

PLANNING COMMISSION
COUNTY OF HAWAI'I

HEARING TRANSCRIPT
AUGUST 3, 2007

A regularly advertised hearing on the COUNTY COUNCIL AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 25 (ZONING CODE) REGARDING OFF-STREET PARKING AND LOADING was called to order at 10:00 a.m. in the County of Hawaii, Aupuni Center Conference Room, 101 Pauahi Street, Hilo, Hawaii, with First Vice-Chairman C. Kimo Alameda presiding.

PRESENT: C. Kimo Alameda
Takashi Domingo
Andrew Iwashita
Shelly Ogata
Alvin Rho
Rene' Siracusa
Rell Woodward

ABSENT & EXCUSED: William Graham
Rodney Watanabe

Ivan Torigoe, Deputy Corporation Counsel
Brad Kurokawa, Deputy Planning Director
Phyllis Fujimoto, Staff Planner
Jeff Darrow, Staff Planner

And approximately 4 people from the public in attendance.

INITIATOR: COUNTY COUNCIL

Amendment to Chapter 25 (Zoning Code), Hawaii County Code 1983 (2005 Edition), as amended, relating to off-street parking and loading. The proposed amendment (Bill No. 79 Draft 2) would increase the number of public parking spaces for various establishments.

ALAMEDA: We are on Agenda Item No. 3 and I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Darrow for a background report.

DARROW: Just briefly, and then I'll turn it over to the Commission for discussion and for testimony. This next agenda item is a County Council initiated bill, an amendment to Chapter 25 of the Zoning Code relating to off-street parking and loading. The proposed amendment would increase the number of public parking spaces for various establishments.

In essence, Bill No. 79, Draft 2 which is your Exhibit 1 proposes to amend parking requirements to improve the ability of the public to find and use parking spaces in appropriate locations by increasing the number of public parking spaces for various establishments and amending the method of determining the number of parking spaces by requiring standard sized parking stalls for multiple family dwellings. Our Planning Director supports the bill but with modifications. This is Exhibit No. 2. There are some issues regarding the bill that is initiated by the Council.

And the Planning Director has mentioned his concerns within the background and has initiated his own modifications to that bill.

ALAMEDA: Okay. Commissioners, any questions regarding the recommendation made by the Department or for Mr. Darrow? Seeing none, Mr. Kurokawa, do you have anything else to add?

KUROKAWA: Yes, I just wanted to -.

ALAMEDA: Sure.

KUROKAWA: You know, in general our concerns for the bill, we're trying to address the concerns that were initiated by Councilman Ford, which is I think in the Kona areas they have a lot of areas with certain types of uses, restaurants, multi-family condominiums where not enough parking so people are parking on the street. With the traffic congestion, you know, things get even little hairy. So what we did in response to that is to kind of look at current recommended standards, urban planning standards, and made some adjustments to our current Code, but not to all of her suggestions and recommendations, and came back with our recommendation.

And, also, one of the other key areas that we're concerned about is non-conforming use if we change the parking ratios. And so we've inserted a recommendation in terms of how to deal with that so that when someone has, say, if their building burns down and have to rebuild that they would be able to do so, and then with conditions for adding additional parking if they're able to. So those are the major areas.

And then in general what we're trying to do is, you know, this kind of balancing act between you add more parking, change the ratios on a blanket-wide basis. It affects the whole island. And it's kind of in contradiction to what we're trying to do which is reduce the auto dependency and also to encourage people to walk and bike, and those types of things. So, in conjunction, recognizing that we still have a lot of these things to put into place, we still did not want to, you know, go the route of encouraging, in essence, by increasing some of the parking ratios.

ALAMEDA: Commissioner Siracusa?

SIRACUSA: One of the comment letters that we got from an architect or landscape architect was that we were basically encouraging the use of more large vehicles, like the supersized SUVs and stuff like that as opposed to encouraging compact cars which would take up less space in a parking area and that sort of thing, that this bill would do that and encourage more automobile dependency.

KUROKAWA: Right.

SIRACUSA: Would you address that concern, please.

KUROKAWA: Yeah, so currently we have, you know, our current Code allows for two-thirds, 66 percent, standard size parking and the remainder, you know, third in compacts. So we have actually kept that because I think the proposal was to do 100 percent standard parking. And

you know, from again, from trying to encourage the smaller cars as well as have less impervious surfaces would be supported by what we currently have; and so we kept that, kept it in.

SIRACUSA: Follow-up?

ALAMEDA: Sure.

SIRACUSA: Yeah, just for clarification, so you're saying that it's the Council-generated version, that's the one that he was objecting to; and the one that the Planning Department did a little tweaking on has maintained the ratio between compact and standard?

KUROKAWA: Correct.

SIRACUSA: Okay, thank you.

ALAMEDA: Very good. Thank you, Commissioner Siracusa, for bringing that up. That's helpful. Any other questions, Commissioners? Mr. Darrow, we just were wondering what kind of action should we take on this?

