

Department of Finance

Honorable Addison Bulosan
Honorable Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Honorable Felicia Cowden
Honorable Fern Holland
Honorable KipuKai Kualii
Honorable Mel Rapozo
Honorable Arryl Kaneshiro

The Committee reconvened on April 7, 2026 at 9:03 a.m., and proceeded as follows:

Pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statutes Section 92-9(a)(4), because a video recording of this meeting is available online, this is to provide a link to the video recording (valid as of the approval date of these minutes): https://kauai.granicus.com/player/clip/3057?view_id=2&redirect=true. Additionally, meeting videos are available at: www.kauai.gov/Government/Council/Webcast-Meetings.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call back to order the Finance & Economic Development Committee and the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Departmental Budget Reviews. Let the record reflect that all members are present. On the schedule today, we will be hearing from the Department of Finance, Office of Economic Development, and the Planning Department. As we do each morning, we will take testimony. Is there anyone in the public wishing to testify?

There being no public testimony, the meeting proceeded as follows:

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We will begin with the budget details for the Department of Finance. Ms. Sakai, if you want to come up, provide your synopsis, and then we will go through each division.

There being no objections, the rules were suspended.

Department of Finance – Administration

CHELSIE SAKAI, Director of Finance: Good morning Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Council. Chelsie Sakai, Director of Finance. Our team is here today to present you with our FY 2027 Budget. Our approach this year was to evaluate the department as a whole and prioritize critical needs while maintaining core services and supporting County-wide initiatives. With the exception of personnel costs, for many of our divisions the Budget was either flat or decreased—in an effort to prioritize our Department's biggest project which is our new Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP). At the time of our FY 2026 Budget, we had not yet selected our vendor and were unaware of what our costs were going to be for that project. Once we knew who our vendor was going to be and what needs we would have to move this project forward, we realized that paying for this system outright made a lot more sense than lease financing. So, you will see the shift in IT's (Information Technology) budget to move the funding away from lease financing, into consulting services, and IT arrangements. Another big priority for our Department continues to be protecting the County from cybersecurity threats. In response to evolving cybersecurity risks, we have reduced system-specific detail in our Budget document, but we are, of course, happy to discuss with the Council as needed. This year, in our Budget we have also consolidated the Assessments and Collections sections under the Real Property Division. The split between the two (2) was a legacy item that just no longer serves the Division's needs.

We are happy to report that this is the first year in eight (8) years that we have seen a reduction in our insurance premiums. This reflects the work that was done in updating our statement of values through doing comprehensive appraisals of our properties. As a result, not only did our premiums decrease but we are now eligible for Full Replacement Cost Coverage, as opposed to the margin funds that we had been operating under, so this significantly improves the County’s financial protections in the event of a loss. Our Budget does include a new position in IT. As the ERP project will be a significant multi-year effort for our Department, we did an internal recruitment for our Project Manager. This did result in a vacancy amongst our Helpdesk, so our request for a new position is to ensure that we can both maintain enhanced Helpdesk services that Council approved last year, as well as support our ERP implementation. We also had the transfer of the position primarily responsible for addressing from the Department of Public Works, Engineering Division into the Real Property Division. By transferring and redescribing the position to a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst, we are aiming to accomplish three (3) goals. One (1) goal is to enhance the overall operational efficiency and long-term sustainability. Secondly, we aim to move away from ink and paper maps into a modern Real Property Information System (RPIS) platform. This modernization has been “in the works” for a few years and we are looking forward to seeing it to fruition. Lastly, we hope to provide additional support for that position if that staff goes on leave as we have another GIS analyst in the Division. With that, we are happy to answer any questions you might have.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any questions from the members?
 Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: First of all, thank you and your team for a really good job. I also just want to know a little bit more about this online auction platform. Can you tell us a little more about that? I do not know if it costs money, but it probably creates quite a bit of efficiency.

Ms. Sakai: Historically, our auction for County assets were done annually and in-person. This new online system allows for this to be done quarterly. We now do the auctions quarterly online and people are not just committed to one (1) bid. So, if they get out bid, they can just bid again. It comes at no cost to the County. The fees that are paid by the person buying the items is what pays the vendor for this system.

Councilmember Cowden: Are we able to move product that we do not need any longer more easily and efficiently?

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: It probably saves a lot of energy and time.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: For each different Department, right?

Ms. Sakai: Correct. We have seen, also, when some vehicles go out earlier in the year and they have to sit for the annual auction, they are just sitting there. At least now, they move out quarterly.

Councilmember Cowden: So, we are not even having to store things.

Ms. Sakai: Correct...for less time.

Councilmember Cowden: I was really pleased to read about that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you for being here. On your Salary and Wages section, you are asking for a new IT position and transferring in a position from the Department of Public Works, so that is two (2) positions...

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: ...but the total is seven hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$725,000)?

Ms. Sakai: That includes everyone across the board. That is for the entire Department and the associated fringe. That amount is not tied just those two (2) positions.

Council Chair Rapozo: Not just to those two (2) positions.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: One other question...and I am not sure it is here or if it will be when we get to the other divisions, but was there any discussion about additional staffing to help with the audit? I know that we talked about that during the audit, but I see nothing here that is going to address those concerns.

Ms. Sakai: We did discuss it but, at the time, we do have a vacancy in accounting that we are focusing on filling first. So, that is why we did not put one in.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I am wondering how our Kapa'a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) working out? Is it operating most days?

Ms. Sakai: It operates Monday through Friday.

Councilmember Cowden: I know that it is by appointment only. Are people making appointments every day?

Ms. Sakai: They are. Appointments can be made the day of, if not appointments can be made for the next day.

Councilmember Cowden: They are busy every day...it is not as if we have a day where staff is there and no one comes.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, good.

Council Chair Rapozo: I have a follow-up to that. I received a call yesterday...thank you for bringing this up...that they will not take any walk-ins, why is that?

Ms. Sakai: Correct. We do not have a lobby space there.

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes, but if someone comes and there is no appointments...which is what happened to this lady. When she got there, another lady in a wheelchair was there and they did not take her. There were no appointments at that moment. Whoever was working told her, "I am sorry, we do not take walk-ins." Why would we not take a walk-in if staff is there and there are no appointments? In fact, the lady in the wheelchair was told that she had to go to Lihue. We can do this when we get to the DMV, we do not have to do this now. Maybe I am wrong, but if no one is there, what would be the issue about taking a walk-in without having to go through the whole computer process. These *kūpuna* they do not have computers, so they do not have the ability...and making them go to Lihue, I think was harsh. We will wait for DMV.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: If you could say a little bit about the kiosks. Where do we have them now, where are we adding them, and are they all the same? For example if you used the one at the Safeway in Kapa'a, and then you used the new one (1) on the west side, would it be basically the same?

Ms. Sakai: Yes, it is the same machine. It is in Safeway Lihue and Kapa'a. We have one in the DMV lobby and now, the new one (1) at Western Motors in Hanapepe.

Councilmember Kualii: Western Motors is the name of the place that you are putting it.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: I thought it was the name of the company that was providing the machine. You said Kapa'a. You said in our DMV office.

Ms. Sakai: In the lobby.

Councilmember Kualii: That is in Lihu'e.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Not the one (1) in Kapa'a.

Ms. Sakai: There is also one (1) in Safeway Kapa'a.

Councilmember Kualii: No, the DMV.

Ms. Sakai: No, not at the DMV.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Where is Western Motors? What town?

Ms. Sakai: Hanapēpē.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: What is the cost to...do we have to lease the space to implement the...

Ms. Sakai: The company that provides the kiosk for the County works out an agreement with the person who is hosting the machine for the County.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions on the write-up? If not, we will move into the Budget. We will start on the Administration Budget.

Councilmember Kualii: Page 38?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Page 38. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: I just wanted to confirm that you have five (5) positions—no vacancies, even as of March 15, 2026, and you have none expected, as in coming retirements within the next few months?

Ms. Sakai: No.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions on the Administration Budget? Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Accounting is next, nevermind.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: On the Special Projects line item, the ninety-eight thousand dollar (\$98,000) increase is primarily from the nearly same amount in the increase in the Kauai Humane Society.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: What is the Disaster Trust Account seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000)?

Ms. Sakai: That is in the event that the Kauai Emergency Management Agency (KEMA) funding runs out. That is some funding that we keep aside for response needs.

Councilmember Kualii: That is extra money for disaster needs.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: And you would be working with KEMA.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for the Administration? Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: The financial reporting software, is that Tyler Technologies?

Ms. Sakai: No. Right now, we are using Gravity Software, but we are still working on setting it up and getting it done. That financial reporting software includes our transparency portal. Right now, we have some money in it to help with some bank reconciliation for the Treasury Division and some of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) work for the Accounting Division.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Is that a new piece of software?

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We will keep moving on. We will move on to the Accounting Division.

Department of Finance – Accounting

Councilmember Kualii: Page 43, positions.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: The one (1) vacancy, Position Number 205 Account Trainee, vacant for two hundred eighty-six (286) days. It says, “filled with short-term hire.” How long has that been and how long do you expect it to go on?

Ms. Sakai: In the Accounting Division right now, we know that we will have a retirement effective August 1 under Position Number 285, our Fiscal Control Analyst. We have just gone through recruitment to have an Operating Budget Proviso Section 4 position shadow that one (1). Because that is number two (2) in the Accounting Division, we are prioritizing filling that position. That way Malia Kagawa, Accounting Administrator, will have support when this retirement happens. We just conducted interviews last week, so we are hoping to make a selection this week and move forward with that. Once we are done with that, we will probably look at recruiting for Position Number 205 at a higher level than Accountant Trainee. Again, we are losing a lot of institutional knowledge with this upcoming retirement, so we want to have some higher-level positions to assist Ms. Kagawa in all the work that gets done in the Accounting Division—to include the ACFR. We are hoping to go out for that shortly.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. That was a very good explanation.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: On page 43, under Other Services, ninety-four thousand one hundred dollars (\$94,100) to the City and County of Honolulu, Drivers License Computer Usage, can you just explain that a little bit?

Ms. Sakai: All of our drivers licensing system is done by the City and County of Honolulu’s Division of Information and Technology (DIT) and those are our fees into that system.

Councilmember Cowden: We use their system, but we do all the work.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Next page. Are there any questions on page 44?
Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: How is it going? We have this opportunity to find out how everything is moving forward.

DEL SHERMAN, Information Technology Manager: Good Morning, Del Sherman IT Manager for the County. As far as software implementations, the only large new thing that we are embarking on is the ERP implementation. That is a multiyear project that will take our entire focus. There are a few smaller projects targeting some enhancements to already existing systems to help with our ability to analyze phishing attacks and other cybersecurity-type of events, but those are small. The ERP is the largest.

Councilmember Cowden: Who is the ERP taking care of?

Mr. Sherman: Sure. ERP is a pretty all-encompassing “bucket” of things. Anything that you would consider is a piece of software needed to manage our enterprise—the entire County. It could be anything from land information to finance and accounting to utility billing. Specifically, the largest piece of that we will be targeting is an entire replacement of our finance and accounting system.

Councilmember Cowden: Is that the green screens?

Mr. Sherman: That is correct, yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Who is our provider for ERP? Which company?

Mr. Sherman: The legacy vendor is CentralSquare Technologies. The winning bidder for the replacement is also CentralSquare Technologies. We can get into more details if you would like.

Councilmember Cowden: We could probably do that on a separate Committee Meeting, maybe.

Mr. Sherman: Sure.

Councilmember Cowden: That is great. Will it probably be several years?

Mr. Sherman: We are projecting, at least, a three (3) year project. We want to be careful to get it done as quickly as we can. At the same time we do not want to rush because that is when mistakes are made. I think one of the most important things to us in this project is that we do not want to let go of all of our legacy data. There is valuable information, historically, that we could use in making decisions going forward. So, that will be one (1) of the biggest “heavy lifts” of this project—making sure we do not lose our whole set of data.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, I am happy to hear that.

Councilmember Cowden: This Enterprise Resource Planning piece is going to be able to pull all of the different pieces together? Will it be able to interface, somewhat, with all of our different programs?

Mr. Sherman: That is the objective. Some of the main things to integrate with would be Workday, for example—our payroll application. The new ERP will have connectivity to that. There are several other cashiering-types of systems that we will want to integrate with. The project will include interfaces to all of those things.

Councilmember Cowden: At one point we had several millions of dollars in our budget. Do we see that software in here particularly?

Mr. Sherman: It is. It shows up in several different places. There is a piece under our Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangement (SBITA) line item.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Page 48.

Councilmember Cowden: Oh, there it is.

Mr. Sherman: That is under consultant services. Collectively those make up the ERP project.

