

Transportation Agency

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

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/3059?view_id=2&redirect=true. Additionally, meeting videos are available at: www.kauai.gov/Government/Council/Webcast-Meetings.

The Committee reconvened on April 9, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., and proceeded as follows:

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as not present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Good morning. I would like to call back to order the Finance & Economic Development Committee and the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-2027 Departmental Budget Reviews. Let the record reflect that Council Chair Rapozo is on his way. On the schedule today, we will be hearing from the Transportation Agency, Housing Agency, Agency on Elderly Affairs, Office of the County Auditor, and Office of the County Clerk, including the Elections Division. Today is our final day for Departmental Budget Reviews. As we do each morning, we will take public testimony at the beginning relating to any of the departments or agencies that we are reviewing for the day. Is there anyone in the audience wishing to testify? State your name for the record. You have three (3) minutes. If you need more time, you will have another three (3) minutes after everyone has had a chance to testify.

There being no objections, the rules were suspended to take public testimony.

DAN FREUND: Thank you. My name is Dan Freund. I live in Kapahi. I pay taxes and I do not resent it. Now, why, you might ask? Because as someone said, the taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society. One thing that makes for a civilized society is caring for your neighbors and that means putting out a helping hand to your neighbors in need. With that in mind, I am asking you to meaningfully increase funding for nonprofits working to better conditions for our homeless neighbors. My understanding is, Hawai'i Island's budget for this work is more than five million five hundred thousand dollars (\$5,500,000). Now, their population is about two point eight (2.8) times larger than ours, but if you take five million five hundred thousand dollars (\$5,500,000) divide it by two point eight (2.8), the answer is one million nine hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$1,960,000), almost two million dollars (\$2,000,000). I am asking you to consider allocating less than that, only one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000). A small price to pay for being a truly civilized society. Now, you will be happy to hear that is the conclusion of my prepared remarks, you will be less happy to hear that I was eating dinner with my wife last night in discussing this and she came up with another rationale, a little more calculating than mine, and that is the experience of tourists, which is where our money comes from, ultimately, and residents, along the Kaua'i bikepath, north of Keālia Beach, there are some encampments there and so people who are enjoying that for recreational purposes will find that occasionally

a motorized vehicle will drive by on the way to the encampment, occasionally someone will pop out of the woods from the encampment and that degrades the experience for residents, and again, if you are looking at economics, for tourists. For these reasons, again, we hope that you consider reallocating one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) for homeless nonprofit support. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Is there anyone else in the audience wishing to testify?

HENRY KEISER: My name is Henry Keiser. I am a Primary Care Provider at the Samuel Mahelona Memorial Hospital (Mahelona). I work about half time in primary care and about half time in outreach. I am primary care to about three hundred (300) who are houseless or in danger of being so. I do a great deal of outreach. I have a lot of anecdotal experience with such and we came here unrelated from this gentleman in the audience behind me who... we were asking for you to increase your budget to about one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) and we would like to specify that you either consider earmarking about five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) of that for safe parking zone. We have been working on plans for such. We understand that unfortunately there have been no proposals so far, we do not have one prepared to show you today, but we have a team of about seven (7) people who have been working on it. We are all experienced in houselessness and we would be looking for your support with some of that money. Hopefully, five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) earmarked, if we even got a part of that. Our plan would have safe zones for multiple locations on the island, some temporary, some longer term that would help with our houseless situation. I would like to turn over my time to my partner who is back.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: There is a clarifying question.

Councilmember Cowden: You have this plan, where do we see the plans?

Mr. Keiser: I do not...we do not a plan fully furnished. We have been working on it now for a few months.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Send it to us.

Mr. Keiser: I would love to.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: Do you have a 501(c)(3) nonprofit name or anything yet?

Mr. Keiser: Currently, we are with three (3) nonprofits.

Councilmember Holland: Okay.

Mr. Keiser: And we are trying to decide how we should do so...Ho'okipa Kaua'i has been our main sponsor and that is where I started, that is where Kino started, we do a lot of work with them. We also have fundamental and I run a pantry through our church, nonprofit, all three (3) of which have expressed a great interest to

participate. We are also seeking help with people who know more about administrative requirements and governmental bodies than us. How to work those details are beyond me. I am an idea person. I act but I do not necessarily have the fine details in the administrative things, that is a foreign language to me.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you for being a part of the solution.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Is that Kapa‘a United Church of Christ (UCC)?

Mr. Keiser: Yes, Kapa‘a UCC, we have a pantry, I believe, it is the largest on the island now. My husband, who is the pastor there, and I started about two and a half (2.5) years ago through Ho‘okipa Kaua‘i. We serve about two hundred fifty (250) meals weekly and we serve one hundred (100) to one hundred fifty (150) people groceries.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you. We know how to get ahold of you then.

Mr. Keiser: I will make sure so.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Next up.

KINO SHIGEKANE: My name is Kino Shigekane. Basically, I am with Ho‘okipa Kaua‘i. We do food bank distributions, we are the outreach, so we do it at the beaches, we go out four (4) times per week from Tuesday through Friday, every day we are at a different part of the island. We service the houseless community on a regular basis, we see them on a regular basis, and we personally, my family and I have also been homeless, so we know what the needs are. I know that you folks understand that there is this overwhelming need, but I would like to see more of a focused approach on the immediate and that would be a safety zone. When we were out, we were living in our cars, we had no place to go to be able to sleep and just not worry about getting a ticket. I could not understand it for a long time. We did the whole thing, we got our camping permits, there was a moratorium, so after the sixty (60) days, you cannot get any more permits, you cannot legally be anywhere. That was really hard for us. How do I not become a criminal because I cannot afford a house. There are a lot of initiatives, there is a lot of support. There are new houses being built and all that, but it is the immediate. Where do they go? Where do we go while we are waiting to get into transitional housing or get into these programs? We did not even know that we had to be certified as being homeless in order to get onto any type of program. That is not something that is posted anywhere, no one tells you about these things. We were homeless for a good couple months before we even knew anything about it. We were like, what do you mean we have to get certified? Then, it takes roughly four (4) to five (5) months just to get certified because there is only one (1) place that does it. It takes a very long time. We are now housed, but it took us almost two (2) years just to get housed. During that interim, what happens and where does everyone go? I think there should be a lot more focus on that aspect of it. Like he said we are working on a proposal, we did not realize that there was absolutely no proposals for this, which is absolutely mindboggling, so we are working on a current proposal.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: That is your first three (3) minutes. Does anyone want to speak? If not, you can have your second three (3) minutes.

Ms. Shigekane: Sorry, thank you. We are working on a proposal right now to deal with all of the different facets of this, but we definitely would like to see a lot more money allocated to the funding of the houseless population, in general, and that specifically for... and extra like earmarked portion for the safety zone initiative. Only because I feel like it gets overlooked a lot. I am looking at, yes, I would like to see one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) and five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), definitely being allocated at least earmarked towards... and of course, if there is no proposals, there is no proposals, you cannot give money to something that you have no proposals for. That being said, I would like to have Kaipo come up and talk.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: He can talk after. We are still in public testimony.

Ms. Shigekane: Okay.

Council Chair Rapozo: I have a clarifying question.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: If you are done with your testimony, we have a clarifying question.

Council Chair Rapozo: You mentioned you have to be certified...

Ms. Shigekane: You have to be certified.

Council Chair Rapozo: Can you explain how does that work? Who certifies?

Ms. Shigekane: You have to call Family Life Center.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes.

Ms. Shigekane: Then they have to come out, like, they make multiple trips out to see you, where you are "living" whether it be in your house, a camp, or in your car. They will come and inspect and then they make their report and then you get a certificate at the end of this to be certified as being homeless. You then get put on a list, which is what all these other agencies will pull from when they are pulling people. So, Catholic Charities will pull from this list, Kaua'i Economic Opportunity (KEO) pulls from this list, Permanently Affordable Living (PAL) Hawai'i pulls from this list. In order to even get into any of those housing, you literally have...first step is you have to be certified as being homeless, which is kind of ridiculous.

Council Chair Rapozo: And you said it took several months?

Ms. Shigekane: Oh, yes.

Councilmember Holland: Three (3) to four (4)?

Ms. Shigekane: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a clarifying question.

Council Chair Rapozo: Hold on. I am just reading...I guess when we have the Housing Agency come up, he can explain better. It makes no sense.

Ms. Shigekane: Yes, it does not.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Can you tell me your name again?

Ms. Shigekane: Kino—K-I-N-O.

Councilmember Cowden: What was your last name?

Ms. Shigekane: Shigekane—S-H-I-G-E-K-A-N-E.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: I think we got an email from you, right?

Ms. Shigekane: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you for explaining about the continuum of care and Family Life Center. We only have one (1) continuum of care provider and when people are always moving, it makes it very difficult for them to even certify people, and this has been a prolonged problem...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay. That will probably be a question that you can ask Adam later.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes.

Ms. Shigekane: And it has to do with phones, too, as well. They will have to be able to get into contact with people and half of them do not have phones, do not have minutes, and whatnot. It becomes a very...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: One more clarifying question.

Councilmember Carvalho: Did you have any connection...I thought you mentioned churches. Did you say that?

Ms. Shigekane: Church of the Pacific. Right now we are doing the distributions under Ho'okipa Kaua'i.

Councilmember Carvalho: So, the church for now, but prior to that was there any connection for you with other churches?

Ms. Shigekane: No.

Councilmember Carvalho: Okay.

Ms. Shigekane: Like, we just go to whomever we can help.

Councilmember Carvalho: Okay. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Is there anyone else in the audience wishing to testify?

KAIPO HO'OKANO: Hi.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Can you state your name for the record, and then you will have three (3) minutes, and an additional three (3) minutes if no one else is going to say anything.

Mr. Ho'okano: Okay. My first name is Kaipo—K-A-I-P-O. Last name Hookano—H-O-O-K-A-N-O. I have been homeless for going on six (6) years now. It is really hard to find someplace where we can go to bed and not wake up worrying about all of our things being taken away, or a safe place to actually put our heads down. Parking is ridiculous because there is no place to go, nowhere. Every place we go, we are either “bugged” about being in the wrong place, we have no place to put our things. I had a case where I tried to go one day and came back and everything I owned was gone, I mean, everything. All I had left was the car that I was in. It is really hard because during the days...at night, I try to cook at least one full meal for everyone who is around, and they took all my cooking supplies: pots, pans, tools—all gone. It took months to rebuild everything. Most of these folks, they have no place else to go, they do not have anything to cook with, no coolers, I tried to set all this up, and I came back, and it was gone. People will try to go to bed sometimes but they sleep with one eye open because only you get people pillaging stuff from there, taking your food, stealing anything they can just to get by for themselves. What else can we do? Where can we go? Nowhere. Not even in a County park can we stay overnight. Most of these people cannot even afford a camping permit. The camping permit is only legal for a couple of days, so where do you go after that? No place to shower, no clean bathrooms—they are really hard to find. I can go on and on about this. A lot of people who are out here is not because they want to, it is because they have to. I was born and raised here. I had choices where I could or could not be homeless. Many of these people do not have the same choices. They are also born and raised here. I have watched people that I knew all my life. They used to have really good jobs, but with the cost of living...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: That is your first three (3) minutes. Is there anyone else in the audience wishing to testify? If not, you can have your second three (3).