DARROW: This particular item is going to be continued until our next Kona meeting.

ALAMEDA: Do we need a motion for that?

DARROW: I believe we do.

ALAMEDA: Okay.

DARROW: Do we? Do we need a motion to continue it to our next meeting?

TORIGOE: You can do it by voice vote.

ALAMEDA: How about I do it by voice vote. All those in favor of continuing this agenda item to our next meeting say aye?

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

ALAMEDA: All those not in favor manifest by your hand. Seeing none, this will be continued to our next meeting. Will it be in Kona? Is this one of the 14?

SIRACUSA: Is it already on the Kona agenda?

FUJIMOTO: Yes.

DARROW: This will be at our August 31st Kona agenda.

ALAMEDA: As one of the 14 agenda items?

DARROW: Correct.

ALAMEDA: Okay.

KUROKAWA: It's going to be a long one.

ALAMEDA: All right.

IWASHITA: Mr. Chair?

ALAMEDA: Commissioner Iwashita.

IWASHITA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mainly because the Kona meeting agenda is so full and I hopefully won't want to say anything in the Kona meeting, I want to make a record now, I guess, of my bigger picture view about this particular proposal. And that is that I really appreciate, you know, the concern and the intent to reduce the auto dependency in our community; and I think that's something that we all, well, I would hope that we all would support doing. You know, every time I read the paper and we see little tweaking of things like this, right, my concern is that that's all it is and that it's, you know, trying to tweak, trying to do little things that may or may not, you know, help towards getting away from auto dependency. And, really, what I think is needed which I've said before is that the County should spend 2, 3, 4 million dollars, whatever it takes in the next couple of years, and do the community development planning in an, I would say, effective way. And my view of that is to do it in a way not by, what it is, Council districts or those kind of gross kind of, in my mind, not real appropriate planning kind of areas, that it should be as small as, done on the smallest scale as possible; and then that way the community would -. Like my friend Junior De Luz here in the audience, he and his fellow business people in the Kanoelehua area, they all ought to get together with houselots people and figure out what that area should look like, on that kind of a scale. And I think that it can be done if we structure it properly. And that really would be, if it's done all at one time island-wide everybody knows that we're all doing this at one time on a large island-wide basis but in a smaller context that the community development plan will be as effectively done as possible. So that, and if in fact -. I mean there are people out there I know that are going to say, hey, I want a freeway, I want to be able to drive, you know, no speed limit to go to Kona in an hour kind of a situation. But all of those different concerns can be raised and -. But it really needs to be done on that, to me, at that kind of a level, in that kind of a format in order for this County, this island, to effectively deal with, you know, getting away from auto dependency or being actually, to put it positively, you know, to establish an effective public transit system down the road, you know, planning for half a million, seven-hundred thousand, a million people living on this island, you know, 30, 40, 50 years from now. So the concerns are legitimate. I just think that, you know, trying to do it on a piece-meal basis really just takes away from the big picture; and in the end to me we're going to just end up like Honolulu, no matter what we do. Because they had all the same concerns and they got what they got.

ALAMEDA: Thank you, Commissioner Iwashita. Commissioner Domingo?

DOMINGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just received the administration's input and recommendations and I'm glad that it's going to be continued to the next meeting, of which I'm

pretty sure I'll not be able to attend. But, you know, my concern is what I see here is the Legislative body slowly trying to arrest the functions of the administrative body. And, you know, for instance reviewing zoning applications beyond "x" number of lots and all that. And what we see is trying to intermix the functions of the legislative and the administrative branches. And, to me, my opinion is that's going to be a very, very serious, pose a very serious problem or it's going to be very sensitive because you'll find both bodies contending with each other.

You know, at the present time you have the Zoning Code which outlines the policies and procedures and the direction of growth on this island; and the administration is delegated the responsibility to administer those policies as adopted by the County Council. So what you find here is that here the administration is approving something that the County Council in the past had approved and is contained within the Zoning Code, and then now the Council though it's not of their doing when this was first adopted saying, look, we want it to come back to us so we can review it and stamp our signature of approval. You know, that's repeating the whole process. I mean, if the legislative body has some specific concerns, let's go ahead and amend the Zoning Code, amend whatever that needs to be done so that the administration can do it according to the way the Council wants to do it. You know, we're speaking of accountability right here. You know, where's the accountability going to be, with the administration or the County Council? The County Council is just a part-time body with staff. You can visualize that if this is adopted that the increase in staffing for the legislative branch will certainly grow. And, you know, our type of charter and the type of government that we, the public, originally subscribed to does not, does not, mandate that this be like this. There should definitely be a separation of powers. And that's why, in general, that's my concern, you know. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ALAMEDA: You're welcome. Any other concerns in general? Seeing none, we don't have any testimony. We already voted to continue this matter to the next Kona meeting.

The discussion ended at 10:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Nomura, Secretary