Councilmember Cowden: I see that two million four hundred seventy-five thousand four hundred thirty-six dollars (\$2,475,436). I would expect it to be a number like that.

Councilmember Kualifi: Over three million dollars (\$3,000,000), right?

Mr. Sherman: Correct. For next year.

Councilmember Cowden: That is the SBITA is over three million dollars (\$3,000,000), but then the consultant services are two million four hundred thousand dollars (\$2,400,000). Collectively that is a big chunk of what is then the Finance Department's total budget.

Mr. Sherman: The ERP project accounts for the entire amount of increase in the IT Budget. If it were not for that, there would have been a decrease.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: What does the implementation time look like and the support after implementation look like? Is it going to be over the next year and a half (1½) or two (2) years?

Mr. Sherman: Initially, we are targeting a Phase I of the project to migrate some of these services out to the cloud that we hope to get done within year one. In years two (2) and three (3) we will be moving towards a more modern platform for Finance and Accounting Services, but as far as the project itself is concerned, we have projections that go out to seven (7) years so that we have a good handle on what the cost, moving forward, will be.

Councilmember Bulosan: This does not include that cost, though for, say next fiscal, or for the following couple of fiscal years will probably be ongoing is the expectation.

Mr. Sherman: As far as the ERP goes, this next budget cycle will be the highest point that we will see in the ERP project. Subsequent years will decline in cost until they stabilize around year four (4) and we begin just paying for maintenance.

Councilmember Bulosan: I have a new question unless someone has a question.

Councilmember Kualii: Follow-up.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: When we are looking at the line items on the bottom of page 48, the consultant services are two million four hundred thousand dollars (\$2,400,000), the ERP Annual Payment and Website ADA Compliance together is another nine hundred ten thousand dollars (\$910,000). So, it is three million three hundred thousand dollars (\$3,300,000). You are saying that this is the highest point. What year are we in now and how many more years to get to seven (7)?

Mr. Sherman: This would be year (1). We just issued the notice to proceed on this. Up until now we have been in contract negotiations.

Ms. Sakai: To clarify, we are currently in the first year. FY 2026 is the first year.

Councilmember Kualii: We are budgeting for year 2027.

Ms. Sakai: Correct, for year two (2).

Councilmember Kualii: That is what I was asking. So, we are budgeting for the second year. You broke it down and put in here IT arrangement and then you put in consultant services, that leads me to wonder if the other items listed in IT arrangement are...an annual payment is to CentralSquare Technologies, so that is a consultant or contract, right?

Mr. Sherman: CentralSquare Technologies is the software company.

Councilmember Kualii: I am just wondering why it is under “there” as opposed to “there.” Are all the other items above, the eight hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$875,000), the five hundred eighty-five thousand five hundred dollars (\$585,500), the bigger items over half a million dollars, are those also service contracts with other service or technology providers?

Mr. Sherman: Those are all subscriptions to various different providers. That is why, according to newer accounting standards, we have to break those out under a separate line item—anything that is subscription-based.

Councilmember Kualii: With this new ERP system coming, will those other line items go down or is it just an enhancement to it?

Mr. Sherman: The other line items are for entirely different pieces of software that involve cybersecurity, Microsoft Office—anything that is subscription-based.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Follow-up. Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Without having to give us too much detail on the cybersecurity platforms—you are combining the cybersecurity in our various systems. There are probably cybersecurity in every one of them, right? We had a conversation with the KEMA Director yesterday about where we are bracing for potential challenges. Do you have anything to say on cybersecurity?

Mr. Sherman: Just that we can never spend enough on it. I wish I could spend more, but we have to be reasonable. Just this morning, we had one hundred (100) attempts to infiltrate via phishing email. It is just a daily thing. The attacks are constant, so we have to always be vigilant.

Councilmember Cowden: Well, at least you are staying in practice. Did those phishing attempts go to different people in our staff across the County?

Mr. Sherman: They did.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Kualii: Councilmember Bulosan had a new question.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho is going next.

Councilmember Carvalho: Just going back to the other services—Videography and Broadcasting Services, one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). I would just like clarification on that.

Mr. Sherman: Sure. We have contracted with Hō'ike Kaua'i Community Television. They provide a number of different services to the County to include what we see today. They also provide services to other boards and commissions meetings.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: New question. For the internet/cable/data, I see a decrease in the request. Similar to what Council Chair Rapozo had asked, is there a change of services?

Mr. Sherman: Which one was that?

Councilmember Bulosan: Internet/Cable/Data. The request is a lot less than the adjusted budget. Carrier services.

Mr. Sherman: I see the ask at one hundred fifty-nine thousand dollars (\$159,000).

Ms. Sakai: We kind of “scraped” to go against our “actuals.”

Councilmember Bulosan: I thought, “Is this going down?”

Ms. Sakai: We did go around our entire Department to “scrape” some things in order to fund the ERP.

Councilmember Bulosan: Okay. Does this also include the Starlink satellite hotspots that we put up?

Mr. Sherman: The Starlink satellite hotspots that we put up for the next several years are reimbursed through a grant. So, the County is not paying for those and they do not show up here. If we were to Starlink services it would be within that line item.

Councilmember Bulosan: As a follow-up, do we have any closed networks for ourselves? Everything is by providers.

Mr. Sherman: As far as access to the internet in general it is all through internet service providers.

Councilmember Bulosan: I am sorry, I will rephrase the question. Do we have any closed networks—the County—that we run ourselves?

Mr. Sherman: We do. We do have a county-wide network—fiber optic—that runs from one end of the County to the other that we contracted with Spectrum to install. That network is now dedicated to the County and County IT manages all of the nodes on that as well.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: In the past, it used to show the detail for the internet. Mr. Sherman, this is the first year that you have telephone costs in your budget. What is that for?

Ms. Sakai: It was actually mis-budgeted in prior years under “Subscriptions.” So, now it is just in the right place.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay. I thought maybe we left them in a cave and did not give them a phone.

Mr. Sherman: We are not allowed to talk to the outside world. Specifically, though, if you would like a comment on that, the amounts budgeted under telephone are primarily for the Kaua‘i Police Department (KPD) and public safety administrative lines.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a question about staffing. I am happy to see that you are pretty well “staffed-up.” How is the stability of the staffing? Are there any planned retirements? I am always concerned when we have retirements and succession planning.

Mr. Sherman: We did just have one (1) retirement and that position was fairly quickly filled. I do not foresee anything coming up in the next year or two.

Driver
Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Unless we have other questions, we can move to page 49. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: On the Computer peripherals from three hundred forty-two thousand dollars (\$342,000) up to four hundred ten thousand dollars (\$410,000), up sixty-eight thousand dollars (\$68,000). The endpoint hardware and replacements, I am curious, what is the breakdown? How did you come up with the four hundred ten thousand dollars (\$410,000)? Are you keeping inventory of things or are you estimating what you have to replace as far as computers themselves?

Mr. Sherman: That is correct. The increase reflects our issuing of small tablets to United Public Workers Hawai‘i (UPW), so that they have a means to interact with Workday—timesheets and other workday types of accounting that they would

do. Part of that amount is for tablets, the rest of that is just replacements for our computers and laptops. We have a general policy where these devices should be utilized for at least three (3) to five (5) years. We will stretch that for even longer, if we can. The amount that we budget each year is to allow for the replacement of those things on the cycle that we have established.

Councilmember Kualii: This is like a replacement schedule cycle. So, on the cycle are you replacing an average amount each year? Are some years a lot and some years less? I am just curious about what we actually get for four hundred ten thousand dollars (\$410,000). How many computers and how many laptops in addition to the twelve (12) tablets?

Mr. Sherman: It would be several hundred systems to include laptops and desktop workstations.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: What happens to the old computers? Do we auction those off?

Mr. Sherman: If they are worth anything we can auction them off. We have done that in years past, but typically we will use a piece of equipment up to and well beyond its useful service life to the point where it is not good for anything anymore. Of late, for example, we have probably seen in the news, the migration from Windows 10 to Windows 11. There was a big thing about how Windows 11 will not run on an older device. So, that is where we are at. We cannot upgrade so we cannot use these machines and do not recommend anyone else using them either, for security reasons. Generally, they get recycled.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for IT? If not, we will move on to the Treasury Division.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you.

Mr. Sherman: Thank you.

Department of Finance – Treasury

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Page 51. There are five (5) positions, no vacancies on the vacancy report. No recent activities since the report on March 15, 2026?

Ms. Sakai: No.

Councilmember Kualii: No retirements expected? You had the other one (1) in August.

Ms. Sakai: We are expecting our Treasurer to retire in September. So, we will try to do a Section 4 recruitment to work alongside her before she leaves.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for the Treasury Division?

Councilmember Cowden: Just to say thank you to our Treasurer.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We will move on to DMV.

Department of Finance – Motor Vehicles

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: We have three (3) vacancies. The first one (1), Position Number 287 Senior Clerk, two hundred eighty-seven (287) days. The status from March 15, 2026 says, “interview scheduled February 18, 2026–March 4, 2026.” Were the interviews scheduled?

Ms. Sakai: We made a selection. DMV has additional background checks to go through, so it takes a little longer to hire for DMV. We are hoping that the senior clerk can start May 1, 2026.

Councilmember Kualii: The next one (1), is Position Number 238, Driver License Examiner II, three hundred sixty-four (364) days vacant. It is paid by grant funds that is why we dollar-funded it, but it says, “continuous recruitment.” Is this position hard to fill?

Ms. Sakai: As a Drivers License Examiner II, it was. We also went out for a Drivers License Examiner I, which we did have an applicant that we did select and is going through background checks now. We are hoping that position can also start May 1, 2026. Our intent with that is to work with that employee to get them the qualifications or certifications that they would need to be an Examiner II.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Last year we were discussing the challenges we were having with people being able to do Commercial Drivers License (CDL) licensing. Did that get resolved? When we have a Drivers License Examiner II as opposed to an Examiner I? Can that examiner do CDL licensing?

Ms. Sakai: An Examiner II can do the CDL trainings, but right now our scheduling for CDL tests are available for the week of. So, we have been able to “catch up” and provide the testing.

Councilmember Cowden: Well, that sounds really wonderful. Are we able to get as many people as needed? If someone wants a CDL, can they get it on Saturday? Can they test for it on a Saturday?

Ms. Sakai: Not on Saturday.

Councilmember Cowden: Well, whatever it is.

Ms. Sakai: During the week.

Councilmember Cowden: We have one (1) day a week that we do the testing?

Ms. Sakai: If needed, our examiner is scheduled for three (3) days a week.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. It seems to me that a year ago, perhaps two (2) years ago, when people were just needing to get their drivers license, it took months to just to get a date assigned. How long does it take to get a test for just a drivers license?

Ms. Sakai: For a regular Type 3 Drivers License takes about one (1) week or two (2) out.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. You can make an appointment inside of a month.

Ms. Sakai: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: That is a big improvement and I am happy to hear that. Are people taking the tests in Kapa‘a also or just in Līhu‘e.

Ms. Sakai: They are only offered in Līhu‘e.

Councilmember Cowden: Is that because we just have the two (2) people doing it?

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: The last position vacant is on the bottom, Position Number 159, Supervising License Examiner and Inspector, vacant for nine hundred eighty-eight (988) days. Last year, it was partially funded at fifty percent (50%). The recruitment status now says, “filled with short-term hire.” You have an eighty-nine (89) day hire. Is it a retiree?

Ms. Sakai: It is a retiree, yes, but we have been working with the Department of Human Resources (HR) to look at different classifications that we can try to hire this position at. The regulatory requirements for DMV are hard to fill, so we have been working with HR and looking statewide at what our options are, to try and fill this position.

Councilmember Kualii: It is kind of like, trying to hire at a lower level and trying to “train them up”?

Ms. Sakai: Somewhat, but it is also a supervisory position so we cannot go too low.

Councilmember Kualii: Right, but you are working with HR and have the intent to fill it. However, for now, you have the short-term hire.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes. What we had as a challenge in the last budget and, particularly the budget before that, is when someone brings a car over from the continental United States. That was not easy to get that car licensed. Has that process gotten smoother and simpler?

Ms. Sakai: That, I would have to have Jeremy “Kalawai’a” Lee, Motor Vehicle and Licensing Administrator, to get into the details.

Councilmember Cowden: That seemed to be very difficult for a while.

JEREMY KALAWAI’A LEE, Motor Vehicle and Licensing Administrator: Council Chair, Vice Chair, Councilmembers, Kalawai’a Lee, DMV Administrator. Going back to the question, Councilmember, all of our service appointments—no matter what the request is of the DMV—are about five (5) to seven (7) business days out in our Lihu’e office. In our Kapa’a office, we are currently only offering motor vehicle services. We are same-day service availability, limited capacity. When I was checking over the last week, our service horizon is really pushing to one (1) day out, right now. It is highly utilized.

