

PUBLIC HEARING

DECEMBER 19, 2018

A public hearing of the Council of the County of Kaua'i was called to order by Arryl Kaneshiro, Chair, Committee of the Whole, on Wednesday, December 19, 2018, at 1:38 p.m., at the Council Chambers, 4396 Rice Street, Suite 201, Historic County Building, Līhu'e, and the presence of the following was noted:

Honorable Arthur Brun
Honorable Mason K. Chock
Honorable Felicia Cowden
Honorable Luke A. Evslin
Honorable Ross Kagawa
Honorable KipuKai Kualii
Honorable Arryl Kaneshiro

The Clerk read the notice of the public hearing on the following:

“Bill No. 2731 – A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. B-2018-841, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE OPERATING BUDGET OF THE COUNTY OF KAUA'I, STATE OF HAWAII, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2018 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2019, BY REVISING THE AMOUNTS ESTIMATED IN THE GENERAL FUND (*Kaua'i Fire Department – Two (2) Full-Time Ocean Safety Officer II and One (1) Ocean Safety Officer I Positions*),”

which was ordered to print by the Council of the County of Kaua'i on November 28, 2018, and published in The Garden Island newspaper on December 9, 2018.

The hearing proceeded as follows:

SCOTT K. SATO, Deputy County Clerk: We received no written testimony and we have three (3) registered speakers. The first speaker is Andy Melamed, representing the Kaua'i Lifeguard Association (KLA), followed by Monty Downs.

ANDY MELAMED: Good afternoon. Congratulations all of you. It is an honor to be here to represent the Kaua'i Lifeguard Association and our Ocean Safety Bureau. In the past right (8) years, we have raised over one million dollars (\$1,000,000), close to one million dollars (\$1,000,000), I should say, and that has gone directly to the Ocean Safety Bureau to through the County Council, basically for equipment, as well as building an ocean-minded community within the public. In doing so, we have really focused on not just the equipment, but brochures, videos, roving patrols, and things like that, and in doing that, it has really basically saved a lot of lives in the past eight (8) years, more so than in the past; however, there is one

thing I would like all of you to know, and that is that the lifeguards themselves are the true preventers of drownings. We can say as many times as we want to on the radio, in the newspaper, and even at the airport with the video that we produced, and in the hotel rooms not to go here and not to go there, but it is still up to the visitor when they get down to the shoreline in particular, whether a decision is made to go out and put their lives at risk or just enjoy themselves at a safer place. The more eyes we have on the shore in various places, the better off we are in helping to save lives and that is what KLA is all about, building an ocean-minded community and helping to save lives. In the past nine (9) months, the lifeguards themselves have basically, personal contacts: one hundred seventy-two thousand (172,000); preventative measures: one hundred nineteen thousand dollars (\$119,000); total number of beachgoers through September, and this is all documented by the lifeguards themselves: over one million eight hundred thousand (1,800,000) people; rescues: three hundred twenty-seven (327); first-aid: over four thousand (4,000); and drownings: six (6). One (1) life lost is one too many. To have the lifeguards at 'Anini now is very important because, one, it is becoming a popular beach; two, it is great beach for visitors to go to, especially with the roads closed on the north shore, but in going there, especially during the winter time, there are a lot currents that are deceiving, especially. We have been able to take a couple of our roving patrols and be there for a while spot-wise, but if we can have some lifeguards there on an ongoing basis, that would help us greatly in helping to save lives. So I wish that you consider it, pass it, and we go from there. Thank you very much.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: Thank you, Andy.

Mr. Sato: The next speaker is Monty Downs, representing the Kaua'i Lifeguard Association, followed by Celeste Harvel.

MONTY DOWNS: Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Hello again to some of you and welcome to the three (3) of you. Pretty straightforward really, the reason 'Anini is...this Bill is just basically about trying to get lifeguards at 'Anini a lot of the time, hopefully seven (7) days a week. 'Anini is a County beach park. As Andy mentioned, with Tunnels and Kē'e Beach closed, those beaches used to be packed. We still have the lifeguard towers out there and we do not feel that even though the beaches are really quiet there, there may be just five (5) or ten (10) people at Tunnels and Hā'ena Beach Park, but we do not feel we can take the tower away. When I say "we," I mean the County Ocean Safety Bureau. It would make sense from a numbers point of view just to put the tower at 'Anini, but that had been hit in the face enough out there beyond Waikoko and to say, "Okay, we are taking that away, too," is not an option, I do not think. That is what kind of made 'Anini become quite urgent for us to address. The only argument against having a lifeguard tower is money, and unfortunately, that is a very good argument. I am a new taxpayer, too. The Kaua'i Lifeguard Association really has tried hard to help the County fund the Ocean Safety Bureau with equipment to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars in this year alone, thank you to a lot of work that Andy, in particular with Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), it looks like two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) will be coming in that we are basically giving to the County. It is really not KLA giving it to the County; it is the people, it is the community giving it to the County. So we are part of the nonprofit conduit and feel very fortunate to be able to