Mr. Ho'okano: Okay. Thank you. They worked hard all their lives, and they still cannot afford housing. That is ridiculous because we are born and raised here. We see people all over the place, coming from everywhere and they have housing, they have this and that, and all we want is someplace safe to “put up” even if it is just for one (1) week, then find someplace new where we can sit down, lay down, close your eyes and hope that tomorrow will be a better day. Do you have any questions?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any clarifying questions?

Councilmember Cowden: I want to say thank you for testifying and we care and I am very aware of the problems.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay. Thank you. Is there anyone else in the audience wishing to testify today?

Mr. Keiser: I was not prepared to speak the first time, that was a placeholder. I wanted to speak after Kaipo and for him to establish the intent and need. For me to follow that and say that just in casual research, it cost as much as thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) per person for those who remain houseless in our community. It costs our community a great deal, between the trash pickup, the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), the extra medical costs, these figures have been amortized by people far more intelligent than I am with numbers. It costs us money to have people houseless. Beyond their suffering, that should be established before you, but now I want to establish that it costs us more money, it costs as little as fourteen thousand dollars (\$14,000) to eighteen thousand dollars (\$18,000) to put people in low-income housing. I cannot find the facts and figures for a safe park because it is not done regularly. I would establish that at a much reduced cost to that, as little as two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per person per year, we would be able to establish where people would be...I am going to say for sake of argument, out of harm's way. Out of sight for some, that is not how I perceive this, but there is a lot of benefit for people not living on the bike path with inadequate access to all of life's needs and the last piece, I really wish to hammer home is that as a provider who has now done this for four (4) years in our community, I can tell you absolutely beyond shadow of a doubt, I love to get figures from Wilcox to the recidivism rate for my medical patients. I call them "beach legs." Living proximally with dirty environment and no hygiene and nomadically having your things cut impart and taken away, move on to the next place and reestablish yourself from the dirt up again leads to massive amounts of infections and problems that cost, not only a great deal of suffering for these folks, but also for our community to have to pay for those things, through Emergency Room (ER) visits. My workplace is more than happy to sponsor me in reducing those medical costs in our community, but think of this, all of our service providers who are there to try to reach out and help these people get out of that situation and get reestablished in our community to better our community, cannot find their people. I have so many anecdotal stories of people who are on housing lists, which are years sometimes, they are on housing lists for three (3) months, six (6) months, and they go without their phone because they are houseless and their entire camp was torn down while they were gone, and they do not have phones. That is when get the call for housing, twice within three (3) days they get a call, they are off the list if there is no answer; "start over" they are told. How are they ever going to get out of that situation? If we had established places and established providers that see these people, I conjecture that we cannot even give you the math yet on how much we can assist this community in getting out of this situation and reducing your cost, your burden, and I am just going to end it with our tourists seeing our folks on the beach.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay. Councilmember Holland has a clarifying question.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you for making it here today. You speak about the safe parking and a lot of people have already seen the testimony...

Mr. Keiser: It is a start.

Councilmember Holland: It is a start. It is an immediate start. I think we can actually do that very quickly, but my question is with your experience with the homeless community, what percentage, can you give me a rough estimate of what percentage you think that would help? I have been thinking of more around a “safe sleeping area” that includes things for people who do not have cars as being urgent because I am not sure how many people, of that percentage...

Mr. Keiser: We are working on the budget...

Ms. Shigekane: That would really depend on how much land we can get and right now that is our biggest obstacle.

Councilmember Holland: How much land are you looking at?

Ms. Shigekane: We are looking at at least five (5) acres.

Councilmember Holland: Five (5) acres.

Ms. Shigekane: Yes.

Councilmember Holland: Okay.

Mr. Keiser: With that right allotment, we would be able to get...we already have “feelers” out and interests that there are public parking places that are unused for overnights...

Ms. Shigekane: Like, Vidinha Stadium.

Councilmember Holland: Right.

Ms. Shigekane: That would be a very large parking, which we would be...

Councilmember Holland: Which would be an overnight thing...

Ms. Shigekane: Right.

Councilmember Holland: ...you are saying like a “fixed” location would be...

Mr. Keiser: Right, there would be lands, there would be private sector, there would just be a safe park where we would allow port-o-potties and such, but a later stage or a bigger stage of the plan would be for us to have parcel acreage of either what our nonprofit could obtain and own so that we can have a permanent structure to allow the transition of people out of houselessness.

Councilmember Holland: Right, so five (5) acres, because I am meeting with the State in two (2) weeks about trying to ask them for land. What other features...

Mr. Keiser: There is a site we like that is about fourteen (14) acres right next to the airport.

Councilmember Holland: Can you send me the details on that specific site, because that is what I am missing?

Mr. Keiser: It would be a dream come true. It is right next to the recycling center...

Councilmember Holland: Can you email me the information and what other features, I would like you to answer it. You do not have to do it now, I am not trying to put you on the spot, but in that email, please also include the other core features of the property like access to water, because I am assuming that we need a few basic things, but I am going to try to get a list of those places that the State is open to. The County does not own as much property so anything you can share with me. Thanks again for making it here.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Is the property that you are looking at...do you know who owns the land?

Ms. Shigekane: Grove Farm, we believe. That is the Ahukini Road business area...that is the fourteen (14) acres right now that we were looking at, but we are also looking at a property out at Kekaha, which I believe is DLNR.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes, there are a number of properties that I am looking at too.

Ms. Shigekane: I think the property out in Kekaha is like ten (10) acres or something like that.

Mr. Keiser: There are a lot of different...

Councilmember Cowden: I have a question. I believe we need safety zones, so that is where people can stay, they do not have to leave every day.

Ms. Shigekane: Right.

Councilmember Cowden: Because that is the destabilizing thing, if you have a place you can sleep at night and leave, it is done.

Ms. Shigekane: Right.

Councilmember Cowden: I believe we need about three (3) of them in different regions.

Ms. Shigekane: Yes.

Mr. Keiser: At least.

Councilmember Cowden: Because people can go to school, they can go to work, they cannot all live in Kekaha.

Ms. Shigekane: Right.

Councilmember Cowden: Are you working with the Kaua'i Community Alliance (KCA) group, the group that has the coalition of all the providers including the continuum of care?

Ms. Shigekane: We have access to them.

Mr. Keiser: We work with them every day.

Ms. Shigekane: We work with them all the time.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Mr. Keiser: Once we have an established plan, we have access to all of...both in personal and professional relationships, so I work with HHSC and we are looking for fulltime outreach.

Councilmember Cowden: We have to keep the questions tight, please contact me at fcowden@kauai.gov or you can write all of us. We can work with you. I want to work with you because this is ultimately...the Administration gets to make the call right now, it is the mayor's and not the Council's, so I think many of us on the Council are on that page.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay, Kino did email us, so you can always email her questions back also. Do you have a question? Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: This is to increase a grant program that is managed by our Housing Agency and we do have a homeless coordinator, Farah Aquino.

Ms. Shigekane: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: I wanted to make sure that you were already working with her. I know that later today, we will probably still be in budget, there is the Kaua'i Community Alliance meeting, which is a coalition of all the nonprofits that we work together with to get things like this done. Are you a part of the Kaua'i Community Alliance?

Ms. Shigekane: I will reach out to Farah.

Councilmember Kualii: Project Vision, YWCA, a lot of organizations.

Ms. Shigekane: We work closely with them; it is just we were not necessarily a part of it.

Councilmember Kualii: Trying to address something that has not been addressed, so thank you very much.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further clarifying questions? I think we got a little far away from clarifying questions. Thank you for your testimony. Is there anyone else wishing to testify?

JUDITH WHITE: I am Judith White. I am a mental health professional. In the community, I have been providing psychology, therapy, and mental health consultation for about twenty-five (25) years. Sorry I was late. I would have liked to hear all the previous testimony because that is the issue that I wanted to provide some testimony as well for the safety zones from a mental health and also from a budget standpoint. I worked long enough to understand the connection between unsheltered and housed folks and mental health needs, and it is powerful. I also know that stable housing is the number one element that helps all individuals, but especially individuals with significant mental health issues. I have seen it so many times over the years that I have done this work. While safety zones are a sort of a “stop gap” measure, it is a step in the right direction. I pulled up, if you are interested, I have a culmination of the latest research that looks not at the human need, which is important and from the heart, but really at the cost, that the initial investment, while it might seem pretty significant, the long-term savings in dollars and in human dollars is really significant. I believe it is the right thing to do from a citizen and taking care of our fellow citizens, but I think it is also the right thing to do from a budget and the dollars standpoint. I am very strongly in favor of this. I am happy to provide any...for free, consultation, and that is it. I think is a good idea and I really hope it goes forward.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay. Thank you. Is there anyone else in the audience wishing to speak?

YELENA OKHMAN: Good morning, everyone. My name is Yelena Okhman. I am over twenty (20) years resident of Wailua Homesteads. I am a mother, I am a real estate agent, and I am very grateful that this issue is being brought up because I have been continuously asking, throughout my career, I have been asking if I have a rental property, if I have affordable housing, if I can recommend someone, and I feel like if you want to help people to not end up in the streets...It is heartbreaking. I see mom with kids and it is really difficult. As a mother, it is not safe. It is not safe, even walking to the beach sometimes, even though we love people, but it creates this turbulence gives a sense that our community is not thriving. I know so many people who are happy to help and step in. If you need to build, if you need volunteers, if you have a project, the Board of Real Estate Agents can bring a lot of realtors. We have been going to help Habitat of Humanity. If you need any help, we are very happy to step in. Thank you so much. Thank you for the people who came here and especially the person who testified after six (6) years of being homeless, it is just heartbreaking. Thank you very much. I hope I can find a way how we can resolve that problem.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Is there anyone else wishing to testify? Seeing none, while the rules are still suspended, the first group up is the Transportation Agency. Can we get the Transportation Agency up and Celia, maybe just go through your synopsis and then we will ask questions on that and we will head into the Budget.

CELIA M. MAHIKOA, Executive on Transportation: Good morning. Celia Mahikoa, Executive of the Transportation Agency. Along with me are two (2) of my staff members. Go ahead and introduce yourselves.

LEONARD PETERS, Assistant Executive on Transportation: Aloha, Councilmembers. Leonard Peters, Assistant Executive on Transportation.

WINNY HOEPPNER, Accountant III: Winny Hoepner, Accountant for the Transportation Agency.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you. We will go over the major items of note and then enter into any questions you may have. Just in general, overall, the operational challenges that we have been encountering, like many and most is personnel shortages, which have forced the continuation of no Sunday service for the Kaua'i Bus, which we are extremely regretful that needs to continue, however, until we can get significant amount of drivers and dispatchers within our team, we will need to continue in this current service level. As far as the larger items we have going on that have been prompt through the past several years of getting grant awards related to electrification of the fleet, we have just initiated the groundbreaking for our baseyard to expand and include the electrical charging requirements to charge the electric buses that we have placed in service in January. We are extremely grateful for the assistance that we have been provided by the other departments within the County, within the Department of Public Works, assisting us with locations with portable chargers, meanwhile until we can get the construction and the installation completed for a charging station in our own facility. We have also been adding to the capacity of our electronic fare payment system that was implemented last January and have been able to bulk up the capabilities available there just to make it a much more seamless and simple process for the bus riders, making it far more convenient for those individuals who regularly or just intermittently use bus service. Individuals who visit from the mainland are able to look up the information necessary and to download the fare payment methods that they prefer and it is extremely convenient for them. Beyond that we are just looking at continuing with the expansion of the baseyard to be able to sufficiently to serve as our electric buses as well as the rest of the fleet, extremely grateful for our outstanding team who has been just making the most of it. The difficulties that come with trying to carry out a construction project while still maintaining the same level of service and taking care of the daily requirements for transient operation. They have been outstanding, their flexibility and just taking care of what needs to get done to keep the service going while for the community. We are just grateful for all the support from our riders, from the leaders within this County—I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here and speak with you today. Do you have any questions?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden, Councilmember Kualii, and then Council Chair Rapozo.