Councilmember Cowden: That is great. What has changed that has made us be able to...is it less cars are moving here from somewhere else? I think that the COVID-19 Pandemic created a big “burst” of need. Is this happening quickly?

(Councilmember Kualii was noted as not present.)

Ms. Sakai: Are you asking specifically about transferring a vehicle from...

Councilmember Cowden: Yes, that was something I would hear of—a big challenge—people having to go back repeatedly and wait...

Mr. Lee: There are a lot of paperwork requirements that come along with a vehicle that is being transferred from another state into the State of Hawai‘i. Like I mentioned, we are five (5) to seven (7) business days out. We offer our “*kūpuna* hours” program in the morning for personal business of individuals sixty-five years (65) old or older. We also offer walk-in services. Admittedly, not the greatest way to get serviced. We have content on our website. We have people on our floor helping to do paperwork review and to help expedite customers in order to help better capture those more challenging...long duration in between attempts to try to get that work done in the DMV—to try to cover those individuals.

(Councilmember Kualii was noted as present.)

Councilmember Cowden: Do we have any more ability...we stopped for a while having walk-ins during the COVID-19 Pandemic. People who just want to walk in to pay their registration will usually go to the kiosk, but can people just walk in and hand over their paperwork to change the ownership of their car or something like that? Or do they have to make an appointment.

Mr. Lee: We offer walk-in services in our Lihū‘e office. We have a lobby there that have services offered from 8:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We have found over the six (6) years that I have been there, that the work-flow management gets really challenging nearing the end of the day—if we continue to allow walk-in service ticket production after 2:00 p.m.—we do not have the ability to be able to catch-up with those longer standing tickets in our queue.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, it sounds like you are doing well. How about answering the phones. Remember, we had a really big backlog on voicemail. Do we have anyone answering the phones now?

Mr. Lee: We do have people who answer the phones. Granted, the volume of calls that we get—we take a live call, and we miss five (5) to ten (10) calls. I think that we are constantly in a state of deficit. Our primary job is to ensure that all of our staff are allocated voicemails and emails that have come in during the course of the day. They are tasked with making sure that they follow up with those individuals in a

reasonable amount of time—typically one (1) to two (2) business days is when we are getting back to most people.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. It sounds like we are doing really well.

Mr. Lee: It is an on-going challenge. I wish I had the ability to provide better service in that area. We have a lot of community members that want to have direct phone contact or in-person contact. Statistically speaking, just on the volume of service that we provide to the community, it is very difficult for us to manage all of those methods of communication with the people that we have in place.

Councilmember Cowden: I did have one last question.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan, did you have a follow-up question, or did you have a new question?

Councilmember Bulosan: Yes, but she can finish.

Councilmember Cowden: My last question is do we have an increasing amount of vehicles on the island? If we were to graph it would it be going like this? Are there more and more cars, or is it pretty flat?

Mr. Lee: I would say that there is a steady increase. I would not...I have not “crunched” the numbers in a while, so I would like the opportunity to do that and then follow up if that is something you are interested in “chasing down.” The answer is yes, generally speaking there is a gradual growth in the amount of vehicles that are legally present on the island—both in rental car fleet upscaling and most of it is in our community.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes. The reason why I would be curious, it would help justify when we need to put another person on staff. It sounds like people are really “maxed.” So, that might be because there are more cars. I am just trying to track it so that we are making sure that you are getting what you need, rather than to find out when it is problematic.

Mr. Lee: Absolutely. I appreciate that and I think our tactic has been to really focus on efficiency. Making sure that our team and the work that they do is the most efficient, effective service that we can provide to the community and only then, when we have maxed out all of our other options, would we then make a request for taxpayer money for additional staff.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: For the kiosk system that we have, in the Budget, would it be in Other Services, or would it be...referring to the cost of the kiosk?

Ms. Sakai: That would be the service fees that are paid. It just goes directly to the vendor, and that is how we pay for the kiosk.

Councilmember Bulosan: Oh, so we just kind of “rent them out.” So, there is no cost to the County to have those?

Mr. Lee: No. No expense at all.

Councilmember Bulosan: So, what prevents us from expanding the kiosk services? I finally gave in and used it a month ago. I like the appointment system, but I feel like that would save us so much time.

Mr. Lee: Sure. There is a two (2) pronged answer, Councilmember. One, the company that is supplying those hardware/software solutions to us have a business model about a saturation in a community like our own. The second one is that the tool is very powerful for what we currently use it for and there is a statewide process that we are going through right now, to add additional service requests to those kiosks. The Administration has a priority list that I am helping to effectuate to get those additional services on our County of Kaua'i kiosks, but it is a statewide contract. We are aligned with the rest of the state on the scope of that particular service.

Councilmember Bulosan: I feel it is very effective. It is easy and I think small businesses would pay to have that in there, so that it would drive traffic to them. I thought that would be a “net positive,” but it is also great that it is not even a “net negative” on our end.

Mr. Lee: It is a “net positive” for businesses. We did struggle to find a westside replacement location for a number of years. We finally found a willing business community member in Western Motors—the Kaiakapu *‘ohana* stepped forward when we were at the “end of our rope,” really—looking for a westside location. As it turns out, he turns out high-volume numbers when it comes to our periodic motor vehicle inspection process, and also in the amount of registration renewables that are processed at that community-based station.

Councilmember Bulosan: One (1) more follow-up. Based on the contract, they decide on...whatever formula they are looking at...when they are ready to expand to the next location and they just contact us. We cannot request one, for example, for the north shore or on the south shore.

Ms. Sakai: Just to clarify earlier, we also have one in Foodland in Princeville. So, there is one on the north shore, but to answer your question, yes, it comes from the vendor with how many we can have on the island.

Councilmember Bulosan: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii then to Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: I do have a follow-up but it is on the earlier discussion about the Kapa'a DMV.

Councilmember Kualii: Regarding what Councilmember Cowden was talking about "more cars on the island," and what Councilmember Bulosan was talking about...and I may have missed some of it when I stepped out of the room...but I think it would be good if you provided, and I am assuming you have the data...provide us the data on the services provided and break it down between in-person with appointment, in-person walk-in, kiosk. I think if you give us a couple of years back, we can see where it was before having the kiosk and then we can see where it is as you have added more kiosks.

Mr. Lee: Absolutely, we can do that. Would it be okay if I added in our online payment system also?

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, any useful information that you probably already have.

Mr. Lee: ...that we have compiled.

Councilmember Kualii: The only other question along those lines was, any time a car rental company brings cars on island, they have to register it all with your Department, right?

Mr. Lee: Yes. They have a fleet process that they engage in. We have worked really hard with our operations team to get as many high-volume entities that deal with vehicles—to use online services, and we just do the part of validation.

Councilmember Kualii: By those numbers, we could, over the last few years, see how they are growing, too, in putting more cars on the streets.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: The same thing for, not just the rental car companies, but the car dealers who are selling those cars. Do they have those same requirements or is that up to the person who buys the car?

Mr. Lee: It is the same requirements for title and registration, but they do not necessarily tell us their entire fleet inventory, just the vehicles that are being titled, registered, and sold.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay. Thank you, I am looking forward to seeing that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: Just circling back to that discussion that we had during the opening regarding the Kapa'a DMV and the walk-ins.

Mr. Lee: Yes, Council Chair Rapozo, the answer is that we do not take walk-ins, but our team will always work with the people who are showing up. Kapa'a DMV is a unique scenario or situation, like Ms. Sakai mentioned. There is no lobby there, so people will use their mobile devices and sit in their cars. Every twelve (12) minutes, just like our Lihu'e office, there will be a wave of people coming in. Sometimes, people will book an appointment, and they will be "in and out," of there. If we have a gap, we will take that gap opportunity to get that person taken care of. It is not always...recently, we have had no availability in terms of appointment slots that we would put people in to record those appointment slots. So, we have been asking people to book. In addition to that, Council Chair Rapozo, we have been working with our vendor to produce an iPad solution out in the front of the office, so that people can check-in for an appointment if a family member helped them to book that service but did not bring a mobile device with them, or needed to be assisted in a way that our people who are working behind the counters cannot help. We realize that there is a gap there, Council Chair Rapozo. We want to really try our best to try and close that gap as much as we can, so we are working to increase our communications about the services that we have out there. We have a media campaign that we are going to launch, hopefully, when we get close to providing full service in Kapa'a. We are doing as best of a "soft touch" as we can offer. As people ramp up service in Kapa'a, it becomes tighter and tighter for us to be able to fit in those incidental *kūpuna*.

Council Chair Rapozo: I understand and appreciate what they do out there, but in a scenario that I said earlier...and I do not think that this lady was making this up... would your staff tell someone to go to Lihu'e? If they did not have a mobile device?

Mr. Lee: No.

Council Chair Rapozo: Do we have the capability to bypass the digital process and just help them at the counter?

Mr. Lee: Absolutely. We always will take that opportunity to use the speaker to speak to people who are outside of the office space, to ask them what they are doing, if they need some assistance, and what can we do to offer help. Like I mentioned though, we are at capacity currently, in terms of our staffing there and the availability of time...so it looks like at times, that there is nobody there, but it is just because people are "remoting" into the service and need to basically sit in their cars. Otherwise, they will be standing outside in the conditions. It looks like someone could walk up and think there is no one at the window right now but are three (3) to four (4) members of the community sitting in their cars waiting for their services to be queued. We always will try

our best to close the gap where we know that we struggle to get people who are *kūpuna* who do not have access to internet services or have a mobile device that they would be able to “enqueue” their services from.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: My follow-up is along the lines of...it has been going a while now, we know that it works, we know that a lot of people want to use it, right?

Mr. Lee: I do not know what we are talking about.

Councilmember Kualii: Kapa'a.

Mr. Lee: Oh, yes. It is actually getting much busier.

Councilmember Kualii: So, let's think about making it better for the long-term. Let's think about expanding the facility. I do not know what else is behind it. I know you just took a little small space. If we really accommodate people—have a lobby and do it the same way that we do it in Lihu'e—that will lessen the load in Lihu'e, which is always busy, too. I think it was smart to start that, but let's go all the way. Let's go further. Let's find additional space. If we have to move the entrance to the side, because that is where there is more space for a lobby, then meet the demand and satisfy the public. I think that it is one of our critical, front-of-the-line services that we hear a lot about, so that should never happen. If it is because the facility is not correct, or the staffing is not correct, then let's improve the facility and add another staff person. I think that is “front-line critical.” These are some of our lower paid employees, so the investment to get another employment is not the same as a much higher paid employee. Their value is so much more because they are front-line service.

Mr. Lee: I am in. I think that we are very lucky in the DMV, we found a number of really amazing humans who love to provide service to our community—and it is essential for people. If we have the opportunity to be able to be community-based to allow for walk-in services and have a place that would accommodate all of those things, I think everyone on our team would be for it. I know that it is a burden for the leader that is out there and to the staff members that function in the Kapa'a office when they have to see things like that occur. No one likes to have our *kūpuna* or family members standing outside in the hot sun while they are trying to conduct essential business for themselves. I love that we are in Kapa'a. I love that we have the opportunity that we have but it is not one hundred (100%) percent what we would want it to be. We took what we could while we can.

Councilmember Kualii: I want to just say too, though, personally, any time I have ever gone to the DMV, the staff there have been incredible. I think they are some

of the most positive, friendly, helpful people, so you are lucky to have such a great staff. Let them know that I appreciate them.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Just a follow-up when he was asking for a report. If we break out how much goes through Kapa'a that would be good. How much comes through the mail...most of my DMV interaction is by mail...so I am sure there is a pretty good amount that comes through the mail so people do not have to go in.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: That is what you said, right? You called it something else, though. You said you would like to included...

Mr. Lee: ...online. I would have included mail as part of our counter service.

Councilmember Kualii: So, you actually process it directly online, too.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Carvalho: Just to add on what Council Chair Rapozo and Councilmember Kualii were talking about, whatever is needed to enhance that place, I think is important. The service part is there, it is just making sure that we can accommodate as much as we can. Whatever support you need to enhance that facility sooner than later, to me, would be great. I just wanted to say that.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any questions for DMV?

Councilmember Kualii: Page 57. Along the lines of commodities, it is flat.

(Councilmember Carvalho was noted as not present.)

Councilmember Kualii: I just wanted to have an idea of...should I wait for him?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: It depends on your question.