help with that. We have tried to reduce the financial burden to the County, recognizing that our donations are for a one-time deal for a truck or two (2) trucks, jet skis, or "mules" or ATVs, and that the cost of ongoing positions is ongoing. That is a real problem and it stops us from requesting that we hit a homerun and get a lifeguard tower at 'Anini. A lifeguard is four and a half (4.5) positions, so we are asking just for two and a half (2.5) positions to try and get the roving patrol very acting on a daily basis. That is my testimony. Thank you.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: Thank you.

Mr. Sato: Our last registered speaker is Celeste Harvel.

CELESTE HARVEL: *Aloha* everybody. Thank you for your time today. I really appreciate it. My name is Celeste Harvel. I have been teaching wind-surfing at 'Anini for about thirty-three (33) years now. I have a perfect safety record and I have actually rescued quite a few downers out in the lagoon because my board is eleven (11) feet long and three (3) feet wide, I could pull a couple of you up on it with me...I have had to do that and give rescue breathing out in the middle of the lagoon. I have saved lives that way. Anyway, we have never had a lifeguard down there until recently and I really appreciate it. Those guys are really sharp and they really do risk their lives, some of you well know, to make it a safer place there. As Monty said, the end of the road is closed, so 'Anini, from my perspective, is getting about ten (10) times the amount of people that we had last year. It is packed down there. My wind surfboards are really excellent rescue boards. I can be anywhere inside of the lagoon within one (1) minute or two (2). When I hear people yelling, screaming, or freaking out, I just go get them and either bring them in and call for the rescue help. Also stand-up paddle boards are really useful in that department because they can paddle right across the powerful currents if they are good water people. I like to bring a paddle just in case I need it for a rescue craft. I think an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of care, too, as these gentlemen said. Having somebody telling you, "Hey kids, do not swim out in the channel. Walk up to the top of the park where there is less current and it is safer." "Thank you, Aunty," they say and they walk up there where it is better, because they do not know. Even like they said with all of the stuff they tell you on the video on the plane and everything, having somebody right there makes a world of difference. Lately, we have been having the truck and when it was really bad, of course, the jet ski down there, and it makes me feel so good. I think it was Chris, the lifeguard parked down there by the channel, they put up the "No Swimming" sign and I think that saves so many lives already. I am here to tell you that I really do hope that we can get lifeguards at 'Anini. I have been doing it myself for thirty-three (33) years, and like I said, I have pulled a lot of swimmers out of there that were in trouble. I think it is just safer, especially with all of the numbers that we have right now of people showing up there. That is about it for me. I have noticed a lot of things down there over the years, like the trees are falling down, the beaches are going under water, the shoreline is eroding, the seawall is collapsing, and all of the sunscreen issues. I think having lifeguards down there is a big lifesaving move and it really should be done. I do not like to go down there when it is thirty (30) feet myself. We really have to make sure that people do not get in the water when it is like that because they do not know any better. Thank you all for your time. Let us do the safe thing.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: You have a quick clarifying question from Councilmember Brun.

Councilmember Brun: So those boards you have, what is the weight limit on that?

Ms. Harvel: You and I can fit on, Councilmember Brun. I would not hesitate. I turn into "Superwoman" when the time arises. I pull big men out of the water like they were kids with all of the adrenaline.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you, Celeste, for all of the good that you do down there. How many days a week do you run your business? What hours and how often are you there? I am wondering about when you are not there.

Ms. Harvel: Yes. These days, it is a little slower than it used to be. I usually do a 10-12 p.m. class on most weekdays. Rarely do I do a Saturday, just to stay out of the way of people on their day off. I never go on Sunday. I used to do a second class once in a while, but it just has not been that busy lately. On afternoons, I am not there. When it is big, I am not there. On the weekends, I am not there. So the lifeguards would really be needed then.

Councilmember Cowden: You are somewhat of a volunteer lifeguard during the window of time that you are there, but you are not there all of the time.

Ms. Harvel: Exactly.

Councilmember Cowden: So that is a really important piece.

Ms. Harvel: Mostly, I just do prevention. I see these people with piles of kids heading for the channel and I just say, "Excuse me," and I interrupt their flow to tell them to go back up the other way and I think that is really something the lifeguards could really benefit there. They do not want to get wet, right. They want to prevent having to rescue. Thank you all so much.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: Thank you. Seeing no one else in the audience to testify, this public hearing is now adjourned and we are done for the day.

There being no further testimony, the public hearing adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



SCOTT K. SATO
Deputy County Clerk