Councilmember Cowden: Have you seen an increase with ridership, decrease, or staying flat?

Ms. Mahikoa: There has been slight increase, it has been coming up. Since the COVID-19 drop in ridership, it has been coming back slowly, but surely. We definitely see that there would be a reasonable jump in that should we get to the point or “when” we get to the point where we can add back the Sunday service as well.

Councilmember Cowden: I know you have a program for people at risk or have different challenges? What is the name of that program, how is that program going, and how many passes do you give out?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are provided one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000) per year to distribute to the various agencies who serve the population who is in need for that assistance. I can get you the total passes. There are various types of passes

that are issued to the agencies. They request what their needs are. Basically, we allow the agencies to define what the needs are for their population that they serve and then we distribute to them. We can follow up with actual counts.

Councilmember Cowden: Does the money totally get consumed?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. I know other people have questions.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Ridership is probably the biggest item, right. I actually think you should think about making that part of your basic presentation. Just some chart or something that shows us ridership in general.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is excellent.

Councilmember Kualii: But along with the thoughts on ridership, I know you have talked about new systems. You have an electronic...

Ms. Mahikoa: Fare payment.

Councilmember Kualii: Fare payment. Does that electronic fare payment also help you with the ridership data counts? Because it would be interesting...you probably have it all but I do not think we have seen it, if you can share with us the details on by route, by time of day, because often we hear complaints from the constituents about, "Oh, I see these buses driving around half empty," and that is the beauty of the other side, too, of making sure our most needy folks get passes, discounts, and maybe even free for the ones who qualify for other programs, because we want to fill the buses, right. It is a big investment. I am hoping that the data is so in depth now that you can give awesome ridership reports.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, we can pull that data.

Councilmember Kualii: I will send something in writing, specifically of how to lay it out. Since you talked about two (2) different items, just to follow up on the one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000). That started several years ago, you and I worked on it together, and this Council supported the pilot program. We started with thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) and it was so successful with the interests of the nonprofits that it is now at the point of one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000). When we get to that line item, I will get in more detail, but I am looking at potentially...if you were open to it, making sure that we are hearing back from all...I know it takes some follow-up work, but if the need is greater and the nonprofits have waitlists, you would be open to us raising the budget to reach more people because we want to fill up the buses too. Would you be open to that?

Ms. Mahikoa: We would be open.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you for being here. I am inquiring about recruitment efforts. The goal, obviously, is to have seven (7) days per week transportation for our people and since 2023, we have had no Sunday service. That is a big part of it. We are spending a lot of money on enhancing a six (6) day bus service, but what efforts have we made in targeted recruiting for drivers and dispatchers. Kaua'i Police Department (KPD) were in here and they spent one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) or whatever it was, but the numbers of applicants were remarkably increased. Should we be considering a targeted campaign to recruit drivers and dispatchers? We need to get back at seven (7) days per week service. Some of our people were forced to purchase vehicles because they relied on the transportation on Sundays because that is when they work. I would like to see an effort being placed on getting back to seven (7) days on a sustainable basis. Are we doing anything extra for recruiting or are we just doing the traditional recruiting process?

Ms. Mahikoa: It has been additional layers of challenge that have come in where historically have brought individuals in who have no commercial driver's license (CDL) license and give them the training requiring to get in.

Council Chair Rapozo: Right, so the targeted campaign would be targeting CDL drivers, targeting truck drivers—you can do that nowadays, and that is what KPD did they have seen some extreme success. This is just a suggestion. We need to get the bodies in. I know a lot of people who would want to come in and get CDL qualified and realized, "That is not what I thought; I thought it was easy to drive these buses," and then they are not going to complete it. Let us try to do a targeted campaign on existing qualified people that may be interested. Just a suggestion.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Carvalho: In the hiring on the on-call van drivers, right? That has been successful and then it transitions into the actual, right...so, how are the numbers on that?

Ms. Mahikoa: I can provide you that.

Councilmember Carvalho: Is it working?

Ms. Mahikoa: I do not have them with me, but it would still be successful, thankfully.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: In your narrative you talk about the need, you have to continue the removal of Sunday bus service, and it started in August 2023, so we are going on three (3) years now. You said that in order to get it going again, you used the term, a net increase in hiring and training eight (8) full-time bus drivers and three (3) transit dispatchers. Are you saying that is in addition to fulfilling the vacancies? We have twelve (12) bus drivers vacancies, six (6) on continue recruitment, four (4)...two (2) selections made, so at least two (2) of the twelve (12) are being filled, but with the need for twenty (20), I think what Chair is saying is doing a targeted campaign and something beyond the van

driver thing, because that is only netting us three (3) or four (4). The van driver has been in place for a while now, where you get them in as a van driver and you train them up to be a bus driver. How many have we gotten per year?

Ms. Mahikoa: Again, I do not carry those statistics with me, but I can provide that to you. I am using the term “net” because meanwhile we have individuals that are doing other jobs or retiring, just the natural flow of..

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Just to clarify, you are saying filling eight (8) of those twelve (12) vacancies would help you get that Sunday service back in, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: Ideally, yes. If we can sustain that...

Councilmember Kualii: So, you are saying you need to fill all of that plus another eight (8)?

Ms. Mahikoa: You are saying an additional eight (8) positions?
No. If we can fill what we have.

Councilmember Kualii: So, not an additional?

Ms. Mahikoa: Right, right.

Councilmember Kualii: Can you give us some data on what the counts were for ridership on Sundays when you used to provide the service? Did we have it for a significant amount of time before we stopped it?

Ms. Mahikoa: Are you talking about Sunday service?

Councilmember Kualii: Yes. Was it like two (2) or three (3) years or longer...

Ms. Mahikoa: That was implemented in February 2011.

Councilmember Kualii: 2011?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Holland: Eleven (11), twelve (12) years.

Councilmember Kualii: Can we get three (3) years data of ridership on Sundays?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: Chair asked a lot of what I wanted to ask. I agree with the advertising, but can you send me whatever you folks are using as an advertisement right now and whatever it is I want to help as the Parks & Recreation / Transportation Committee Chair, I do not feel like I do enough to support you folks. Can you send me

whatever you have as basic information even if it is not graphic and just continually start to push that because Sunday service is critical. Whatever I can do.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I want to talk about our electric fleet transition.
We have two (2) electric buses now.

Ms. Mahikoa: Four (4).

Councilmember Cowden: Four (4). That is right. Have they been operating for maybe six (6) weeks? How long has it been?

Ms. Mahikoa: January 5th.

Councilmember Cowden: Almost three (3) months.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: How is it going? They look like larger buses.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: How is the ridership on those so far and what does the drivers tell us?

Ms. Mahikoa: The ridership has been growing particularly with the student population because that is typically where the overcrowding would occur to where they end up having to wait for the next bus to come through. That has been successful thus far, and people are becoming more familiar with what it offers because the route for it is somewhat different from what the standard Kaua'i Bus service has always been.

Councilmember Cowden: Anahola to Waimea.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: When we have four (4) buses, we have two (2) going in each direction? How do we use our four (4) buses?

Ms. Mahikoa: We use two (2) buses per day. We rotate them out to give sufficient time for the recharge and the logistics involved in carrying out all of that. We are low on the learning curve with this, we had three (3) months, yes, but we are still gauging what it take to keep them going to remain within levels of acceptably consistent service as best as we can.

Councilmember Cowden: Do the drivers give you feedback? Do they like it? Are they staying charged up just fine for their entire routes, for the entire day?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes. Thankfully, we have seen a very good battery usage and the good portion of that is from a skill level of our drivers as they are applying in

operation. There are very efficient ways in which the drivers of these vehicles can operate and thankfully they are being trained in that way and they apply it very well. We are seeing one vehicle can carry out a day's service, which is two (2) full runs, I believe.

Councilmember Cowden: Are the drivers happy? Do they like the buses?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes. There was caution, naturally, in the beginning. They were a little bit hesitant, but it has caught on very well and there are many who are now very interested in wanting to get the training and licensing that is required in order to operate those buses.

Councilmember Cowden: Those are the buses that go by the airport.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, from the north side, it serves the airport.

Councilmember Cowden: And people have been taking it.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes. I can provide the ridership statistics for that, too.

Councilmember Cowden: For what the Chair spoke again, presenting out, making videos on things, it might be a good to put a video on this, so people become more familiar with that route and maybe we will have more people taking it to the airport, and next time, I will try to take the bus to the airport.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is great.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: On the bottom of page 4, you talk about the second phase of the baseyard expansion. Additional fleet parking that includes significant structural improvement to the current unusable water basin. Is it the plan to fill in that basin and will that affect any flood control in any way? It has not served that function, has it?

Ms. Mahikoa: Leonard has been the project manager on this.

Mr. Peters: Initially the plan was to just take half the basin, but we found out it was more cost-effective to take the entire basin and chamberize it because of the cost of the retaining wall for half of that basin. We are in the process of doing that. The idea is to chamberize the basin and have it handle as much volume, if not, more volume than the basin is handling now. That was the idea because rerouting that, especially potentially through the soccer park, was going to be way more expensive.

Councilmember Kualii: When you say "handle," you mean handle the number of buses they can park there or the amount of water that can...

Mr. Peters: Both. It will increase about forty-two (42) spaces for buses, and the volume of water is an idea of...the same volume of water to go through those chambers.

Councilmember Kualii: I do not get the dual purpose, like the buses are parked there and then all the water...you cannot have the buses there if it is going to fill with water.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: They park over it.

Councilmember Kualii: Oh, that is what chamberize means.

Mr. Peters: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: You cover it with a...okay, got it, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on the write-up? If not, we will move into the Budget. We will move past the Highway Fund-Administration budget because there is no money coming out of the Highway Fund for Administration. We will move to Master Page 274, the account funded by the G.E.T. Fund. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: There are no vacancies and none recent since the March 1st Vacancy Report or a need anticipated in the next few months, three (3) to six (6) months because of coming retirements.

Ms. Mahikoa: There is pretty much consistent movement at our agency, so I apologize, within a month or two (2) months from any information provided, there would be changes, but I can provide...

Councilmember Kualii: But these five (5) positions were filled? Page 276.

Ms. Mahikoa: Oh, the five (5) in Administration? That is correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, we are starting with Administration.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, I am sorry.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I realized that it is coming from G.E.T. dollar-funding all the rest of this.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: The Highway Fund was dollar funded, everything here is funded through G.E.T.

Councilmember Cowden: Right.

Councilmember Kualii: It comes up again with actual funds budgeted.

Councilmember Cowden: That is what I looked at first when I turned the page when I figured it out.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as not present.)

Councilmember Kualii: The line item that is Consultant Services.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: It is flat, one hundred eighty-three thousand six hundred twenty-seven dollars (\$183,627). Project Management & Tech Support—what is this? Is this some type of annual contract for IT?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are utilizing it as matching funds for the grants that we received to carry out the design and engineering and other professional services to get the construction project completed and all the associated expenses with that.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay. I have a different item.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Go ahead.