Councilmember Kualii: Other Commodities is flat, one hundred twenty-four thousand seven hundred dollars (\$124,700), so you probably estimated these things as the same as last year and they are just in line, but on the "Vehicle Plates," Tags I

am just wondering what numbers make up that number. How did you estimate that? Is there one (1) fixed price for plates and one (1) fixed price for tags? And then how many of each? On the line item Other Commodities is where the Vehicle Plates/Tags are, ninety-seven thousand two hundred dollars (\$97,200), is that calculated by “X” amount of plates and “X” amount of tags at a certain price for each?

Mr. Lee: Yes, Councilmember, that is correct. We work with our statewide vendor to identify individual plate costs as a set. Then we calculate how many plates on average, what our “burn rate” is, and then we procure as needed.

Councilmember Kualif'i: If you do not have that now, could you follow up and share the details?

Mr. Lee: I am sorry, what details?

Councilmember Kualif'i: The details of how many plates, how many tags, and what the price is.

Mr. Lee: Sure. Absolutely.

Councilmember Kualif'i: How you came up with the ninety-seven thousand two hundred dollars (\$97,200).

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for DMV?
Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you so much. I would like to say first of all, that your service is incredible and I second what Vice Chair Kualif'i said. I have a question about resident-only parking zones and the cost to do a pilot project as a trial for a specific community that may include twenty (20) to forty (40) homes, that would create a placard that you could get at the DMV when you share your address or proof of address to create a first-off...I have been working on this for a while...and it seems more appropriately housed in the DMV rather than the Department of Public Works, which is the current situation it would be under. We would have to create a whole position and structure for the licensing to receive those placards. I am wondering if, and you do not have to answer on the spot right now, because I know that I have not gotten a chance to bring it up to you, but I am wondering where that would fall in. Would it fall in here under Tags? I would love to know about what kind of costs would be expected for something like that. I know that you are already stretched, but I am wondering if there is a possibility of that, and I would like to know what you think the anticipated costs would be to do that just for a very small pilot project.

Mr. Lee: Sure. First time I am hearing about this. I think that we would definitely do some “scope digging” to find out all of the details of how that might work, how long, how many vehicles...I believe that will fall under our Motor Vehicle section, where we would have to track vehicles—the correct tag associated with the correct vehicle for a term, I am assuming. Then, we would have to deal with the outliers—Turo

vehicles that might be owned but are used for commercial businesses. We would need to “vet” through the details. I know that there are other models of similar programs in our state that we could look at. I would be happy to work with you on that.

Councilmember Holland: Okay. Just expect that I will be sending more requests on that and possibly meeting with you on that pretty soon. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii'i.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Quick follow-up. Along those lines, how do you handle Disability Parking Permits “Handicap Placards” now?

Mr. Lee: We process them in the office in-person. It is always considered a priority request. We really work hard to make sure that people who attempt to come in select the right service request, then we always prioritize those.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Do they have to do an application process with you? How does it work?

Mr. Lee: It is a State process. The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) office on O'ahu is the lead for it. Basically, we have a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with them to provide the services through the DMV. We have paperwork in our office and online available for people. People go to their doctor and get those forms validated and then they come into the DMV and we process it.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Lee: We offer this service in Kapa'a, too.

Councilmember Kualii'i: So, you are on the “end” side where you actually issue the placard.

Mr. Lee: That is correct.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Does that come under that line item for Tags...with regards to the cost of it...or do they just ship bunches to you every now and then?

Mr. Lee: It is free of charge to us as far as the materials. Then, we get reimbursement from DCAB. We send a report to them each month or quarterly regarding the amount of service that we do, then they provide us a reimbursement for the staffing.

Councilmember Kualii'i: What does DCAB mean?

Mr. Lee: Disability and Communication Access Board.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for DMV? If not, we will move on. Thank you Kalawai'a. We will move on to Real Property Assessment and Collection.

Department of Finance – RPT Assessment and Collections

Councilmember Kualii: Is that on page 60? Just to confirm there are no vacancies? Nothing recent since March 15, 2026 and nothing expected in the next few months?

Ms. Sakai: We had a retirement at the end of March in Position Number 276, but someone internally moved into that position, so we now have a vacancy effective April 1, 2026 in Position Number 216. That we will have to put out for recruitment. It is T276, Appraiser I.

Councilmember Kualii: Is it on this list and I am just not seeing it?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: It is in the middle.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I am hearing you say that we are combining the two (2) and it makes sense to me, but can you just give a little overview of why that was separate and why it is combined? What is the big change?

Ms. Sakai: I am not sure why it was separated to begin with. Under the Real Property Division, there is the Assessment Section, there is the Collection Section and there is also the GIS Section and the Appraisal Section. There are all different sections, but they all report to the Tax Manager, so they are one Division. I am not really sure why the Collections Section was split out, but ultimately Scott Teruya, County Real Property Tax Manager, is responsible for the entire budget of the two (2) sections.

Councilmember Cowden: Has he always been?

Ms. Sakai: He has.

Councilmember Cowden: So, I do not understand what the difference is now.

Ms. Sakai: I do not know why it was split in the first place.

Councilmember Cowden: But I do not understand what it is now.

Ms. Sakai: So now, Account Number 0507 will be all of Real Property's Budget and Account Number 0508 will no longer exist. We took everything from there and added it to Account Number 0507.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. So, it just numbers. It is just what is accounted for.

Ms. Sakai: No.

Councilmember Cowden: Nothing moved in strategy or management.

Ms. Sakai: No. It is just so that then, he does not have to look into two (2) different places if he has money for a contract. He just has one Budget.

Councilmember Cowden: Alright, well that makes sense.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you, I have a Councilmember Kualii-type of question. You said that T276 was the vacant position that was currently filled.

Ms. Sakai: It became vacant with a retirement.

Council Chair Rapozo: Then that became filled by the person that was in T216?

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: But T216 is a Real Property Tax Appraiser II and T276 is an Appraiser I, is that two different positions?

Ms. Sakai: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: What is the difference between a Real Property Appraiser and an Appraiser?

Ms. Sakai: The "T" position was a contract position. That is why it does not say, "Real Property Appraiser." Janine Rapozo, Human Resources Manager III, Department of Human Services, can correct me if I misspeak on that. That is why it also does not have an SR rating, because it was a contract position.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay. Is it still a contract position?

Ms. Sakai: No. It has reverted back to a Civil Service position and it is now an Appraiser Assistant, so it has less responsibilities than that of the Real Property Appraisers, and it was the choice of the employee to take that position.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay. Thank you.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Can you please clarify the difference between the appraiser and the assessor? Does the appraiser look at the property while the assessor looks at the numbers on the computer?

Ms. Sakai: The Assessor is usually the head. In our case, we call the assessor the Tax Manager—is the title of our position.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, and then the Appraiser is...

Ms. Sakai: The Appraiser and the Assessor—they are still valuing the properties. It is the same responsibilities.

Councilmember Cowden: It is the same responsibilities just a different word.

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. It is a little confusing but no problem.

Ms. Sakai: I think that in the continental United States they are called “assessors.”

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: All of our positions are called Appraisers.

Ms. Sakai: All of ours are called Appraisers.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: But our department is called Real Property Assessment.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Thank you for that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for the Tax Assessment and Collections Division? Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Is our work staff team pretty stable? Are we anticipating more retirements? I am always curious about succession planning.

Ms. Sakai: We are very mindful of succession planning. Mr. Teruya will be eligible, at some point in the next fiscal year for retirement. He may or may not retire, he has not made that a formal decision yet.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Does he have succession planning happening under his “wings”?

Ms. Sakai: Yes, very much so.

Councilmember Cowden: He has not nodded his head yet. You do? Okay, because that is important.

Ms. Sakai: Across the entire Department, because this is something that we were mindful of, we made it a priority to do a lot more written standard operating procedures (SOPs)...

Councilmember Cowden: Standard Operating Procedures.

Ms. Sakai: Correct, so that we do not lose a lot of the historical knowledge on processes as people leave the Department.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes, and it is good that, when someone leaves, that someone else is the bridge in between the replacement.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions from the Members?

Councilmember Cowden: Your software is not in a “growth-mode.” Is it in “stability”?

Ms. Sakai: Correct.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Software is pretty much the same. Are there any other questions? If not, we will move on to the Purchasing Division. Councilmember Kualii.

Department of Finance – Purchasing

Councilmember Kualii: On the Purchasing master page 66, positions. Just confirming that there are no vacancies, nothing since March 16, 2026, nothing recent, or nothing expected as far as retirees?

Ms. Sakai: We are anticipating for Ernest Barriera, Assistant Chief Procurement Officer, to retire at the end of the calendar year.

Councilmember Kualii: Is that Position Number 102?

Ms. Sakai: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Alright. You just said, before that S24 recruitment...

Ms. Sakai: Yes, of Section 4 to work alongside Mr. Barriera ensure continuity.

Councilmember Kualii: This position says, "Assistant Chief Procurement Officer." Is there a Chief Procurement Officer?

Ms. Sakai: That would be me, the Director of Finance.

Councilmember Kualii: Oh, the Director of Finance is the Chief Procurement Officer. I thought it might be something like that. That is all on positions, thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: First of all, I really want to thank Mr. Barreira. I believe it has been forty (40) years. I want to express very sincere gratitude, and I want to acknowledge that he has always been super helpful, so I have a little bit of anxiety about him leaving. Can either one of you speak to succession planning? I will let you speak to that first and then I have a second question.

ERNEST W. BARREIRA, Assistant Chief Procurement Officer, Executive Administration, Finance: Good Morning, Ernie Barreira, Purchasing Chief. If there is one thing that we have focused on, in the seventeen (17) years of being here, was the need and critical importance of succession planning. There are a number of people in this County who possess the requisite qualifications and competence to step into my role to facilitate a seamless transition, and we are very encouraged that is going to happen as we embark upon the recruitment process.

Councilmember Cowden: My second question: I know during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Procurement Division was particularly helpful in doing "work from home." How much of...we had to let go of our office space for a while, and filled it with another Department. Do we have physical space across the street for the Procurement Division, right now? How much of it is still remote?

Ms. Sakai: The entire Division remains one hundred percent (100%) remote.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. When we have succession planning and there is change, will it continue to be remote? I am not complaining, I just want to know.

Ms. Sakai: At this time, yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Has that been a problem?

Ms. Sakai: No.

Councilmember Cowden: Everyone is happy working from home, I guess.

Ms. Sakai: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Alright. I have not found—at whatever level I have interfaced with it, I do not do a lot—but I have not found any “speed bumps” and have always found Mr. Barreira very helpful if I am just confused about something.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions? We can delay his retirement. We can ask him for a report.

Ms. Sakai: I try every day.

Councilmember Cowden: What I have been thinking when I see all of these 89-day hires, the ones that come in to fill in—I will be you will be one of those.

Mr. Barreira: Well, since I have the three (3) mayoral candidates before me...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We can take a recess now...

Mr. Barreira: I would very much like to retire. Now, of course, the seventeen (17) years that I have been here and twenty-five (25) years with the Court but seventeen (17) years starting with Mayor Carvalho in 2010. It has been a remarkable experience and tremendous. I am not leaving because I am dissatisfied in any way. I could easily stay another ten (10) years and be very happy. I have a tremendous staff, tremendous leadership...starting with Mayor Carvalho and to Mayor Kawakami...it has been a great opportunity...and a staff that is utterly amazing in terms of commitment, intelligence and dedication. They have made me look great for the past seventeen (17) years. It is an incredible group of people. I will still answer the phone, if the phone rings, but I would very much like to be a permanent retiree. It has been a long time. My wife of thirty-five (35) years, Annette, has supported me tremendously—taking care of the house and raising the three (3) kids, now three (3) grandchildren—so, it is time to enter a new chapter of dedication to them.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. We respect that and we have a lot of gratitude for great work with a warm smile and very approachable.

Mr. Barreira: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We could make him create a report that would make him retire faster. Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: Yes, could we, maybe have some reports that are handwritten in triplicate form? I am just kidding.

Mr. Barriera: I feel dirty just holding this paper. As you know, I have been the “paperless fanatic” for all of the years...I was given direct orders back in 2010 to increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Division. We have had a brilliant IT Manager that has made all of that possible. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for the Procurement Division, I mean for the Purchasing Division? If not, we will take our 10-minute caption break now. Then we will come back to the Office of Economic Development and then the Planning Department.

There being no objections, the Committee recessed at 10:19 a.m.

The Committee reconvened at 10:34 a.m., and proceeded as follows:

Office of Economic Development

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Welcome back. The next department we have is the Office of Economic Development.

