating the support and passing of the bills. The County has several individuals track these bills, including Deputy Corporation Counsel Bobby Jean Leithhead-Todd, Executive Director Andy Levin, and Executive Assistant Billy Kenoi. Also, the Fire Department goes online to track the bills. There is no lobbyist for the Fire Department, the County or the Fire Service. There is a partnership with the Union, which does have a lobbyist that helps with some of the issues, especially these dealing with Fire Fighter safety. It is a team effort.

Commissioner Okabe asked whether every island has a particular group of individuals who do the same.

Chief Oliveira replied that he could only speak on what is being done in the County of Hawai'i. As a member of the Fire Service, he will contact his counterparts and inform them of what is coming up. There is an established network amongst the Fire Chief's, and they solicit each other's support. He is unaware of the other county resources on tracking bills.

- Training Bureau
  - 32<sup>nd</sup> Firefighter Recruit Class: Finalizing their EMT training. Scheduled to graduate on February 17, 2006, 5:00 p.m., at Nani Mau Gardens. Invitations were sent to commissioners.
  - 33<sup>rd</sup> Firefighter Recruit Class: Continuing with driver training and station orientation. Scheduled to begin EMT training on March 15, 2006.
- EMS Bureau:
  - Electronic Ambulance Report Form committee members: Assistant Chief Mento and the Department of Data Systems attended Med Media Train the Trainer workshop on Oahu on February 6.

- Received three new ambulances one each for Keaau, Waikoloa and Ocean View.

#### New Projects/Business

- Personnel Orders: Will be providing copies of Personnel Orders to Commissioners for “read only” folder.
- Review of Progress and Accomplishments: An overview of the department’s operations since the administration began in 2002 will be placed on the March 8, 2006 agenda.

Commissioner Okabe inquired on the status of the lifeguards.

Chief Oliveira explained that it was stressed to Council Member Virginia Isbel at the preliminary budget meeting that the Fire Department, the Mayor’s Office, and the Department of Parks and Recreation are committed to this project. However, the HCFD is requesting time to proceed with the transition correctly. West Hawaii’s Ocean Safety Captain Chris Stellfox has been working on a proposed staffing and budget package. Chief Oliveira asked Mr. Stellfox not to limit himself, to to his own strategic planning, and to not limit the Ocean Safety budget to what it is now. However, the departments will be working together on their proposals. It’s what is needed to service the community around the island. The task is difficult because there is no standard on the number of lifeguards per beach. There is a need to identify beaches that have a high potential for incidents, accidents, and risks. The department is aware of a consultant from Australia who makes his services available and grades each beach based on surf and water conditions, currents, rockiness, etc. The HCFD would like to use that information and try to categorize each beach and identify the number of lifeguards needed. Once the transition takes place, an administrator for the program will be needed. It is a Battalion Chief’s position. Target date for the project is fiscal year 2007/2008.

#### Employee/Public Relations

- 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Employee Awards and Recognition Dinner: Invitations mailed to all Commissioners for fourth annual dinner to be held on March 18, 2006, Saturday, at King Kamehameha Hotel in Kona.
- Hawaii Heart Walk: 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Heart Walk to benefit American Heart Association to be held on February 11, Saturday, at 0800, starting at Liliuokalani Gardens. All invited to attend.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- Follow up on the Fire Chief’s evaluation.

Commissioner Fergerstrom met with Chief Oliveira and discussed the Fire Commission's evaluation. Chief Oliveira was given time to review and analyze and comment on the evaluation. Commissioner Fergerstrom will review the Chief's comments and report on them at the next Fire Commission Meeting. A meeting with the Mayor will follow.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Budget & Finance (Hart/Matsuda) Budget will be reviewed by the County Council on March 28, 2006.

Office Management and Staffing (Brazier/Okabe) no report.

Rules and Policies (Maedo) no report.

Public Relations (Browne/Kudlo)

Commissioner Browne questioned whether Chief Oliveira received his letter regarding show and tell at Station 16. Chief Oliveira replied that the department would coordinate.

Commissioner Kudlo reported that she would be attending a Firewise community meeting in Ocean View this weekend. Also, the Milolii community will be having its meeting on March 4.

Training and Education (Brazier/Maedo) no report

Chair Maedo requested a 10-minute recess at 11:06 a.m.

Meeting resumed at 11:15 a.m.

Chair Maedo introduced Council Member Pete Hoffman.

Council Member Hoffman stated that he was happy to be present. He supports Chief Oliveira, who was a former resident of Waikoloa. He was asked by Commissioner Browne to attend the meeting and thanked the commission for allowing him to attend.

## **MOTION TO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Commissioner Fergerstrom moved to go to an executive session to consider a continued evaluation of an employee of the Hawai'i County Fire Department where consideration of matters affecting privacy would be involved and a closed session was requested. Commission Okabe seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

The regular session ended at 11:17 a.m.

Executive Session began at 11:17 a.m.

Regular Session resumed at 11:50 a.m.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None

**PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

None

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday, March 8, 2006, at 10:00 a.m., in the Liquor Control Conference Room, Kona Center Building, 75-5722 Hanama Place, Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i.
- Set agenda for March 8, 2006, meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

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KAYCIE A. I. CARTER  
Secretary