Councilmember Kualii: On page 276, Advertising, one hundred eighty thousand dollars (\$180,000). One hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000) of that is what we were talking about the bus pass program.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: The description, the first two (2) lines is for the ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) and then the description for the one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000) is “Outreach, Low-Income, Bus Pass Programs,” but at this point it is sort of turned into almost like a grant-in-aid program. You know how this line item is “Advertising,” would it not be more appropriate if we just called it “Grant-In-Aid” for that one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000), because you are not actually giving dollars, but you are giving the value by giving either full bus passes or half off the bus passes. Is that how it is working?

Ms. Mahikoa: Basically.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes.

Ms. Mahikoa: The funds are being awarded to these nonprofits.

Councilmember Kualii: But you award it as a credit and then they come back to you and get x amount of bus passes.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: When they get x amount of bus passes, are they entitled to just use their credit and get the credit they need whether it is senior, youth, because the bus passes have different prices, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Is there a price for low-income? There is a price for seniors, students, but there is no price for low-income, if you will.

Ms. Mahikoa: No, we...

Councilmember Kualii: That is why this program is meant to help with that.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right, we rely on the agencies to carry out that function.

Councilmember Kualii: Absolutely, perfect. As far as this one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000) and this line item, is there somewhere else in the Budget where you account for the lower...because individuals come in and buy their bus passes directly as well, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: If a senior comes in and buys it at a lower rate or a student comes in and buys it at a low rate, you are not trying to backfill that to the full cost by charging somewhere else?

Ms. Mahikoa: No.

Councilmember Kualii: No. Just the low-income. Just this program.

Ms. Mahikoa: If individuals come in and say they cannot afford to buy at the price at which it is defined within the County Code, we refer them to the agencies.

Councilmember Kualii: Oh, perfect.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: So, you are not selling it over the counter, but you send them to the agencies...and there are like twenty (20) agencies, right, at this point.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right, I believe there are seventeen (17).

Councilmember Kualii: There is a lot of different ways...I think what we talked about how you do not want to be responsible for making the criteria, you are just trying to get bus passes out there.

Ms. Mahikoa: That would require more staff.

Councilmember Kualii: As far as you can tell it is working well?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Because we are on television, can you say which towns? I believe you can get them at Kīlauea, if you go to these places and pick the bus passes up, so do you know offhand where people can get them? Sometimes we have had testimony from people who are unhoused and maybe without a car, if they think they have to somehow get into Līhu‘e, I know Shared Blessings, for example, in Kīlauea, gives them away. Which towns are they available? Do you know?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is one piece of information that we did not list on here, but it is basically whichever ones that applied and we awarded to. We can assemble that information.

Councilmember Cowden: That might be another thing that is good to put on a little video. Although most people who do not have a car, certainly do not have a television.

Councilmember Kualī‘i: As a follow-up from you last year, April 7, 2025, you provided us a list of like fifteen (15) to twenty (20) of those nonprofits. Perhaps most of them are headquartered in Līhu‘e, but some of them probably have satellite offices or services elsewhere. The one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000) is broken down by American Legion Post 54, Catholic Charities, Child and Family Services, Easter Seals Hawai‘i, Hale ‘Ōpio, Hawai‘i & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC), Hawai‘i Self-Advocacy Advisory Council, Ho‘ōla Lāhui Hawai‘i, I know they are in multiple locations, Ho‘okipa Kaua‘i, Kaua‘i County Housing Agency Homeless Coordination, Kaua‘i Planning & Action Alliance Līhu‘e, Mālama Pono Health Services, they recently shut down, Pa‘a Lima, Shared Blessings Thrift Shop, the Salvation Army, United States Veterans Initiative, Waimea Canyon Middle School PTSA, Women In Need, and YWCA-Kaua‘i. Of course, they are not necessarily all places with counters that are serving the general public because I think primarily they are trying to help their clients, if you will, but people can go to any of these places knowing that if they could seek services through them, they could have bus passes available. What we have been trying to do is make sure year after year that these places do not have long waitlist. That they are able to help more people. They would be able to help more people if they had more funding and that is why in three (3) to four (4) years, it has gone up from thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) to one hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$170,000), and you all voted and supported it. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: When you award these, does it get announced, aside from our normal PR, is it possible or do you folks, because you have the Kaua‘i Bus website and the announcements, do you ever use that?

Ms. Mahikoa: I am trying to recall if we have.

Councilmember Bulosan: I know the agencies will do their outreach too, but I think that might be a good partnership, too, to reach more people.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any questions on page 177, which is the last page for the Administration funded by G.E.T.? These pages get out of order a little bit

because we put Administration all together and operations all together, so that we are not going Administration, Highway Fund, General Fund...

Councilmember Kualii: Just call out the pages as we go.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a question.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: If not, we would be going Administration, Operations, Administration, Operations, Administration...right now we get to look at all of Administration, all of Operations...

Councilmember Kualii: Just call out the page numbers and I will adjust.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: On page 277 where it says, "Automobiles—one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000),"—is that replacing fifteen (15) buses?

Ms. Mahikoa: These are matching funds for the federal funds were provided to...

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is why we do not ask for the full amount to replace fifteen (15).

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, I was going to say that is a deal.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right.

Councilmember Cowden: How much is a cost of one (1) bus?

Ms. Mahikoa: Five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) for the diesel cutaways that we have historically purchased.

Councilmember Cowden: And then the electric is over one million dollars (\$1,000,000)...like one million three hundred thousand dollars (\$1,300,000), if my memory is correct.

Ms. Mahikoa: One million two hundred thousand dollars (\$1,200,000).

Councilmember Cowden: When we replace fifteen (15) buses, it does not break down...some of those are for the paratransit buses, so we just collect them altogether, right? How long is a bus lifecycle?

Ms. Mahikoa: The useful life that we typically get from them usually averages out about five (5) years, but we can get up to six (6) to seven (7) years out of them.

Councilmember Cowden: Do we auction them out when we are done with them?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes. The electric buses have a useful life, I believe is about twelve (12) years.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on page 277? The next page is page 258, Operations from the Highway Fund.

Councilmember Kualii: No.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Basically, it funds a little bit less than half. Fifty percent (50%) of the bus drivers' salaries. Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Just to clarify, the Highway Fund comes from people's car registrations.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: And gas.

Councilmember Cowden: Both?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: So, it is good for people to know that they help to create this as well.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Moving to page 278 is the General Excise Tax Fund funding the operations of the Transportation Agency. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Pages 280 and 281 are where all the vacant positions are. I will start at the top, the first Position No. 9322, Transit Dispatcher I, vacant forty-two (42) days, it is on continuous recruitment. What is the likelihood of filling this position to start on or before July 1st?

Ms. Mahikoa: We had one (1) who stated earlier this week or late last week, and we have...it is in open recruitment right now and I need to get an update on exactly where we are with interviews.

Councilmember Kualii: Position No. 9322, Transit Dispatcher I, and Position No. 9439, Transit Dispatcher I, also.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: So, you are referring to both of them?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay. Position No. 10397, Automotive Storekeeper I, seventy-eight (78) days. The HR status on March 15th was, "No recent activity with HR." Since then, have you initiated recruitment? Are you intending to fill this position by July 1st?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are finalizing the redescription of this position to more accurately describe it and hopefully appeal to more interests for applicants.

Councilmember Kualii: When you are doing this type of redescription and working with HR, how long does it take before you can actually open a recruitment and try to fill it? How long will that take, on average?

Ms. Mahikoa: It depends on how long it takes for us to get each step done, but typically once it is provided to HR, they keep it moving.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden has a follow-up question.

Councilmember Cowden: Can you tell me what a Storekeeper I does? What is that job description?

Ms. Mahikoa: They handle the inventory management, the work order, documentation for the many parts and supplies that it takes to keep the vehicles in operating condition, as well as the other facilities that we have, from bus stops, etcetera.

Councilmember Cowden: So, they are basically are like your purchasing, your parts distribution, they work with the mechanics?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Councilmember Cowden: They do not work with the public? Like a storekeeper sounds like someone who works retail, but this is on the mechanical side.

Ms. Mahikoa: Primarily, mechanic. They work with vendors as well, extensively, but primarily mechanics.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, and it looks like we are going to hear from HR?

JANINE RAPOZO, HR Manager: Good morning. Janine Rapozo, HR Manager. This is in response to Councilmember Kualii's question. The Transportation Agency is exempt from civil service and therefore their hiring process is a little quicker than the regular civil service system, so I just wanted to clarify that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Thank you. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: The next position is Position No. 9314, Administrative Assistant I, brand-new vacancy, but you had a posting that closed on March 18th. Did you receive applicants?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: What is the status?

Ms. Mahikoa: I cannot remember the number, I know it was over one (1) dozen, and we have interviews set up from next week through the end of the month after which time we will be hiring.

Councilmember Kualii: You have a high chance of filling that before July 1st.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thankfully.

Councilmember Kualii: The last non-bus driver position is Position No. 9457, Automotive Storekeeper I; it sounds like the other position.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, there are two (2).

Councilmember Kualii: Are you working on both of those with HR?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: The last is a group of bus drivers, and I am just going to lump them together the best way I can. It looks like based on your responses of the Vacancy Report update, of the twelve (12) vacancies, two (2) say, "selection made." So, on both bus drivers that say, "selection made"—did they accept your offer and are they starting any time soon?

Ms. Mahikoa: We had two (2) individuals start...I think it has been about three (3) weeks now. We have three (3) more scheduled.

Councilmember Kualii: Six (6) are on continuous recruitment, how is that going? How are you going to get the six (6) more?

Ms. Mahikoa: We just continually accept applications, we will group them, hold an interview series, and then hire several, because it is very time consuming to train up the individuals from when they come in the door to being fully released to covering bus service.

Councilmember Kualii: And the last...

Ms. Mahikoa: I am sorry, can I just add that we have three (3) drivers scheduled to start on April 16th as well.

Councilmember Kualii: The last four (4), which say, "Continuous recruitment filled with short-term hire,"—are those the van training program or do they come up somewhere else?

Ms. Mahikoa: No, the three (3) that are coming up would be part of showing as vacant on here. It is shown as vacant on the list provided.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: When it says, “Short-term hire,” are those retired bus drivers?

Ms. Mahikoa: Some are. There are quite a few individuals who have jobs elsewhere or they are retired and want to work a part-time job.

Councilmember Cowden: So, are they filling? Do they have a regular schedule?

Ms. Mahikoa: Not on regular schedules. We call them substitute drivers.

Councilmember Cowden: Substitute drivers, okay.

Ms. Mahikoa: Just as needed.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on salaries? We will move to page 281. Are there any questions on page 281? Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I will make the same comment that I made over a number of departments is that we are having really big changes in our oil and fuel economy, since the budget was made, so my expectation is that number might increase for our fuel cost in our Supplemental Budget—is that being considered?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: It seems like fuel is going up and probably will stay up.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes. Thankfully with some of the transitioning to electric, we can anticipate some shifting in that, but naturally the electricity will need to increase at the time when the fuel is going down.

Councilmember Cowden: That is right, but the electricity will cost more.