NALANI K. BRUN, Director of Economic Development: *Aloha*, Nalani Brun, Director of the Office of Economic Development (OED). Can I do an overview?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Yes, you can do an overview, we will ask any questions on it, and then go into the Budget.

Ms. Brun: Okay, great. Thank you. The Mayor’s proposed budget for us is four million three hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$4,330,000), a decrease of about one hundred two thousand dollars (\$102,000), primarily due to a transfer of a certain grant program. More importantly, this Budget reflects a clear direction. We plan to have FY 2027 be a year of stabilization, execution, and transition. Our focus is on finishing what we have started, strengthening our systems, and preparing for the next Administration. The key shifts for us are; we have made several strategic adjustments, we reduced grant-in-need funding to align without our administrative capacity allowing us to focus on bringing all of the grants current and closing them out properly; we reallocated two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) in energy funding from a grant-in-aid to other services, that is for the Energy Savings Performance contract project—this funding also ensures the County can cover a potential walk-away fee if we elect not to pursue proposed upgrades and retrofits with an energy services company; we also transitioned the Coconut Marketplace Mobility Hub to a nonprofit partner, with the County now in a supportive role reducing long-term burden while strengthening community ownership; we increased maintenance funding for the Waimea Theater to stabilize that asset; and adjusted travel to reflect rising costs and the return to in-person coordination. A key area of focus this year is staffing. We are currently in the process of interviewing candidates for the Economic Development Specialist position

that is open. This role has been restructured to provide the same cross sector grant management support and prioritizing agriculture. It will be the start of a type of mini-agriculture division. I also wanted to emphasize the strength of our staff. Our team has demonstrated an exceptional ability to step across sectors. They juggle multiple projects and support one another whenever needed. We have leaned into this cross-sector model intentionally because it allows us to be more responsive and effective for our community. At the heart of this Budget is discipline and teamwork. We are focused on executing what is already underway, closing projects cleanly, and positioning initiatives for long-term sustainability. Another important point is how we leverage our funding. Of our total budget, four million three hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$4,330,000), approximately two million dollars (\$2,000,000) or approximately forty-eight percent (48%) comes from grant funding. This significantly impacts our capacity and allows us to multiply the impact of County dollars in supporting economic development initiatives across the island. We continue to carefully manage federal grant compliance, ensuring we only take on what we can successfully administer. We also maintain clear alignment between State and County roles. We are actively preparing for a smooth administrative transition by documenting processes and organizing our portfolio work. This past year, we strengthened our grant systems, we advanced energy and mobility initiatives, we expanded our youth climate practitioners program and supported county-wide invasive species coordination. We also continue to modernize programs, like Sister City and Kaua'i Made to improve clarity and longer-term sustainability. This Budget reflects a steady, thoughtful approach. It is about finishing strong, taking care of what we have built, and setting things up for long-term success. It is powered by a team that consistently shows up, steps up, and works together and services this community. Thank you.

Councilmember Kaneshiro: Are there any questions on the write-up from the Members? Councilmember Kualii'i.

Councilmember Kualii'i: I just have one (1) quick question just to have a better understanding. When you mentioned the total Budget was four million three hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$4,330,000) and two million dollars (\$2,000,000) from grant funding, so that was grant funding coming to you.

Ms. Brun: That is grant funding we give out.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Okay, that is grant funding you give out. All your funding of four million three hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$4,330,000) is General Funds.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii'i: So, you are just saying that the majority of your funding—half of it—you grant back out to the community.

Ms. Brun: To the community, yes.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions from the Members?
Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: Can I please get a little bit more information about your expanding agriculture part of it—can you share a little bit more about what that looks like and the goal and the vision of the Department in that area?

Ms. Brun: This is pretty typical of OED, we tend to be the “little kid sticking their finger in the hole of the dam” which is breaking. That often is our role—especially in agriculture. As we all know right now, we have an affront happening to us from invasive species of all kinds. So, a lot of Niki Kunioka-Volz’s, Economic Development Specialist IV, work... and she can come up here if I get something wrong...has been trying to step in when the State has not stepped in yet. We know that it is their job...that is what we encourage and we keep reminding everyone of that...but in the meantime we are not going to let everything drop and die, as best as we can with what we have. We have innovation grants that we have for agriculture and for all other sectors. Basically, we are asking the community of farmers and others out there have great ideas on how we can make things better, to come to us with those ideas and we fund them. That is part of the innovation grants. We also have agriculture farm expansion grants (AFEG). Those are really popular. The goal is basically for existing farms to be able to get bigger—to expand what they have. A lot of times there just is no money to do that. Sometimes, it is a small thing that they need—expansion on their irrigation, or some kind of equipment that will help them to be producing more. That is what those funds are for. We also have our other grant program which are cultural and events grants. That covers every gamut of anything else outside of farming...although we have had funded things through that fund for things like farm fairs or events that support farmers and help them get new information. Other than that, we have quite a bit of money going into invasive species. I think in this next Budget we have one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) set aside to continue the work on the Little Fire Ant (LFA), which we definitely do not want to expand any more. They are basically handled by the Kaua‘i Invasive Species Committee (KISC), so that is where the money would go. Basically, their work is to try to keep that population of LFA down. They are the lead on that. So far, we have been the lead on more on CRB. That is our area until the State Department of Agriculture (DOA) comes in and rescues us.

Councilmember Holland: Is there conversation happening internally about growing that agricultural footprint role for the County holds? I ask because I have been really looking into...last year...the benefits of creating—and I do not think that this is the right year to do it—creating a Department of Agriculture, similar to what Maui County has, that is also like a DOA, Environment, and Sustainability—some of the other counties have similar departments. It would incorporate all of those environmental controls and outreach all of the biosecurity and agriculture issues, but taking it to a next level and really helping farmers double agricultural production, and filling the gaps. This would be similar to what Maui County has done, with their DOA, which is duplicative of the State’s regulatory process, but more of a support branch of government to really get farmers across the line outside of just grants. I am just wondering if there is conversation, for example, additional roles, growing a team under Ms. Kunioka-Volz—any kind of conversations of moving us in that

direction outside of the incredible grant work that you are doing. Thank you so much for the continued support of both our fight against LFA and CRB. I am just wondering if that is a conversation that is happening internally.

Ms. Brun: I do not think there has ever been a time that we have not said, “if we only had more.” The effort this year of hiring this next person on our team is going to be focusing on agriculture and supporting Ms. Kunioka-Volz, so that she can get out more to the farms and help people versus most of her work right now is just trying to “finagle” with the State on different subjects. That is where we are going to go. I think that it is a great pilot way to see how things work. I have looked at the numbers of the other economic development offices in the State and really, percentage-wise, we are at the number of people for an economic development office. However, for sure, if you wanted to put effort in one area—and yes, agriculture is probably our best place for expansion—then it would be agriculture some day.

Councilmember Holland: Great. So, that position that you are talking about, is that the one that is listed in the Vacancy Report, the 4000 Economic Development Specialist II?

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Councilmember Holland: Okay, great. It says, “interviews scheduled.”

Ms. Brun: Yes. We have interviews scheduled. We have some great candidates. They are recently graduating from school in this background so we are hoping that we can “snag” some of them and get them home.

Councilmember Holland: Awesome, thank you so much.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: You just took Councilmember Kualii’s question.

Councilmember Kualii: That was E4000, right?

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you, a follow-up on Councilmember Holland’s question. The funding for the invasive species mitigation and LFA, that was in the current fiscal year. So does, KISC get those moneys?

Ms. Brun: KISC gets the LFA money.

Council Chair Rapozo: Do they provide a report to us?

Ms. Brun: Yes, they provide quarterly reports to us. They provide an application first, telling us exactly what they are going to do. Then we monitor every quarter—that they hand their reports in and that they are actually getting to where their goals are.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay. We will just send over a request that we get those reports. I am just curious...even with the invasive species mitigation as well. How is that one going? Is that not KISC?

Ms. Brun: We have not distributed that one yet.

NIKI KUNIOKA-VOLZ, Economic Development Specialist IV: Niki Kunioka-Volz, Office of Economic Development. Just to clarify really quickly, the initial funding that was allocated with the intention to address LFA—we have been going back and forth with KISC. We are awaiting their formal proposal. We cannot shift the funding without that formal proposal. They are still working on what their staffing capacity allows for that program to look like. We are on the same page and they have started to do the groundwork already, but that formal movement of the funding is really just waiting on them giving us that formal proposal.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, from the last Budget...it was the Council's initiative to put that money in the fund...you are telling me that they did not complete the process?

Ms. Kunioka-Volz: We have already begun discussing what the program and funding is going to look like, where the funding is going to go, and what our intention and priorities are. They are completely onboard with it. Translating that into a formal proposal that we can then submit and go through the procurement process to shift the funding, that is taking a little bit longer than we had anticipated. I imagine that has a little bit to do with staffing on their side. There is a lot of moving projects and funding on their end. I cannot exactly answer why the delay has happened, but that is where we are at. I keep getting reassured that it is going to be happening soon. Late last week, they reached out again for another follow-up convening, so I am really confident—putting all my “eggs in one basket”—that we will have that completely moved over very soon. We have everything enrolled on our end. We are just waiting for that formal proposal.

Council Chair Rapozo: Try to get a commitment before the Supplemental Budget because I am inclined to take that out. We went out of our way to put that in because of the need that they stressed. I love what they do, but again, we are just not going to do that—put money away and then they are not going to act on it. What about the invasive species mitigation funding?

Ms. Kunioka-Volz: The invasive species mitigation funding—we have decided the best, most impactful use of that is to support our other departments and their fight against invasive species. We have discussed and gotten agreement with our Department of Parks and Recreation to do a cooperative purchase of an air curtain

agricultural producer and nonprofit land steward support system—the cost share system. We just received buy-in from Malama Kaua‘i that they are willing to be that intermediary nonprofit that helps to implement that project. We have held off because I have been going back and forth with CRB response. They are introducing a Kaua‘i based team. They are going to formally announce that this Saturday at our Earth Day event. A part of this is not wanting to duplicate efforts. They have their own legislative directed funding, so we did not want to be duplicative. They are going to be hiring two (2) part-time staff who are going to be on-island. At the same time KISC is hiring one person specific to CRB. This has all happened in the past six (6) to eight (8) months. They are going to be offering resources to the community as well, so we want to make sure that the funding we have—I want to prioritize our agriculture producers and our land stewards, we want to make sure that they are receiving the resources as well and that the resources are not just going to the general community, but that our producers and our industry get that support. That is what has taken us a bit of time to figure out what exactly what they are doing, what area they are operating in, and what gaps can we fill in the industry. Malama Kaua‘i has just stepped up to say that they are willing to do a second cost-share program. We initiated the pilot project with them last year. It was successful, but the funds ran out quickly. Like you said, five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for one property. We do not have enough funds to support all of our producers, that is the reality of the situation. That is the direction that we are moving, in terms of a cost-share program for small producers. There is opportunity for it to reach more producers should more funding be made available.

Councilmember Holland: Farmers cannot come directly to us, right? It has to be mediated through a nonprofit organization.

Ms. Kunioka-Volz: Yes.

Councilmember Holland: I think that is a limiting factor on a farmer being able to get immediate help, is that we cannot come and apply directly to the County, it has to go through whatever the host nonprofit organization is.

Ms. Kunioka-Volz: Yes.

Councilmember Holland: Alright, thank you very much.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: On that same page, you have specific line items for invasive species mitigation and LFA mitigation. Then you have the larger line item that is above that is agricultural for six hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$675,000). Is that six hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$675,000) fully amounts to a grant program where they apply and then you give it out? I know I got reports from 2024...and the other thing about this grant cycle, is it one cycle in the fiscal year? No? Is it like a roving cycle? So, it is hard to track. Malama Kaua‘i did fix the four (4) *lo‘i* farmers’ irrigation and the design of the east side agricultural park. That is separate, right? They applied for a grant to do those specific projects. They did those specific projects. So, year-after-year are they applying for

different projects? Is the thing you are talking about something else that they are applying for, or is there direct funding to them for certain purposes?

Ms. Kunioka-Volz: For this specific project relating to invasive species, that is a direct funding grant. That is not using General Funds. That is a subgrant initiated using funds that we received from the department.

Councilmember Kualii: So that line item, then, Invasive Species Mitigation, that is the direct funding source.

Ms. Kunioka-Volz: No. The funding to Malama Kaua'i to do that cost-share program with agricultural producers is not included in this Budget.

Ms. Brun: Those are State funds.

Councilmember Kualii: Oh, I see what you are saying, that was along the lines on what I was saying earlier. You are also an agency, like the Housing Agency, that gets fund and...

