News Release
For Immediate Release: April 9, 2021

Mayor Kawakami signs Bill No. 2804 relating to Agriculture Zoning District

LĪHU’E – Mayor Derek S. K. Kawakami has signed Bill No. 2804, amending the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to encourage and allow a multitude of agriculture and agriculture-related activities in the Agriculture Zoning District.

The bill was passed by the Kaua‘i County Council on March 24. A virtual bill-signing ceremony was held Friday, where Mayor Kawakami was accompanied by Council Chair Arryl Kaneshiro and Council Vice Chair Mason Chock, along with County Planning Director Ka‘āina Hull.

The signed ordinance amends the uses in the Agriculture Zoning District, allowing farmers to sell their produce and ag products on their agriculture properties without obtaining a use permit from the county Planning Department.

“In general, this bill supports agriculture,” said Mayor Kawakami. “By having a robust ag industry on Kaua‘i we’ve always known the importance of being able to grow our own food, but it’s more than just being sustainable and self-sufficient. This new ordinance preserves our rural character. We want to create an economic atmosphere where farmers can farm and be successful, so that our children can look at agriculture as a way to make a living and take care of their family while also maintaining our unique sense of place. Bill No. 2804 definitely does that.”

Prior to Bill No. 2804, the zoning laws have allowed farmers to sell their produce on their site, but they would have to go through a use permit process, explained Planning Director Hull.
“This bill actually makes it much easier for legitimate bona fide farmers to sell their produce on property, while also making sure that non-agricultural retail operations don’t occur,” said Hull. “It also clarifies definitions such as what type of food services can occur on agricultural lands.”

Council Chair Kaneshiro who introduced the bill in January, explained that its intent was to allow farmers to get their produce to consumers faster, especially while facing ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“With the pandemic and the shutdown of hotels and restaurants, many farmers were stuck with a lot of produce they couldn’t sell,” said Council Chair Kaneshiro. “One way for them to be able to get their produce to consumers was through an ag retail stand. Ultimately, those retail stands would have needed a use permit but this bill makes it easier. I think farmers should be able to sell their own produce from their own property from an ag retail stand without needing to go through a use permit. This bill provides an opportunity for farmers to survive.”

Council Vice Chair Chock, who serves as the Council’s Planning Committee Chair, expressed his gratitude to all involved.

“Thank you to Mayor Kawakami, the Planning Department, Planning Commission, and our Planning Committee for seeing this effort through and supporting our agriculture community,” said Vice Chair Chock. “One of the silver linings of any crisis is there are opportunities for us to pivot and support what we want and can see for our future. This is a long time coming to help our small farmers, and I am happy to stand behind this important initiative.”

The ordinance took effect upon Mayor Kawakami’s approval and signature on April 9, 2021.

To view Ordinance No. 1092 (Bill No. 2814), visit https://tinyurl.com/r6z24hay.