Ms. Mahikoa: Naturally, yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions? If not, we will move on to page 282. Page 283. Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: You probably told us this before, but when we do repairs and maintenance, does that go to our main mechanics garage that is shared with other things or do we have separate mechanics? We have separate mechanics for our buses, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Councilmember Cowden: We have dedicated mechanics.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions for the Transportation Agency? That will be it for their budget. If not, thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: Sorry, I have one (1) more question.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Just a quick question. Along the lines of the bus pass program. I noticed that, and I was going to ask the Housing Agency later, but the Kaua'i County Housing Agency Homeless Coordinator—they are actually giving out bus passes too, to the homeless?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Is it another way for people to come to the County, too, not to the bus stop, but to the Housing Coordinator.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: The continuum of care, which is Family Life Center, which is by the Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC), upstairs in the medical place. When we have people who are recently released from the Kaua'i Community Correctional Center (KCCC), can they get their bus passes anywhere? I had to go upstairs to a medical clinic...I had to drive a person over there, upstairs in the medical clinic to get the bus pass. Do you look at how these go out?

Ms. Mahikoa: No.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, because that was not a real obvious or easy place. The person did not have a car...it would not have worked out very well. That is something we need to work with the nonprofits to figure out. I think that is Catholic Charities, maybe, who puts...I cannot remember who it was, but we had to go upstairs.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Just to be clear, the ones that we are talking about are just the low-income ones. Any other passes such as seniors, youth, they can get it at any of your regular locations, including your counter itself.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, if they are paying for it, then yes, they can...right now, we are still distributing at Hanalei Big Save, Kilauea Mini Mart, Waimea Big Save...

Councilmember Kualii: All the regular outlets, yes.

Mr. Peters: The beauty of the mobile fare system is they can purchase and do it all on their phone as well.

Councilmember Kualii: Cool, so cool. I am going to ride the bus in my retirement.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: You can drive the bus. Are there any further questions for the Transportation Agency? If not, thank you. Next up, we have the Housing Agency.

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as not present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Adam, can you give us a brief overview of your synopsis and then we will ask questions about it, and then we will go into the Budget.

Housing Agency

ADAM P. ROVERSI, Housing Director: *Aloha*, everyone. Adam Roversi, Director of the County Housing Agency. Thank you, Committee Chair and Members. Our budget is relatively flat compared to last year. The ask is essentially the same. As you know from our CIP discussions, the bulk of the Housing Agency's actual working budget is what is now classified under the CIP, the project funding. I believe when you received the Administration's Budget at that time, we had four (4) vacancies. We are already working to fill two (2) of those. Those are all in our Section 8 Rental Assistant Division and they were, to be blunt, intentionally left vacant because the federal funding for the Section 8 program has been chaotic to be straightforward. All the regular deadlines where we typically receive annual confirmations of the amount of funding that we will receive have not been followed, so we have been receiving conflicting information from the Trump Administration versus what Congress is actually doing. Last year, the Trump Administration had proposed significant cuts to the Section 8 program and the complete elimination of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME). We are very uncertain about the level of funding that we will be receiving. Ultimately Congress did not follow that guidance and did fund the Section 8 program, last year, but then the same thing happened again this year, the Administration was asked for cuts. We are not getting clear confirmations from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that we would be receiving the funding necessary to fill our staff positions. For better or worse we intentionally left them blank until we got some clarifications, which we have recently received, and with that information we are moving ahead with trying to fill the empty positions. They were purposely left empty because of the uncertainties around federal fundings, which funds all of the salaries for our Section 8 office. The last note, we have received continued guidance from the federal government that we should potentially not count on the federal government covering all of Section 8 program salaries in the future and that they have a wide policy of forcing local jurisdictions to pick up some of the weight of operating these federal programs. None of that has happened yet, something to potentially keep an eye on in the future. With regard to our Development Division, which is the second half of our office, we have...it does not go into a lot of detail on our budget, because they are CIP items now, but we have three (3) very large projects ongoing, which is be utilizing the bulk of our project funds. Lima Ola-Phase I is complete. We

expect this fiscal year to go out to bid on Phase II of the Lima Ola subdivision, as well as a new water tank for the 'Ele'ele Lima Ola community. That will put in all the infrastructure for one hundred seventy-five (175) additional homes at Lima Ola and are expecting that to be somewhere between twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) to twenty-eight million dollars (\$28,000,000) of work. Fortunately, we have attracted significant federal funding to pay for more than half of that, so not all will be carried out by our Development Fund. Both the Waimea 400 subdivision and the Kilauea subdivision are moving forward. We completed community master plans for both of those projects. Ultimately, they will provide close to seven hundred (700) new homes, both rental and for sale. Right now, both projects are working to wrap up the required environmental assessment (EA) review. We are hoping to have the draft EA for the Kilauea project published this fiscal year. Waimea will probably be a little later because the environmental documents for that project cover the entire four hundred (400) acres, including public works wetland restoration project and other things, not just the housing project—that is why it will take a little longer. The next steps in both of those projects are to come before the County Council with Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 201H applications for rezoning land use entitlements, and then as soon as that happens, we will be moving into producing engineering and construction documents, so that we can move into construction on those projects, maybe late FY 2027. One of the first big projects connected to all of those is the construction of Namahana Parkway in Kilauea, which will provide a new main access road to Kilauea Town, it will also provide the primary access of housing development area, that is on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for funding in FY 2027 to the tune of roughly fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000) to sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000), so we are working closely with Michael Moule of the Engineering Division and have also secured some federal funding to add to that along with County funds. As you know from a Council Meeting a couple of times ago, we also executed a purchase of sale agreement to acquire another large development parcel in the Puhi area. That is currently in escrow. We expect those funds, which were in current year's budget to be expended before you even have to approve the current budget in front of you. We are estimating roughly a five-million-dollar (\$5,000,000) item. Some other smaller projects, we are wrapping up Kealaula on Pua Loke Phase II, our third supportive housing project. That will be another twenty-six (26) units over by the Department of Water for homeless families. We have been working for some time with the State on what we hope will be our fourth supportive housing project for homeless families adjacent to the Mahelona campus on a State parcel. We are still working through some of the details on site control and the use of that property. Other near-term pending projects, we have selected a developer, who will be seeking State funding next year for the development of the Puhi Park project, which is planned out to be a 60-unit rental project. Other ongoing projects, right now, many of you came to the blessing of the Lima Ola Community Center Phase I and the notice to proceed has been issued for that project, so that is moving forward, and some private partnership projects—the Rice Street apartments that are being constructed right across the street from the Historic County Building, I think this might be optimistic but they are projecting a completion date December of this year, for building completion and starting to get people on a waitlist to move in. There are sixty (60) apartments above the first-floor retail. The Uahi Ridge project across the highway from Kukui Grove, which is not a County project, but they did receive some financial support from us. That will be one hundred fifty-six (156) rental units across the street, and you can see buildings going up as we speak. They have quite a few more buildings yet to go, so I doubt that they will be completed in this calendar year, but maybe early 2027.

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: The sheet says, "sixty-six (66)."

Mr. Roversi: Sixty-six (66) at the Rice Street project. I believe that is it. I am more than happy to answer any questions.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland, Councilmember Kualii, and then Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you so much. Are you also getting all the testimony that we received around increasing the grant money for the houseless programs and grant in aid projects?

Mr. Roversi: I have not seen any of them.

Councilmember Holland: Okay. We have received probably fifteen (15), twenty (20), maybe more, emails. Their requests, a group of people all starting to work together, a coalition of groups, it sounds like, did you hear the testimony on that? We actually had public testimony this morning when we started this morning and I am wondering how you feel about the five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) being an adequate amount? Do you folks support increasing that amount? I would be really interested knowing a full list of all the applicants from last year that applied to that, because what I am hearing is that there are a lot more applications than there was able to give out, about three (3) times the number. Can you verify that? Can you provide the types of applications and more information of how that was spent? You do not have to answer now.

Mr. Roversi: I would be happy to provide a full briefing memorandum outlining everything that was on the applications and the nature. I can say broadly, in the current application here, we received twelve (12) applications for a total of about one million seven hundred thousand dollars (\$1,700,000) in funding. A couple of them were deemed incomplete, so they were not considered in the scoring process, but I think there were ten (10) completed applications and five (5) awards were issued from the group of applicants and there was five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000).

Councilmember Holland: Right.

Mr. Roversi: I am not privy to all of the Administration's priorities and where money is absolutely necessary, so I can just say that based on the applications received, there is certainly a capacity to issue more grant awards based on the number of applicants, but I do not want to go to battle against other departments on the Administration's priorities.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you, Director.

Councilmember Kualii: And basically you have the program in place so whether they give out five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) or one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000), I think is what the number they were asking for, you would just run the program with the staff that you have?

Mr. Roversi: Yes. We have an annual system where we put out a request for proposals (RFP), we have a scoring committee who scores all the applications

based on the criteria in the RFP. After the first year, for this year, I think we have fairly well ironed out that process.

Councilmember Kualii: On the numbers you just provided about how many applied for what amount of dollars, and then how it was awarded, I actually requested that information and you provided to me in writing, I did not know it was not shared with all the other Councilmembers, so you do not have to do that again, I will just share it.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you, Housing Chair.

Councilmember Kualii: I have other items on the narrative.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Do you have a follow-up?

Councilmember Cowden: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I appreciate Councilmember Holland asking if you had heard the testimony earlier today. I think what we are all getting and I certainly, as you know, have been arguing for this since I got elected, almost seven and a half (7.5) years ago, for some type of safety zone or safety place. I understand that is not the vision of the current Administration, right, is that why we do not have it? Is that correct? Having a place for people to come and safely park.

Mr. Roversi: I would say that the Administration's position is that we have always been ready and willing to support a nonprofit partner who wanted to operate and manage such a place, but we do not feel we have the capacity to administer, manage, or oversee, safe camping or safe parking areas. I know that there have been numerous efforts going all the way back to former Mayor Carvalho's Administration to do this. There was a prior effort to form a *hui* of churches to utilize, which primarily use their properties mostly on Sundays and special events, so they have land sitting empty for much of the week. But there were roadblocks in trying to bring that to the finish line. I think that was before I became Housing Director, but I understand one of the primary issues that came up was concerns about liability. The churches wanted the County to take on the legal liability for the operation and the facility use and decisions were made...I do not know if it was at the mayor's level or at the council's level that was not acceptable or appropriate or too risky. There have been discussions since I have been at the Housing Agency with other nonprofit groups who have come to us with ideas to establish safe camping or safe parking areas. We have been receptive to those discussions but typically ask them to come back with an actual plan. How do you plan to run this? Do you have insurance? How is it going to operate? When we ask for some level of detail, we often never hear from people again. I think the Administration remains open to cooperating on a project.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Thank you. I am hearing you correctly, people are open, they just need someone else to take the liability. I want to emphasize that what I am consistently hearing for that extra one million dollars (\$1,000,000) is not just for any applicant or any type of thing, but for a safety zone, safe parking, because that is what is needed not only for the benefit of the people who are unhoused, but we are also hearing from the people who feel impacted by the unhoused, and they are very willing to have that

money spent. I am just trying to emphasize that. If we put it in the budget where it is in the nonprofit element, can we put it in, so it is targeted?