Ms. Brun: Redistributes.

Councilmember Kualii: You are helping the State deliver programs for funds to support agriculture and we would not see any of that in this Budget.

Ms. Brun: No, although we will have matching funds for different programs. That six hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$675,000) that is actually a split number. Our plan for it is for four hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000) of it to go into the AFEG grants. Another one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$175,000) would go to the innovation grants. Farm expansion for the first one, four hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000). One hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$175,000) is probably going to be pushed towards the innovation grants—specifically to agriculture. Then, we will have fifty-thousand dollars (\$50,000) as part of an agricultural workforce development pipeline. That one (1) we are working with “AgVenture” programs in the schools and “AgAcademies.”

Councilmember Kualii: I think if you had a way of doing it, because it is hard to track with the moving cycle of grants, if you could...especially just now you gave us a little more detail that does not show up in the Budget, maybe if you could follow up with what you did last year versus what you intend to do this year. Then we can compare the changes in the Budget for those specific line items in what you are doing.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Carvalho: Just checking on the three hundred ninety-three thousand dollars (\$393,000) for Energy. Can you just explain that?

Ms. Brun: Yes. From one hundred ten thousand dollars (\$110,000) to three hundred forty-three thousand dollars (\$343,000)? This is the implementation for the first year for the mobility hub at the Coconut Marketplace, now known as the East Side Mobility Hub. Basically, this is going to pay for the first year of the nonprofit organization, they are going to get up off the ground. They are going to start running their program. There are some implementation—like signage—things like that to try to get that location functioning well, so this year, we have the launch. They are creating the nonprofit organization. We are doing the “hand-off” to the nonprofit organization and then next year, which is this budget here, is going to be them taking off for their first year. They have funding to go, while they look for funding to sustain them after that.

Councilmember Carvalho: Okay, thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: What is the level to the nonprofit and what is the name of the nonprofit organization?

Ms. Brun: It is three hundred forty-three thousand two hundred dollars (\$343,200)—that includes the upgrades to the area, so it is not just the salaries and things. The name of the nonprofit I believe, is Makaiwa Initiative. It is an off-shoot of Hanalei Initiative.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay. It is basically that entire line item.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo, do you have a question?

Council Chair Rapozo: Is the intention to continuously fund that project, or is that nonprofit organization going to be able to sustain itself?

Ms. Brun: That is the goal. The goal is that it is going to be like Hanalei Initiative. We are working closely with the State and other mechanisms up at the Hawai'i State Legislature to make sure they have access to funding and that people know about it. They are also teaching as they are going along because a lot of areas, like Haleiwa, are also interested in doing something similar so we get to be a pilot.

Council Chair Rapozo: I agree with Councilmember Kualii, when it is just under “Energy”...I guess you could show the relationship but...it is not the energy that I am thinking about.

Ms. Brun: Yes, I am sorry. The positions turned into energy and transportation, although it is still named energy.

Council Chair Rapozo: I think that might be...

Ms. Brun: I apologize.

Council Chair Rapozo: No, do not worry about it, and I will be sending over a request for a report on all of them. That way we can check before the Supplemental Budget review. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden

Councilmember Cowden: My question is basically just a follow-up to what Council Chair Rapozo just asked. If we all get the same report, I would like to know who is reliant on repeat funding, because that is important for us to be aware of. If someone gets one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) one-year and then it drops off the next year, often times people cannot “wean off” that fast. I have confidence in what has happened on the north shore, so I understand why they are probably being the choice for the east side. I am fine with that, but I would imagine the east side might question why the north side is helping them. Hopefully, they are hiring people from the east side.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: That is one of the strengths of that. They have pretty good funding for this first year. I am sure once it is really underway, it will become more sustainable. The north shore has some pretty generous “pockets” there, and hopefully the east side would also...if that is needed...but I do not know enough about what their plan is.

Ms. Brun: Yes. Hanalei Initiative is amazing. They were with us in the beginning as we have been trying to create this new nonprofit organization and you are right, they would only hire from the area. That is the whole point. It has to be the community of that area that has to be running it. So, that is where they are right now, is working on their hiring. Their Board of Directors is all from there. Their guidance is all coming from Hanalei Initiative because they understand how it all works.

Councilmember Cowden: They know how to make it work. That is really the core of what makes it work up there is creating all of this locally-based work force. What is the new name? What is the east side name?

Ms. Brun: Makaiwa Initiative.

Councilmember Cowden: Makaiwa Initiative.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: I just want to be clear, if possible, I would really love to see a list of all of the expenditures that happened this year for CRB related response—whether that is an Innovation grant, funding that comes from those things—just a collective on who needed assistance, who came to us for support, and what that allocation was.

Ms. Brun: No problem.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you very much.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Ms. Brun, I think that you keep track of it. You usually provide us a list of all of the grants from this past year—the amounts awarded and who was awarded. I think it has a description of the project as well.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: And it would include the CRB and any other areas anyone has questions about. Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: Just a new item. We had a little chat in the stairwell the other day. I just want to make sure that we have enough funding for the Waimea Theater repair and maintenance (R & M). I see eighty-six thousand dollars (\$86,000) in the Budget, but in my last visit there a few weeks ago, I think it is going to take more than eighty-six thousand dollars (\$86,000) to renovate that theater, and we have to do that. That is a resource for us and I think we need to really look at it. As I look at our Budget for CIP and repairs, eighty-six thousand dollars (\$86,000) does not get much. Especially because, I am assuming, it is a historic building, it must be on the register, I do not know if it is or not—so it is going to be more intense to make that right. Really take a look at that and get with whomever in the County to give us a better estimate, because we need to do that. We definitely need to get it right.

Ms. Brun: Absolutely. We will.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up to that and it is almost directed to Council Chair Rapozo. Would that be a CIP and not an operating cost?

Council Chair Rapozo: However they want to place it. It does not really matter. It is hard for me to say without knowing what needs to be done. I only know what I saw and I know just the superficial repairs—the carpeting, the walls, and the painting.

Councilmember Cowden: And the women's bathroom.

Council Chair Rapozo: I did not go into the women's bathroom, but the men's bathroom was okay. It was. I just have to believe that the restoration cost is significant and possibly a CIP project. That is up to the Administration—where they want to put the funds.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: Just to follow up on the eighty-six thousand dollars (\$86,000) under Operating Budget, what specifically is that for? I know that we talked about paint...

Ms. Brun: It is short fixes.

Councilmember Holland: Okay.

Ms. Brun: Not the big fixes. We increased it because we know we are having plumbing issues in the bathrooms. We are having some exploratory work done now, and we want to have enough money to try to take care of whatever those problems are right away.

Councilmember Holland: Okay, so it is for the emergency things.

Ms. Brun: Yes, not the, “we have a problem and we are to fix it so it does not happen again” issue. That will be in the CIP.

Councilmember Holland: Do we have regular, standing Operating Budget year-after-year on that item or is this a one-off thing?

Ms. Brun: Right here in the Operation Budget?

Councilmember Holland: Yes.

Ms. Brun: We usually have this. It is usually about thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000). We inherited it from the Housing Agency.

Councilmember Holland: I got it. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Included in that list of grant funded projects, can we add the Kekaha Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) projects also?

Ms. Brun: Absolutely.

Council Chair Rapozo: I am going to be requesting...I have it written down here...for a report for the Host Community Benefit Program, but I am going to be asking for an updated briefing from OED here at a Committee Meeting because I am hearing some concerns in the community about structure and elections and term limits and things of that nature. One of the bigger concerns, multiple times from numerous *kūpuna* is that it is no longer live. It is a Zoom meeting and the *kūpuna* are not up to going on Zoom, so they would rather go back to the in-person meetings at the Kekaha Neighborhood Center which is how it used to be—which I totally agree with. That is where these meetings should happen, not on Zoom. I went on the last meeting and there was just myself and one (1) resident and very little involvement of the community. The whole purpose of that was to get the community engaged and involved in these things and it is not happening. So, I think that it

Councilmember Kualii: Just one (1) thing on the grant reporting. I am pretty sure I am looking at two (2) different reports from prior years and what I am having a hard time doing is seeing the distinction between fiscal years. I think it is important that, when you give us all the data on the grants, to distinguish what the grants are, regarding the funding. It is a part of this fiscal budget. This fiscal budget is July 2025-June 2026. If you award it within the funding year, it starts but does not necessarily end.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Still, put it all in that year, as far as the report, because that is when it was budgeted—regardless if it was multiyear. It gets “tricky” when you fund them again the next year. Line it up so that it is easier to understand. I can speak with you off-line as well. In your Department, because everyone is working on the different parts, is there necessarily one (1) person that is leading the whole grant-function? For example, bringing in money from the State and then granting it back out? Do you have different committees for different areas? For example, with volunteers from across the County, or from the citizen constituents to participate in, say, the grants for agriculture so we would be able to get people with an agricultural background reviewing the applicants, or do you have just one (1) primary grant committee that does all of the reviewing?

Ms. Brun: We mostly use our own office staff for this, since they are so good at all kinds of grants. We also have teams...I think I mentioned this before...where Kaua'i Made has two (2) or three (3) people from our office on it. Agriculture has three (3) people, including the business person, in that area. So, they have to work as a team in different areas all of the time. They are really great for reviewing grants. Sometimes, we will bring in outside help. For example tourism, if we do destination management, then we will bring in the Hawai'i Tourism Authority's Kaua'i representative for that to help us score, just because we know that other people have other money and we do not want to allow anyone to “double-dip” and we want all of the grants to work together to make one (1) thing happen. We will use that kind of outside partnership to get some of the reviews done, but typically it is mostly our staff that does it.

Councilmember Kualii: The last question, on the Level 3 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging. That is part of the energy funding, but is that in-house? You are just paying for the charging stations.

Ms. Brun: Yes. We do some operations work. That is mostly in the energy and transportation area.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, thank you, Chair.

Councilmember Cowden: Where are you finding that...the Level 3 EV charging?

Councilmember Kualii: In the narrative on page 4 and in the Budget on page 84.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are the charging stations and charging for the use of the charging stations under OED, or is that under the Department of Public Works?

Ms. Brun: The charging piece is under the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Council Chair Rapozo: Oh, the Department of Parks and Recreation, okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Carvalho: On the Kaua'i Made Program Refinement, please go into that overall.

Ms. Brun: Are you asking how we are changing that?

Councilmember Carvalho: Yes.

Ms. Brun: We have implemented new "blood" in the program, Michelle Rego, Economic Development Specialist II, from our office is "gung-ho" ready to go. She and Therilynn Martin-Haumea, Economic Development Specialist III are the force of Kaua'i Made right now. What they have done is gone through everyone again, and started to offer more business services versus just events where they can sell their product. We still continue to do events, however, they are also providing business services, such as helping them utilize their social media, how to use it, and where they are advertising. Coming up next week, during the Merrie Monarch, we are coming up with a big promotion called, "Live Like Leina'ala," and it is all about Kumu Hula Leina'ala Pavao-Jardin's life. Kaua'i Made is going to be a big part of that. It is probably television (TV) we have gotten in a long time. They are beginning to work as a team to try to find these options for the program to not only build the power of those that are members, but also their exposure to the outside world. Everybody is working together.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Just one more question on the narrative on page 5. The last bullet talks about "completed the formal acceptance process for Mimasaka, Japan as Kaua'i's newest Sister City." How many sister cities do we have in Japan, now?

Ms. Brun: In Japan we have five (5).

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Councilmember Cowden: Wow. How many sister cities do we have outside of Japan?

Ms. Brun: There are sixteen (16) total, eleven (11) outside of Japan.

Councilmember Cowden: What does it cost us to have a sister city? It costs us to fly there, right?

Ms. Brun: Yes. When we visit, of course, there are travel costs, but they—especially Japan—are really good sister city people. They regularly keep our relationship fresh. I would say...we work with the Mayor's Office, that is a big part of it...they have their own budget that they help us with. Usually, when they come we will pay for their transportation. That is a typical thing, helping them get around. We have on staff, Art Umezu, who is our translator, so we use him a lot when they are around. He helps us to organize the tours we want to take them on. They pay for their hotel and flights. We usually host a dinner or a lunch somewhere when they are here. If it is a celebratory year—like a 15- or 20-year anniversary—then we will have, depending on how big it is, some kind of an event.

Councilmember Cowden: What other countries do we have, is Portugal one?

Ms. Brun: We have Portugal.

Councilmember Cowden: Portugal and what other countries?

Councilmember Kualii: Philippines.

Ms. Brun: I think we have five (5) in the Philippines. In Tahiti, we have Papeno'o. We have Penghu in Taiwan.

Councilmember Cowden: Just for the person who may be watching on the television right now, I get that there is value in having Sister City relationships, but could you articulate for someone who does not understand, briefly, what the value of having a Sister City relationship is.

Ms. Brun: All of our cities are island sister cities. They are grappling with the same kind of issues that we are. Recently, Tokyo came here because they are trying to help one (1) of their islands just off of Japan who is struggling with the loss of young people—they have no workforce. A lot of times, we are going back and forth with ideas, asking, "What are you doing?" or "How are you doing it?" We have meetings talking about things. Mimasaka is a new one that is here. It is way up in the mountains and they have a lot of landslides. We have talked back and forth about managing landslides. We have put them together with the people here that need to speak to them. That is really what it is—we share experiences.

Councilmember Cowden: Fresh eyes expertise, but it also does help with our Kaaui Made products a little. Do we share products, maybe they buy from us?

Ms. Brun: We do. Iwake, Japan is a popular one. They sell a lot of Hawai'i things. I think that Kaua'i Kookie got launched over there at one point really well. Of the few Japanese visitors that we get, many are from our sister cities. They are encouraged to come here.

Councilmember Kualii: Councilmember Cowden, on page 88 there is a line item Other Commodities and under Administration it has Omiyage Sister City, they have "lei for special occasions" fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: I believe that we even share sports with some of them, too, right? For example baseball, with some of the Japanese sister cities.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Our kids go there and their kids come here.

Ms. Brun: We have had bands come down and visit and sports teams go back and forth. It has been different with every Administration.

Councilmember Kualii: Typically the economic connection is pretty strong—as far as businesspeople traveling along with the delegation—to promote the Kaua'i businesses.

Ms. Brun: Yes, that is why OED is involved, because economic development is usually the crux of why the relationship is occurring.

Councilmember Kualii: And the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, too.

Ms Brun: Yes, tourism and any of the other things. We have talked to them about energy and agriculture. They are great at agriculture.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a short follow-up. He just brought up the fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000), is that just for Sister Cities, or is that for omiyage in general? For example, when we go to anything? This is when we show up and be culturally appropriate bringing some gifts that reflect Kaua'i.

Ms. Brun: Yes.

Councilmember Kaneshiro: The Mayor's Office also has that.

Ms. Brun: They also have a budget.

Councilmember Cowden: Oh, they have a separate budget for that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: I would love to understand what all these little pockets of money for the Sister City Program add up to. I see that the air flights are seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500). We have this fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) that Councilmember Kualii, just pointed out, but I would be interested in collectively what we are spending on those relationships. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions for OED? If not, thank you.

Ms. Brun: Thank you.

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as not present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We are going to move on to our final department for today, which is the Planning Department.

Planning Department

(Councilmember Carvalho was noted as not present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay, Planning Director Hull, maybe just give us your synopsis and we will ask questions on that. It is late in the Budget, we might end up jumping around.

KA'ĀINA S. HULL, Planning Director: Thank you, Chair, Members of the Council, Ka'āina Hull on behalf of the Planning Department joined by Deputy Director Jodi Higuchi-Sayegusa. Really briefly...I know that we are what is standing between you and lunch...but, operationally the Planning Department is made up of four (4) divisions. Besides Ms. Higuchi-Sayegusa and I, the divisions break down to the long-range division which is overseeing the various community plans and the general plan update. Currently, it is in the East Kaua'i Community Plan, as well as the Līhu'e Mauka Bypass Plan, and the Administration of the Safe Routes to School Program. They look at the 50,000-foot view of long-range planning. There are three (3) positions in that division. Currently, there are two (2) positions filled and one (1) vacant position. Then, we have the regulatory division, which is broken up into two (2) sections. One (1) is the front counter operations handling the bulk of the permit applications for single family dwellings, sheds...and the like. That division is made up of three (3) individuals. The other part of the regulatory division handles larger scale permits before the Planning Commission such as SMA use permits, Class IV permits and so on, and again, there are five (5) individuals there. Then we have our enforcement division which is made up of six (6) individuals.

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as present.)

With the exception of illegal vacation rental operations, which that team is actively seeking out, that division is primarily complaint-based from a zoning perspective. Again, made up of six (6) individuals. Then we have our Administrative team which is made up of six (6) individuals and that is mechanics of the Planning Department, if you will, keeping it running smoothly. We have been missing a manager of that division for the past several months. Operationally, that is how we function, with roughly thirty (30) individuals. The new proposal that we have before you is a new Wildfire Mitigation Specialist. There were several discussions between the Planning Department and KFD on this approach. It was decided that on a built environment standpoint and the recalibrating of our built environment policies, it would be appropriate to look at housing that particular specialist in our department as a planner. It does make sense from a fire code prevention standpoint. The fire codes that we have today, are primarily focused on...which a lot of people do not know, fire codes have to do with evacuation of a structure when it is on fire and ensuring that it can be evacuated safely. It has nothing to do with wildfire mitigation and the recalibrating of certain strategies or building materials that can resist ember intrusion from high wind wildfire event, which is what happened in Lahaina, Maui, and could potentially have happened in Kaunakakai but we were not experiencing high winds at that time. So, from a resiliency standpoint, as well as from an insurance standpoint and the affordability of housing now, we are proposing this position. Lastly, the other part of the vast increases of our budget have to do with Federal funding for our Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program. We have four (4) individuals currently staffed within that program—two (2) planners, one (1) administrative clerk, and one (1) enforcement officer.

(Councilmember Carvalho was noted as present.)

Last year, despite Congress appropriating the funds for it, the White House signaled that they will not be releasing those funds. So, you see a couple of vacant positions, we have been using those vacant positions to fund these live bodies that are current and active today. The Federal Government has funded this program for the past forty (40) years nationally, so last year when they cut-off funding despite the funds being there, it set CZM Programs across the nation in a mad scramble. Our partners on other island were somewhat fortunate in that they really had not staffed those programs up. There were several vacancies there. Kaua'i is unique in that it has live bodies in these positions. From a vacancy standpoint, yes, we have been using two (2) vacant positions to fund these positions, so we are asking that they be funded this year in hopes of ensuring that the program can have continuity and ensuring the live bodies there are kept, as well as much needed recruitment of the vacant positions—particularly the administrative vacant position. Ms. Higuchi-Sayegusa has been doing a yeoman's effort in cobbling together various procurement, accounting, and administrative services, but I would argue without trying to offend Ms. Higuchi-Sayegusa, that we are woefully missing that element of our office right now. That is the Planning Department in a nutshell. We are here for any questions or concerns.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: I cannot tell by the job titles...and I just call them code enforcement officers, because they do code enforcement, the continued enforcement of transient vacation rentals (TVR) and I guess all codes, right?

Mr. Hull: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: What are six (6) positions that are actually code enforcement?

Mr. Hull: We have position 2005, 2022, 2029, 2030, and position 2011 is the Manager of the Enforcement Program.

Councilmember Kualii: There is a new position, right, seventy-four thousand six hundred forty-two dollars (\$74,642)? Then you said that in your narrative that the 2001 Planner II, and the 2029 the Planning Inspector II, your narrative says, "Could be reorganized to fall under this position for both the implementation and enforcement of the Wildfire Policies within the built environment." Would the new position be the Planner in that new focus? Would these two (2) positions help with the enforcement part of that?

Mr. Hull: It would be the administration and the program, as far as whatever codes have been adopted, say the Plantation Camp Wildland Interface Ordinance that was adopted back in October, further implementation of that. We have also begun working with current housing developers and projects that are not subject to the wildfire ordinance, to consider incorporating wildfire standards into their conditions of approval as part of the zoning permit process. Recently, one (1) was approved with the consent of the landowner. The team would continue to be used to interface with these future developers to "spin-up" either no cost or very low-cost resiliency measures concerning wildfire. Also to work within existing or future Homeowners Associations (HOAs) to incorporate standards and approaches within HOA policies to administer wildfire resiliency measures. HOAs are somewhat notorious arbitrary landscaping requirements...and I am not here to judge HOAs...but working with them to consider folding in some of those...albeit arbitrary...requirements on where trash cans are located or how the *ti* leaf needs to be manicured...to consider recalibrating those policies for a wildfire resiliency approach. Lastly, the wildfire position in the overall program—the task force which is the Planning Department, KEMA, and (KFD) have been looking at is certainly is one hundred (100%) percent about wildfire resiliency in addition to other climate hazards that we need to be resilient against—but, there is a concern about the affordability of housing when it comes to these climate hazards—or example the "sky rocketing" cost of insurance rates. The Appleseed Foundation released a report in 2025 that catalogued a two hundred percent (200%) exodus of insurance providers in the State of Hawai'i between 2018 and 2023—from the multi-family insurance game, if you will. They are not even renegotiating the policies of these multi-family sites, they are just saying, "It is too risky here in Hawai'i given flood hazards, wildfire hazards—we are out." So, recognizing there are programs in other states whereby the insurance can look at the way the built environment is calibrated and the way projects are calibrated, to signal to the insurance industry itself that they can

consider or reconsider insuring some of these sites—would be one (1) of the many facets of the overall program under that wildfire position.

Councilmember Kualii: Which are the four (4) positions that the White House will not fund? In prior budgets would it have been dollar-funded because it was coming from another source?

Mr. Hull: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: In this Budget there are all fully funded, which are those four (4) positions?

Mr. Hull: Positions 2021, 2017, 2020, and 2019.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: They are all towards the bottom. Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: I am on page 3 under the TVR items. Do we have any idea how many of those TVR operations, of those one thousand four hundred (1,400) much of which we have cut down, actually converted to long-term rentals?

Mr. Hull: We do not have an official track of that. We have been attempting to see which ones got their notice of violation (NOV) and were converted into long-term rentals. We should be able to track that, but when we are dealing with a third-party host platform monitoring consultant, at the time in 2017—when we first got the number from them it was one thousand five hundred (1,500) estimated illegal vacation rentals. When we finally got the contract procured, it had dropped to seven hundred (700) or eight hundred (800) units. I told the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), “I appreciate getting that number, but that is a lot lower than you originally pitched. What is going on here?” What he pointed out was that...and it took two and a half (2½) years to prepare the contract...since we got that contract he pointed out that our team had been actively out shutting down illegal vacation rentals. In one particular case where we had levied a ten-thousand dollar fine when we went to the hearings officer, the hearings officer increased that fine from a ten-thousand-dollar fine to a one hundred fifty-thousand-dollar fine. What the CEO pointed out at the time, there are illegal operators legitimately afraid of what you are doing. They are just coming into attrition and coming into compliance without them notifying them of the violation. We can track, to a certain degree, the ones that got the NOV's that converted, but there will be a whole group that...as the consultant was saying...converted without a formal tracking notice.

Councilmember Holland: I wonder if there is some sort of way to search, maybe with artificial intelligence (AI) that could search of those one thousand four hundred (1,400) how many of those were sold, how many turned to long-term rentals, and how many became affordable rentals.

Mr. Hull: We can take a look. One of the first areas that we went into and monitor and hit carte blanche was using the Real Property database records of what was being taxed at vacation rental rates outside of the Visitor Destination Areas (VDA) and using that as a starting point. We could look back at those first notices that went out based on Real Property Assessments.

Councilmember Holland: I know that you are very busy, Director Hull. I do think that data will be very interesting to see how effective that was.

Mr. Hull: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions on the narrative?
Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I am glad that you emphasized the insurance elements because I think that without that emphasis, they might think that we are trying to put up more hurdles. We are actually being helpful, helping them to avoid future hurdles. With the Wildfire and Wildland Urban Interface Program, something that I am very passionate about is flooding. Is there going to be more, maybe in that job position, where they might be partnering more deeply with the State? We have to look “mountain to the sea.” I think that wildland urban interface should include flooding.