Mr. Roversi: I believe it would be up to the Council as to how you allocate the funds.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Mr. Roversi: I would offer, globally, this is a policy discussion, and we looked into this when, if you remember Ashton Varner, who used to be our Homeless Coordinator several years ago, she put together a short paper on the idea of safety zones. It was not really to come up...it was to study what other places are doing. Nationally, there is a debate, both sides, and I guess from a policy perspective, one of the concerns about safe camping and safe parking areas is establishing them with no plan in place to unestablish them in the future. So, you are not creating a place that just is going to be forever, a place for homeless people, and if you are going to make a place available for people to live inside, there needs to be a plan at the beginning on how you are going to work with these people to eventually help them move on, so we are not establishing something forever.

Councilmember Cowden: Understood.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: The County has the transitional programs, the County has the housing list, the County has all of this, you are not asking that the nonprofit set up the plan to transition them into housing, was that what you suggested? Is that what that paper said was done?

Mr. Roversi: It did not get into that level of detail; I will have to pull it up. It has been a while since...

Council Chair Rapozo: I think it is a partnership, so the short-term immediate need would be the nonprofit offering these immediate services, working in conjunction with the County who has the programs in place for the transition. I think that is the natural partnership. To expect a nonprofit to take on everything, you are not going to get anyone, you are not going to get any proposals. I think the County has a part in this, as far as the transition component, that would just make sense. Is the Administration willing to work in partnership with these nonprofits that can fill the immediate need while we in the County work towards the transition into housing. To me, that would be the ideal partnership.

Mr. Roversi: Sure, and to be clear to what the County has to offer in that mix is our supportive housing projects.

Council Chair Rapozo: Correct.

Mr. Roversi: Which would be the first step off the street.

Councilmember Kualii: Kealaula, and the affordable rentals, too, right?
Across the street.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: Can you send me and share that report with me of what the findings were, about the history of...

Councilmember Kualii: Ashton Varner.

Councilmember Cowden: I would like that as well.

Councilmember Holland: I do not want to double up the research. Do we have a setup for the structured transition out of Kealaula facilities? Currently, we have a process that helps people find and move out of that system, and even that is not supposed to be a permanent solution, right?

Mr. Roversi: Right. One of the conditions of tenancy is that you agree to work with staff on a customized care plan to provide...everyone is different, so the plans are all different providing them what they need, such as employment opportunities, connecting them with health care and various services, but there is a goal. It is not a hard deadline, but there is a goal to transition everyone out of a supportive housing project within two (2) years.

Councilmember Holland: So, we have that structure, do you feel that structure could be utilized and applied similarly to one of the safe parking and safe camping areas, and utilize that existing structure then we can have a plan to support the nonprofit with that structure?

Mr. Roversi: Certainly. I think it would require staffing and people to do it. We do not have the boots and the bodies for the County's staff to do that work, but we could share all of the information and the systems we have with a nonprofit partner who is willing to do the work.

Councilmember Holland: Thank you.

Mr. Roversi: And our supportive housing projects have historically been operated by a nonprofit partner, not by the County. We have, for the recent past, been self-managing the Kealaula project, but our Lima Ola project is managed by a nonprofit partner who is implementing the exact same program that we are.

Councilmember Holland: Great.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are we having problems moving someone from our supportive housing project to another project, the step above, like the affordable housing projects? Just based on inventory, I feel like as soon as all of these housing projects fill up, like if Uahi Ridge comes up...I feel like it gets filled right away and if we are putting people into Kealaula housing, when their time is up in two (2) years, is there a place that they can readily go? I feel like there is not a place they can readily go to.

Mr. Roversi: So far we have had a fairly good track record of moving people out within the two-year period and the vast majority of them go into permanent housing. There is enough turnover in those projects that we have successfully

moved those people out. There are exceptions, occasionally people who for whatever reason do not or cannot cooperate with the program, do not make any progress. It is rare, but occasionally we have had to evict people who end up back on the street, but that is not the rule by any means.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay. Thank you. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: In order to address the immediate with the safe zone and in order to allow them to get to the transitional supportive housing, the main thing we have to do is create more supportive and transitional housing because you probably have a long waitlist for any Kealaula type units that get built, like twenty (20) here and twenty (20) there, is all taken up right away and you probably have a waitlist, right?

Mr. Roversi: Correct. All of our current supportive housing projects have fairly lengthy waitlists, yes. One thing I did not mention, that is a pending project, we also have developed a concept plan for the rehabilitation and expansion of the existing emergency shelter that is operated by Kaua'i Economic Opportunity (KEO). That facility is well over fifty (50) years old and has a total bed capacity and two (2) dormitories of thirty-eight (38) beds. It has historically been only housing nineteen (19) people because of staffing concerns, and they have eight (8) transitional apartments in the back, so we have a concept plan, we are doing the environmental review as we speak. If it can move forward under the future Administration it would increase the number of emergency shelter beds up to one hundred eight (108) and increase the transitional apartments from eight (8) to twenty-four (24), so that would more than triple that space at the shelter. It is a big project, significant expense, but we are at least laying the groundwork to make that possible for the future.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: The State has their affordable housing policy or they have been trying to create like these, similar to what we are doing with Kealaula, has the State tried to do anything like that on Kaua'i or have they given us any money to do Kealaula? Have the State assisted us? Oh, their Kauhale program—have they done anything on Kaua'i yet?

Mr. Roversi: Just a quick review. Our current supportive housing projects were facilitated by the 'Ohana Zone program, which began under Governor Ige. Under Governor Green, the project changed to the Kauhale program, which was a little different model, but largely doing the same thing. To-date, there has been no Kauhale project on Kaua'i. We have met with, now we are in the Governor's third homeless program coordinator, so he toured the island first with James Koshiba, who, if you recall, came and spoke with Council a while back. Rightly or wrongly, my understanding from my interaction with my State counterparts is that the State viewed that program...the 'Ohana Zone program was administered as a passthrough program to the counties who would then go do the projects. The Kauhale project, as I understand it, was a State-driven project, money was not being made available to the counties to do things, the State was trying to self-made projects on different islands by connecting with local nonprofits. I am aware that starting with James Koshiba, they did do multiple tours of Kaua'i and with Kaua'i nonprofits trying to get a Kauhale project off the ground and I toured the island with them, several times, pointing out recommended State properties that we had researched for good locations, but so far there has never been any project they are funding on Kaua'i. One exception, I do not know the source of funding, but I believed that Project Vision is working to open a medical respite facility

across the street from Mahelona Hospital, which will provide housing for any homeless individuals who are released from the hospital, but still need to recover or heal from whatever procedures that they had done. I believe that project is being funded by Kauhale money, but I cannot absolutely confirm that because we are not directly involved with the funding, it is going straight from the State to Project Vision, and we are not a middleman.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Do they have a...

Councilmember Kualii: Grant program.

Mr. Roversi: Correct, they also receive some funds from our Grant In Aid program.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Have they done Kauhale projects on every island except ours so far or they just...what have they done?

Mr. Roversi: I could not tell you the list of all of them. I believe most of them have been on O'ahu. I know that there were some significant efforts on Maui especially after the wildfire, there were a lot of resources being put on that. I believe there are a couple on Hawai'i Island, but I could not give you a list.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Is there a motivation on their end to say, "We are having a difficult time moving anything on Kaua'i, let us just work with Kaua'i County with our projects"?

Mr. Roversi: The State has been quite helpful in providing potential funding for the newest Kauhale project, as I mentioned, on the Mahelona campus. It has been difficult to iron out the details of controlling a piece of the land. It is a long story. I could share a memorandum that I have already put together on the difficulties of that project, but we are hoping that it will actually move forward.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We have properties that are going to be moving forward, with that type of housing, I would love for them to just say, "You are taking the bull by the horns, how about we just help to support you," versus us trying to create our own, which is obviously not moving much?

Mr. Roversi: It has been the mayor's desire at each of our largescale subdivisions, which is what we did at Lima Ola that...let me back up, it is the mayor's desire to have at least one (1) supportive housing project in every district of the island because all those folks who are from Kaua'i, generally they want to stay in the community they are from. The people living on the beach in Waimea, not all, but largely are from Waimea. That is where their family is, that is where their connections are, so if the extent we can provide supportive housing opportunity in different communities, it has been the desire to spread the geographical. As we buildout these subdivisions in Lima Ola and in the future in Waimea, Kilauea, here in Lihu'e, it is the hope that a component of each of those will be another supportive housing project.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Interesting. I would be curious to know how much they spent on that. We always want to get our fair share, I would love for them to do a project

here, but if they cannot get one going, then they should look at partnering with us. You can kind of say our first one was a partnership with them, we took land that they owned.

Mr. Roversi: It was built on State land, the construction was fifty/fifty (50/50); State and County funding, and the operational costs have been covered by the State 'Ohana Zone program, since it opened. We are working on a renewal of a State contract through the Department of Human Services for operational costs at both Lima Ola, Kealaula Phase I, and Kealaula Phase II. The State is assisting with the operational costs and have assisted with some of the construction costs at Kealaula.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: I will be sending over a request to the State of a total report from the Kauhale Program, because I agree with you, they should be covering our projects here on Kaua'i; they will just make sense.

Mr. Roversi: I have not read it, but I believe there is a Kauhale Annual Report on the Governor's homeless program website.

Councilmember Kualii: And the initial commitment was to have so many on each island?

Mr. Roversi: I do not know if there was ever an official commitment.

Councilmember Kualii: There is one (1) or two (2)...

Council Chair Rapozo: That is what his campaign video said.

Councilmember Kualii: It was said.

Mr. Roversi: Okay.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, I would assume that is what he meant.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: On the narrative, at the bottom of page 2, which is my favorite section with all the operational highlights. When you mention the Kilauea 50-acre and Waimea 400 40-acre, and you said, "Total plans, roughly seven hundred (700) new homes," along the lines of the Waimea 400, with only forty (40) of the four hundred (400) acres being dedicated to this affordable housing, does the master plan allow for additional acreage, maybe another forty (40) acres for another chunk of affordable housing type project? I know that what is planned now is immediately adjacent to housing that is already there, but if you go further along the foothills or keep going west towards Kekaha from where this forty (40) acres is, in the future they potentially could be more acreage, according to the master plan?

Mr. Roversi: At least very early versions of the...if you recall the Planning Department did the master plan for the entire four hundred (400) acres and

then the Housing Agency did a more specific master plan for a designated portion. The overall project master plan does have an area designated to the west of the current housing project for potential future additional housing. I think it is in the near-term intended to remain in community agriculture (Ag) of some sort.

Councilmember Kualii: Right.

Mr. Roversi: But made available for possible housing in the future. That is the highest elevated property, the least prone...out of the flood zone, it is not in the designated wetland areas.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you. I will stop after any new questions so if there are follow-ups or others.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up on our unsheltered population. Last night, when I woke up from the storm at 2:00 a.m., I thought about all those people. In the past, I have tried to get the County to get buses go grab people. They are afraid to leave when they are in the storms, because they do not want all their things taken. Does our houseless coordinator program currently have a storm outreach or any type of elements of things like that?

Mr. Roversi: The County's staff does very little street outreach work. We do not have enough people to do that. Our current staff, we have a homeless coordinator and an assistant. Their primary job is to manage our supportive housing projects. They "self-manage" the Kealaula project. When it comes to outreach, they often do go to...if we receive complaints about areas or to the extent that we are working with people on the waitlist to get into our supportive housing projects, they are going out into the community. Their primary goal, when it comes to outreach, is connecting with nonprofit groups that we are helping to fund and being the bridge between a complaint that comes to the Office of the Mayor and the County Council with the nonprofit organizations that we are providing funding to, so we can be sure that they are made aware of problem areas and issues individuals that need help. We do not have the staff or immediate services to hand them...

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: I am wondering if you could provide how many people we have housed in these different facilities and how much more Phase II has the potential for...how many total people that when you started, like Kealaula facilities have been built, how many have we totally assisted? Do we have that number somewhere?

Mr. Roversi: We submit an annual report to the State to the Department of Human Services, and I can provide a copy to you.

Councilmember Holland: Yes, can you share that with me.

Mr. Roversi: Our most recent, I think it is a biannual report or semiannual report.

Councilmember Holland: Okay, great. The money you spoke of earlier about the 'Ohana Zone program, is that never-ending supply of money? When does that cut out entirely, because you are saying money from that...we are still applying for that to cover...

Mr. Roversi: We have an existing contract which expires at the end of this fiscal year. We applied for a renewal of operational funding for next year, it is only one year's worth of funding. The 'Ohana Zone program, I would have to go verify what it is, but it has a sunset date.

Councilmember Holland: Okay.

Mr. Roversi: Whether they renew it or not, I do not know. It seems that on the State level, the Administration was moving away from the 'Ohana Zone program, and putting its funds in the Kahale program, which for better or worse, you are not committed to.

Councilmember Holland: Okay. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan, Councilmember Kualii, and Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Bulosan: You can go first.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Carvalho: Going back to the safe zones program and then working with the churches, would you say that is a similar situation or how can we bridge that, if anything? Just in your thoughts, I wanted to hear that portion if that is something that can work.

Mr. Roversi: If we wanted to do a better job helping nonprofits and community groups make this possible, I would imagine it would be helpful if we did some preliminary legwork with the County Attorney to understand the legal requirements and liability requirements, do some of that work for them so that they know from day one what the expectation is and what they need to be looking for rather than have them try to reinvent the wheel themselves.

Councilmember Carvalho: I wanted to just follow up on that to see if you had any suggestions on that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Because we have been hearing from the Planning Department about coastal erosion and managed retreat, and I would imagine that as part of the Waimea 400, since it is County lands that maybe some of those lands will be made available for addressing managed retreat. Even though the Planning Department is probably the one leading that, because it is replacing homes for people, leaving one (1) home and trying to get into another home, do you think your agency might be part of that like when you are doing a pilot project of ten (10) to fifteen (15) homes for that purpose of managed retreat and

have you even start talking with the Planning Department about that or have you given that some thought?

Mr. Roversi: We have had some very preliminary conversations with the Long Range Division at the Planning Department about utilizing these pending housing projects as relocation areas. I think what remains is just some of the details of if does the County, and there are no real answers to this, it is more questions than answers, so if someone is at risk of losing a beachfront home and it is the benefit of the public policy to help relocate them, do we pay them the entire value of their house and give one a new one for free?

Councilmember Kualii: And are they trying to go from affordable home to an affordable home or are they trying to go from a millionaire mansion just to something higher ground?

Mr. Roversi: So, the financial aspects of how that would all work and where the funding would come to support it, and we have not worked through those details because what we build out, as an example, the homes at Lima Ola and we provide the construction financing to build the house, but we still expect the homeowner to get a loan and pay for it.

Councilmember Kualii: Sure.

Mr. Roversi: And not give houses away for free.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, so the support would be the land, if anything.
Thank you.

(Councilmember Carvalho was noted as not present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Let us finish any questions on the write-up.

Councilmember Kualii: The exciting new news about the acquisition of one hundred fifty (150) acres. I think your last thing says, "which will support the future development of the County's largest workforce housing development project to-date." I was wondering what you meant by that and of the one hundred fifty (150) acres, I think you said, was it ninety (90) that is buildable, because some of it is gully.

Mr. Roversi: That is our preliminary estimate just based on looking at the maps. We are having detailed surveys done as we speak to understand exactly what the buildable space is and that would be worked out as part as this escrow process. Just comparing it to the flat buildable acreages of our other project, so Lima Ola is currently the largest seventy-five (75) acres, we are estimating this could be about up to ninety (90) acres of buildable space.

Councilmember Kualii: I was thinking of the largest with the most units and, potentially, it could be, right? Are you thinking about because it is Lihu'e to maximize the land by building more units and maybe some of them go up and looks like some of the multilevel projects that we already have, which I think are beautiful.

Mr. Roversi: The preliminary assumption is that it would be a mixed, both multifamily and single-family homes, and array of different price points. For every project, this is a requirement of the 201H process that we bring to the Council, we are required to do a market study that analyzes the economic need of the community and the different income levels and the housing need. We had to come to both the County and the State Land Use Commission and the approvals of the rezoning is all contingent on our design and aligning with the market analysis. We do not want to build something that does not match the reality of the need, we want the two (2) to match, and the need for Waimea might not be the same of Puhi or Kīlauea. Each one requires an area-specific market study to determine the type of need and we try our best to meet that, while at the same time meeting the desires of the community that is expressed through the array of public meetings.

Councilmember Kualī'i: Will there be a master plan and all of that?

Mr. Roversi: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: I would assume when the decision was made to purchase this property, the intent to build the number of units with wastewater capacity there in Līhu'e, we do have capacity.

Mr. Roversi: Yes, this property that we are talking about would be connected to Puhi sewer.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay.

Mr. Roversi: The County's system.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay.

Mr. Roversi: And we have had preliminary engineering meetings, multiple meetings, with them to understand the capacity.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on the write-up, if not, we will take a ten-minute caption break, and then we will head into the actual budget.

There being no objections, the Committee recessed at 10:59 a.m., for a caption break.

The meeting was called back to order at 11:17 a.m., and proceeded as follows:

(Councilmember Carvalho was noted as present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We are going to move into the budget, do we have any questions on the Housing Agency's budget? Councilmember Kualī'i.

Councilmember Kualī'i: Page 226, the four (4) vacancies, you went over all of that in your narrative, I am satisfied with that. Just to confirm, there is no other recent

vacancy since this March 15th report and none expected in the near future, in the next few months, maybe an anticipate retirement or an announced retirement?

Mr. Roversi: We do an anticipated retirement. Unfortunately,
Kerri...

Councilmember Kualii: What is the position number?

Mr. Roversi: I have the names on a separate sheet.

Council Chair Rapozo: We already told her that we are not accepting her
resignation.

Mr. Roversi: Kerrilyn Barros, who is Position No. 9552. She
will be retiring at the end of May, after many, many years of fabulous service to the Housing
Agency.

Councilmember Kualii: Is that a position you can fill from within with a
promotion or potentially be easy to fill on the outside or is it a difficult position to fill?

Mr. Roversi: We have a tentative internal promotion planned
already.

Councilmember Kualii: Oh, you have a succession plan. I think she
mentioned something, too.

Mr. Roversi: And then we would be looking to fill the position
of the person who is succeeding.

Councilmember Kualii: Excellent.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: If there any no questions on page 226, we will
move to page 227. Is the R&M Building for your offices here? For the Termite Service, Pest
Control Services, Fire/Security Service, Air Conditioning Maintenance.

Mr. Roversi: Yes, all other projects management offices, they
have it all in separate budgets.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Oh. Is this the first time you had these items here
or was it coming out of somewhere else?

Mr. Roversi: I believe this is the first time. I would have to get
back to you as to exactly why.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Is it an accounting thing? It does not make sense
to have some in parks, I guess now is the building maintenance...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Yes, like Air Conditioning Maintenance, that is
sort of...

Mr. Roversi: Looking back at what has been done in our office recently, larger things, when there is a flooring and painting project happening, and that was funded through the Department of Parks & Recreation, not through my office, but when we have done some smaller projects, like we had to replace our kitchen counters, that came from our internal budget. I could not tell you what line item that came from, because that was a couple years ago. We had to put up a partition wall and a new door, that came from our internal budget, and so I think this is smaller internal repairs.

Council Chair Rapozo: Can we ask the Department of Finance about this. Ken, can you answer that? I am not sure how we decide how an R&M cost would stay with the office versus in one (1) department. It is very hard to track these expenses when they are scattered all over the budget. Is that something you can answer? No, you cannot.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We will send it as a follow-up.

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes. I mean it would just make sense to have all of the R&M in one (1) place. This is not directed to you, Adam. You probably did not even know it was there.

Mr. Roversi: I can just offer as a practical matter that we tend to do small things and we turn to the Department of Parks & Recreation or the Building Division for big fixes; maybe they just do not want to be bothered by our small projects.

Council Chair Rapozo: I understand, but for tracking purposes, for budgeting purposes, it is very hard to know what is the...I honestly did not even know until we were going from page to page. I do not read every page prior to the budget. If I wanted to get an idea of what we spent on R&M, as a Councilmember, "I want to know what we spent last year on R&M," and I go to the Department of Parks & Recreation or the Building Division's budget and you can get it, but if there are all these little pockets of money all over the place, it makes it so hard to track.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Just for me, it looked like things that would be recurring type expenses. That is why I was curious why it was not here before. Things like Termite Service, Pest Control Service, Air Conditioning Maintenance, but if these are just one-time costs for some reason, this year, I can kind of understand, but it was weird to see those types of services, which you would think it would be like annual maintenance type things.

Mr. Roversi: It is my preliminary understanding...well, I thought those recurring services were paid by the Department of Parks & Recreation in the past.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, the decision was made to move it and I guess that is the question why, because I do not know how you track that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on page 227?

Councilmember Kualii: There was discussion about the Grant In Aid, but I just wanted to make sure if there was action to increase the funds there, and you would not be opposed to that, and also to potentially asking for a part of that fund to be earmarked or

given first priority, if you will, to the safety zone idea? Keeping in mind that if there was not a valid award winning, if you will, because they have all the criteria where they can figure out what would work and what would not, grants, then the money would go to the other purposes. I think the interesting to see if the person managing the grant would provide...we have the grants, how they were distributed the last couple of years, and it has only been in place two (2) years now, if they would provide what is the criterion in scoring measurements that they use to award the grants. Maybe through that they can implement including something that make sure some of that money goes towards the immediate, I guess, we would be adding money that would be for that purpose, if possible.

Mr. Roversi: So, all of that information is provided in detail in the request for proposals. It lays out a scoring system. It has not been finalized and published yet, but we are using a draft homeless strategic plan, we have a five-year draft homeless strategic plan that the University of Hawai'i is helping us develop based on best practices on other islands to help us guide our expenditures of funds. We specifically worked on that plan so that we would have guidance in issuing these Grant In Aids. Like I said, it has not been finalized and published, but we are utilizing in draft language from that plan in the request for proposals to highlight the areas that the plan is calling for. I will happily provide a copy of the actual request for proposal.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes. Especially if it changes each year.

Mr. Roversi: Safe zones was one of the things called out as a potential project idea, but we did not receive any proposals.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions? If not, we will move on. Page 228. The last page of our Housing Agency, the next pages are questions on Housing programs, Kalepa Housing Fund, and Pa'anau Housing Fund. Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a question on page 326, Special Projects. The Home Loan Program, that is kind of what we agreed on where we had the Revolving Fund, is that correct? The seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000).