Mr. Hull: Wildland Urban Interface generally refers to wildfire approaches. We have been one hundred percent (100%) interfacing with our floodplain manager and how they are our nexus between the two (2) programs. Ultimately, spinning up a wildfire mitigation program is somewhat akin to the existing floodplain management program system. In essence, the floodplain management system, as it was set up nationally, is an attempt for the built environment to live with water—to accommodate the needs of water and having the built environment survive its impacts. It is essentially...and it might sound weird, but as we get into this topic with our various partners, the fact that you can calibrate the built environment to live with wildfire, might seem like a stretch, because it is this idea of this wall of fire coming at you and you must consider how to combat this. Understanding that it is not the wall of fire that is responsible for ninety percent (90%) of these catastrophes, it is the embers. There is a way to mitigate the built environment at a no-cost or reasonable cost to live with wildfire. There are certain aspects of the floodplain management program and the wildfire resiliency where they actually conflict, in that, when you have an elevated structure, the potential for embers to get under an elevated structure as required by certain flood codes, can actually create a vulnerability in flame catch and exposure to an under area of a structure. The wildfire approach is to have a fire mesh screening. The floodplain management says that we cannot have the fire mesh screening because that would be a diversion of the flood waters. So, we are actually working with some national partners who have basically said that no one has asked us this question. People from Fire Safety Research Institute, Headwaters Economics, and others are saying that we have never really come up with this question. We have a prototype in the Kapa‘a baseyard of an elevated structure in which we are using “smart vents” to accommodate both flood waters and wildfire embers. So far, the tests have demonstrated that, maybe, this is an adequate approach, but it is an area of science that, I do not want to claim to be on the front

of this issue, but the rest of the nation is watching this little Kapa'a baseyard project to see how we marry the two (2) programs from a resiliency standpoint.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you for that. The other question I have is about the stability of our team. I am not saying that people are getting older but I would say—especially in our enforcement area—some of them have been doing it for a very long time. Do we anticipate retirements?

Mr. Hull: We have at least one (1) person on our enforcement team that we do anticipate retiring. I will not say that it is in the very near future, but within the foreseeable next two (2) or three (3) years.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, well that is not too soon.

Mr. Hull: That individual has specifically been training one (1) of the younger staff members to essentially understand the paradigms and processes that he...

Councilmember Cowden: What I am seeing is across the departments that we are having a hard time hiring people. I am always very curious about succession planning and very curious about cross training. In my view, if people are somewhat cross trained, then when people are sick or retiring, we can cross-fill some responsibilities. Plus, it makes anyone better in their jobs. You have an eye on that and we are doing succession planning.

Mr. Hull: Yes definitely and not just in the enforcement division. We have been looking at the roles, where we have a singular individual responsible—if we did not have “eyeballs” deep in cross training, we have begun one particular area, which has been identified within the past couple of months. Our subdivision planner is unique, in that he is probably the only one (1) doing it.

Councilmember Cowden: Cross training?

Mr. Hull: No, as far as understanding the overall—what goes into it, even more than Ms. Higuchi-Sayegusa and I as well. So, he has begun cross training two (2) of our younger staff to handle subdivision applications.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. I think that is super important. We want to avoid these gaps. You have even complained that you have lost a third member and so that gap is very well felt.

Mr. Hull: Absolutely.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Going back to wildfire mitigation. The Planner V Wildfire Mitigation would lead the County's Wildfire Home Assessment Program, or will that person create it, develop it, and then lead it?

Mr. Hull: We are still in the process of creating it right now. We are coordinating how it will be rolled out. Certainly, if we are afforded the opportunity to hire this individual come July 1, and we already have individuals expressing interest, this individual will be leading that program.

Councilmember Kualii: We have been hearing about this from KFD and the Hawai'i Wildfire Mitigation Organization (HWMO) from Hawai'i island. You did say that the ember mitigation approaches are no cost or reasonable cost. Obviously, it is something that everyone can do, so I think it is really important that we do this program—not only that, but to share the best practices and the most affordable approaches. One of the things I have thought about is how I have in the back section of my house a concrete sidewalk, if you will, to get around, but in the whole other section I do not. It is said that the concrete is what would be the barrier for the embers that are falling, but it is so expensive. I was hoping your team would ultimately come up with other ways.

Mr. Hull: There are other ways that would adequately address embers within what is called the "5-foot non-combustible zone" through hardscape, or even the way you program and manage that space, absent the hardscape. That is the intention of the Home Assessment Program, while in a new development one can construct and pursue strategies within that new development to ensure wildfire resiliency, there are strategies today that homeowners can pursue that would be either no cost or nominal cost to retrofit their homes to be able to be more resilient against a high-wind wildfire situation.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. I am looking forward to all of that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: On page 4, I appreciate here how it talks about the Planning Department to provide an annual report to the Council as a part of the Mayor's Budget submittal.. That means that we already received it, but it says that you collected eighty-two thousand seven dollars (\$82,007) in fines. Did we get a breakdown of that or are we just getting that one (1) number?

Mr. Hull: You are just getting that one (1) number right now.

Councilmember Cowden: I am curious how many people got fined for that eighty-two thousand seven dollars (\$82,007). If that is across one hundred (100) people, that is very reasonable. If that is three (3) people, I would be curious to see what the offenses were.

Mr. Hull: We can break that down. Generally, the larger fine amounts are within two (2) programs and those are either the illegal vacation rentals that have been notified a number of times that they cannot continue to operate and still continue to operate. Those fines are derived from those programs, as well as our Coastal Zone Management (CZM) enforcement. We have had a fair amount of property owners that have been put on notice previously as well, that they have requirements to meet and still skirt those laws to do improvements and grading operations in the coastal zone area in violation of the law. Those are the two (2) biggest chunks of fines that we give.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes. If it is possible to get a report on it. I know that you have plenty of extra time, as you pointed out. That would be really helpful to me because that is something that I am quite interested in. I just want it to be fair and reasonable.

Mr. Hull: Yes, we can put that together.

Councilmember Cowden: And effective. Sometimes we absolutely need behaviors change, so that is of interest to me.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: The last thing on the narrative is the East Kauai Community Plan. You have done all the different policy workshops and you have been out in the community. You say that the plan will be for public review in late spring. Do you have a date yet?

Mr. Hull: The draft plan internally, for the most part, has been completed. It is still being reviewed internally. We are actually looking at summer to be able to go back to the communities. That is when you really get a lot of the...there was robust participation building up with the workshops and open houses...but once you come with that draft plan that has actual policies in place, that is where you get the reactions, which is what you really want. Sure, we want to hear about how well the plan has been articulated, but really, where did we get this wrong? When we go to the community in the summer, the hopeful timeline is to have something before this body as early as fall to winter of 2026. That is a very hopeful analysis and "kudos" to the long-range division who is hoping to get that done. It just depends upon what kind of angst and issues that draft time can create and how much more time we have to spend with the community once the draft comes out. We are hopeful for winter but I would say the realist estimate looks more like early 2027 if not spring of 2027 to bring it before Council.

Councilmember Kualii: What will the public review process involve?

Mr. Hull: We held various workshops. First, we did open houses, which was "give us your ideas." Then, from those open houses, seeing if there were themes that emerged around housing, transportation, and open space, we created workshops around those particular themes. We went and held those various workshops in various parts

of East Kauaʻi and from those workshops derived the draft plan. Our desire is to go back to the community in some of those spaces that we held before to show the draft plan and reengage the community on the draft plan itself as those policies have been drafted.

Councilmember Kualii: Was everyone in the community to come to Kalukalu at 1624 or did you have other sponsors?

Mr. Hull: We had other sponsors as well.

Councilmember Kualii: Did that include Anahola?

Mr. Hull: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, good. Will you do that again?

Mr. Hull: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions on the narrative?
Are there any questions on the Budget? Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: The Planner IV position that is being held with a return rights position, does that get absorbed into jobs that are unfunded? When we put money in there and that position is basically open, are we using that money to fund someone else?

Mr. Hull: Right now, it is proposed to be funded July 1st. To speak somewhat candidly on what we had to do last year and “cannibalize” certain vacant positions to fund live bodies in previously federally funded positions, I think if there was a hesitation by the Council to fund those CZM positions, I would quite handily ask that you fully fund the return rights position so that we could use some those moneys to keep those bodies around. Having said that, if the Council, and it seems like they hope to fund those positions, the return rights position is my planner position. I do intend to return back to my position but not on July 1st. At the sunset of this Administration, I do intend to return back to my position and that would be on December 5, 2026. I have no objections, if Council is looking at funding those CZM positions, to having that Planner V return rights position only for seven (7) months.

Councilmember Cowden: That is your plan.

Mr. Hull: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: All right. So far, that has been utilized to fill in other pieces.

Mr. Hull: Previously, it was dollar funded. On the last budget cycle it was funded and we did use it to fund the CZM positions, but before that it was dollar-funded.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Position Number 2000 Planning Program Manager, vacant one hundred ninety-five (195) days. The HR status says, "No recent activity with HR." Do you intend to start recruitment? Is this a difficult position to fill? Will there be an internal promotion? What will happen with this position?

Mr. Hull: The reason that says what it does, is that we were using that to fund the...

Councilmember Kualii: But now from July 1, 2026...

Mr. Hull: Now, if it is funded, we will start recruiting in May. It is a position that is sorely needed and we have had parties' express interest in that position.

Councilmember Kualii: So, it will not be hard to fill.

Mr. Hull: No.

Councilmember Kualii: Position Number 2008 Planner V Regulatory also says, "No recent activity with HR."

Mr. Hull: That is the return rights position for the planner...

Councilmember Kualii: She just asked about Position Number 2027.

Mr. Hull: I think those numbers are off on the vacancy report. I apologize.

Councilmember Kualii: What she asked about was Position Number 2008. What about Position Number 2027?

Councilmember Cowden: It is a Planner V.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: One (1) is a regulatory and one (1) is a long-range.

Councilmember Kualii: Position Number 2008 is regulatory and Position Number 2027 is long-range.

Mr. Hull: On the vacancy report they are mixed up. The position that has been vacant for three thousand nine hundred seventy-one (3,971) days should be the regulatory position.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, that is what they have for Position Number 2008.

Mr. Hull: The one (1) that has been vacant for four hundred seven (407) days is the long-range position. For the long-range position, we would like to attempt to fund it on July 1, 2026. If there is a desire from Council to push that to six (6) months, we are certain we can fill that by January 1, We are not certain by July 1. Obviously, we do not have any objections, but if that is the desire of the Council to fund the positions for six (6) months, I would strongly ask that the Program Manager position, not be six-month funded and the Wildfire position not be six-month funded because those positions have people interested and waiting to apply. The other positions, the return rights position for example, we have no problems with seven (7) months funding and the long-range position to be funded for six (6) months.

Councilmember Kualii: I appreciate your candor. Please repeat what the three (3) divisions were?

Mr. Hull: The Long-Range Division, Regulatory Division, and the Enforcement Division. There is an Administrative Division, which is a fourth division, that handles all of the internal aspects of the Department.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions? Page 76? Page 77? Are there any questions on the Planning Commission budget? It is basically for travel for them to attend the Hawai'i Congress of Planning Officials (HCPO) Conference.

Councilmember Cowden: Where are you?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Page 79. Did you have any more questions for the Planning Department?

Councilmember Cowden: I do. Maybe all of your IT items are in the IT department's budget? Do you have a line item for your IT needs?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Page 76 at the very bottom.

Councilmember Cowden: You have been doing so much. Is Alan Clinton, Administrative Planning Officer, a part of your team, is he a part of the Mayor's team, or a part of the Department of Public Works? It is hard for me to tell.

Mr. Hull: It is hard for me to tell as well. Technically, he is a part of the Planning Department's team. He definitely does a lot of work with the Mayor's Office as well as KEMA. Given his GIS expertise, he definitely works with Mr. Sherman's division. All of the software procurement items that Mr. Clinton is a part of goes through the IT division.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Are you happy with all of your computer and software needs? Are you trying to grow?

Mr. Hull: No, all of our technology needs have been well met with our alliance and partnership we have with Mr. Sherman and his division.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. I see a lot go on. I have a question. I see on the qPublic page, which may be a question for the Department of Finance. We do not say who owns the roads anymore. When I look on the map on the County's website to see who owns the roads, I do not see that anymore. Does that go through your Department?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: That would be a question for...

Mr. Hull: Is that regarding the qPublic web application? Yes, that would be a question for the Real Property Tax Division in the Department of Finance.

Councilmember Cowden: I will have to ask them separately. I sure liked it when I could see who owns a road.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Most of the time, it is County or State.

Councilmember Cowden: I know that, but I would like to know the difference. Sometimes they are private. I was sorry when they took that off, but that is not the Planning Department.

Mr. Hull: No.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any other questions? We are on page 76 and moving on to page 77. This is the last page for the Planning Department. If not, are there any questions on the the Planning Commission's travel budget and their attendance at the HCPO? I think that this is a good thing for them. If not, then we are done for today.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you.

Mr. Hull: Thank you all.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Thank you. I would like to recess the Departmental Budget Reviews. We will reconvene on Thursday, April 9, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. for our final day of Budget Reviews, when we will hear from the Transportation Agency, the

April 7, 2026

Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Departmental Budget Reviews
Department of Finance, Office of Economic Development, and Planning Department
Page 63

Housing Agency, the Agency on Elderly Affairs, the Office of the County Auditor, and the Office of the County Clerk.

There being no objections, the Committee recessed at 11:55 a.m.