Mr. Roversi: That has been in the budget, I believe, for the last couple of years. To clarify, the 211 Account is funded by federal income on loans that were issued following hurricane 'Iniki. I cannot remember the acronym, but the Housing Agency received, I want to say it was close to forty million dollars (\$40,000,000) in special N-H-P, I could be misstating the acronym, and I do not even know what it stands for. It was a large pool of federal loans that were provided to the Housing Agency, given out after 'Iniki. As those loans are being paid back, the revenue from those federal loans all go into this 211 Account and can be expended on the allowable purposes from the federal program. We have the potential to use these funds for these items. For example, one that we have been using it for, significant amount, lately, is for the buybacks. That is also a permissible use of the Housing Development Fund, but because we have these funds that have restrictive uses, whereas the Development Fund could be used for a much wider range in uses, when we do have buybacks, even though we could use the 512 Account for that, we use the 211 Account.

We would buy back a home, we would fix it up, and resell it, then the proceeds of the sale go back into this account.

Councilmember Cowden: I see. Thank you.

Mr. Roversi: So, residual federal funds, quite a while ago, that will eventually all vanish. As all the loans are paid off, they will no longer be any income coming into this account, so it will, over time, unless we do nothing but loans that revolve, it will eventually go away.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: The last item on that list, the KEO Rehab Cost & Engineering Plans. Is the four hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$470,000) represented of the first efforts towards the bigger thing you told us about?

Mr. Roversi: We engaged G70 to do the concept plans and the required environmental studies. We had hoped that we would complete that and move on to actually developing, construction, and engineering drawings, so we would have a shovel-ready project, but we have not gotten into the contract for the actual construction and engineering plans yet, but that is what that is referring to.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on page 326? If not, we will move on. Housing Revolving Fund, page 346.

Mr. Roversi: If you recall last year, the bulk of the Housing Development Fund, the 512 Account, was all moved to CIP. What you see here are prior year projects that were encumbered, so some of the 512 Account money that was already allocated to projects or encumbered was left in. What you are looking at on this page, the rest of it was transferred to the CIP, so these are the residual projects with encumbered funds from last year that are ongoing.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Additional Rental Unit Subsidy is what we passed, probably four (4) years ago, and so that is so when people are trying to get a discount on their water heater, is that what that money is for? We are able to pay the Department of Water.

Mr. Roversi: Correct, that is the largest expense out of that fund, but it covers an array of...when people voluntarily enter and agree to develop with what we define as an affordable additional rental unit (ARU), they can enter into this program and we pay their facility reserve charge (FRC) for them, which is roughly five thousand dollars (\$5,000). By agreeing to enter this program, they first get a reduction on what the FRC charge would be from the regular nineteen thousand dollars (\$19,000), because it will be affordable, it is reduced to four thousand nine hundred (\$4,900), about five thousand dollars (\$5,000), and these funds pay that charge for people who have entered the program.

Councilmember Cowden: Does it get used up every year or is it just sitting there? It does not seem like too much of that has been used.

Mr. Roversi: The first year that this program was implemented, and I think we had fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) applicants, and since then, we have had one (1) or two (2) per year.

Councilmember Cowden: So, it is either that people do not know about it or something is not working with it. The goal was to make it easier for people to put in an additional rental unit to provide affordable housing in the private sector.

Mr. Roversi: Just based on an anecdotal experience talking to folks that are considering doing this, the reduced rent that they are required to charge to be in this program to get the cut in their FRC charge does not pay for itself; it is not worth it financially if you think, "I can rent my ADU at market rate." The difference in the amount of money they get kind of overwhelms the intended financial incentive of getting a cut on reduced amount FRC charge.

Councilmember Cowden: So, it is the market difference.

Mr. Roversi: If you had someone who wanted to build an ARU just for their mom or kids who do not expect to make a lot of money on it, this program still could be attractive, and we could perhaps do a better job renewing the advertisement of the project. For someone who is just looking at creating a rental unit on their property, from a dollar and cents perspective, if you are not driven by some other great sense of community, giving back, this program does not make financial sense.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Thank you. That is clear.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on this? If not, we will move to Kalepa housing. Are there any questions on Kalepa housing? We have Pa'anau housing. Are there any last questions for Adam before we let him go? If not, thank you, Adam.

Mr. Roversi: Thank you, all.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Next up, we have Agency on Elderly Affairs. Hi, Emily. Do you want to just go over your write up and then we will ask questions on that, and then...just a quick summary on it, then we will go into the actual budget.

Agency on Elderly Affairs

EMILY ISHIDA, Executive on Aging: Good morning. Emily Ishida, Executive on Aging, Agency on Elderly Affairs. Thank you for having us. Our main focus of our ask of the one hundred eighty-one thousand dollars (\$181,000) is we want to focus on our nutrition programs. This includes our home-delivered meals, our congregate program, and our in-home services, which are all essential services for *kūpuna*. As you know that the premise or the reason that we have our area agency on aging is because we want to, mostly do three (3) things: we want to prevent hospitalization, keep people from nursing homes or long-term care, and we want to support caregivers. We are in a generation now where people that are our age are taking care of our children, taking care of our parents, and then also taking care

of our *kūpuna*, and ourselves. Here in Hawai‘i, we are in an isolated area so if we can keep people outside of hospitals, it is better for everyone. They are able to live happier at home, independently, but we definitely need support caregivers for that, so this is where our home-delivered meal, our congregate meal program is very important to support that. We wanted to highlight some programs including our digital literacy program, Kūpuna Connections. This is where we have Ken Dickinson coming down from the mainland and he offers in-person training, we involve high school students and that is where we work hands-on with *kupuna* to help them maintain their quality of life, educating them about digital literacy. With scams going on, it is important for them to be aware of how to operate their own phones, computers, and we help them to do that. We try to empower them so that they feel good about that and they are able to help themselves, as well as their grandchildren. We hosted our first annual Elder Abuse Conference. Thank you, I know many of you attended, so we are actually planning to do that this year again. On Enhance Fitness program—this is important because we try to prevent, so we offer these services where we are able to do our direct services, but we also really see the importance of prevention: manner of balance, falls prevention, we have our Enhance Fitness program, and we offer Zoom technology and in-person. We have our RSVP program, which I know you folks are all very supportive and familiar with. We have over forty-one (41) workstations across the island and after I put this report together, we realized they did almost twenty-five thousand (25,000) hours of service, so that is pretty impressive. Thank you for all your support with those programs.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Thank you. Are there any questions on the write-up?

Councilmember Cowden: Nothing other than, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualī‘i.

Councilmember Kualī‘i: It is not necessarily in the write-up, but I know your delivery of services is amazing. I know you have some staff that actually respond to individual *kūpuna* when they are trying to seek assistance, you send them to the right places, and do you then sign them up for a home-delivered meal? You actually go that far or is it more just referring to them elsewhere?

Ms. Ishida: Our information and referral specialists, they are the ones if someone calls and is interested in any of our programs that we have, we send them to their house, and they do an in-home assessment. That is why they have to make certain qualifications, depending on the service that we have, home-delivered meals or our in-home services. At that point, we are also able to talk with them, meet with them, and make other referrals that our agency has that are not necessarily direct services. For example, we have Alzheimer’s, adult day health, and so if they recognize whether any of these programs pertain to them and give them more information.

Councilmember Kualī‘i: I would ask that you consider this suggestion, because we have seen our low-income bus program has grown and like over in the Housing Agency, they are taking advantage of that in addition to all our nonprofits. During your in-home assessments and you are trying to figure out what they need, medical needs, their meal needs, etcetera, if you could see if they could use help with a bus pass also.

Ms. Ishida: Yes, definitely.

Councilmember Kualii: Potentially, you could even play a role in getting them the bus pass because we could give you a budget and you could provide it.

Ms. Ishida: Yes, for sure. That is one of the main parts of the components of their job, is to get that information and make those referrals, for sure.

Councilmember Kualii: Great.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: I will just validate that is happening right now. I was able to sit in one of those home visits with my mother-in-law and I was completely impressed with...they had two (2) of your staff who made that visit. They went through everything. It was incredible the details of which these interviews were given, how these interviews are done. It is strategic, and yet when you are 86 years old, you want to talk story, the staff were so accommodating and loving, I guess, is the word. I am thinking like, "Mom, they probably have another appointment right after yours," and they were like, "No, no, no." It was just a pleasant experience. They coordinate everything, including the bus service that was available, yes, it was awesome.

Ms. Ishida: They are amazing. They are our boots on the ground, the hearts of our agency.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: I think my mom went in the other day asking questions about the bus passes. Where can *kūpuna* go to get lead that maybe are low-income that are struggling with bus passes, are there multiple nonprofits that are helping with that? I think I gave them completely wrong information.

Ms. Ishida: I would have to check with Celia.

Councilmember Holland: Okay.

Ms. Ishida: Our agency is doing assisted transportation and that is through three (3) of our providers, but that is only for medical appointments.

Councilmember Holland: Is that the paratransit bus support?

Ms. Ishida: No. That is only with Kaua'i Bus, but we have something called an assisted transportation. We have a contract with three (3) different providers. They call us and we make that connection and then we hook them up with them. Like I said, it is only to medical doctor appointments for now. Eventually, when we have more money, we can expand that, but right now it is used just for those services.

Councilmember Holland: I would support more funding possibly for helping *kūpuna* get around on those types of things and working between the agencies. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Carvalho: I wanted to talk about the Enhanced Fitness program, and I heard really positive comments about that our *kūpuna*, but did you say you had a Zoom technology option?

Ms. Ishida: Yes.

Councilmember Carvalho: How does that work?

Ms. Ishida: That came out because of COVID-19, I have to check how many we are doing right now, but I know we were trying to transition back to full-time, but everyone got used to the Zoom method. We are trying to have more full-time classes. Is the feedback you hear that they like Zoom?

Councilmember Carvalho: Yes, very, very...no, no, they like the...

Ms. Ishida: The in-person.

Councilmember Carvalho: The in-person one, but if there is another option, but now I understand more about the program. Really good program, I receive good comments for that.

Ms. Ishida: Oh, good. To add to that we are going to expand to line dancing.

Councilmember Carvalho: Oh, okay.

Ms. Ishida: In Anahola.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on the write-up? Okay, we will move into the budget. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Master page 222, the three (3) vacant positions, starting with Position No. 140, Community Service Program Assistant. You were in recruitment, the status says, "Re-recruit, no selection made," so you are back in the first part of recruitment, where are you?

Ms. Ishida: We have interviews set up for next week. Those are the ones who go into the home, and they have direct conversations with the *kūpuna*.

Councilmember Kualii: The next vacant position is a newer vacancy, Position No. 146, Accounting Technician, but you had that on continuous recruitment.

Ms. Ishida: We just made a selection for that.

Councilmember Kualii: Made selection.

Ms. Ishida: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Filled. Excellent. And then the last one is a “return rights” position. How does that work? Do you just fill in with a temporary person?

Ms. Ishida: Right now, we are having one of our staff in the Kapa‘a district temporary assignment (TA) that position.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there further questions on this page? If not, we will move to the next page, page 223. Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: How often do they come with home-delivered meals?

Ms. Ishida: Five (5) days per week.

Councilmember Cowden: Five (5) days per week, so that is a really big gift, and it helps us to know if anyone falls or has a problem...I remember when we discussed this and needing to increase the number. How big is our waitlist now? Do we cover the entire waitlist?

Ms. Ishida: We did, yes.

Councilmember Cowden: We did? Okay, that was my memory. That is a really big accomplishment.

Ms. Ishida: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: I am thrilled to hear that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Just following up on the line item called “Home & Community-Based Services,” and then it breaks it down further as Home-Delivered Meals, In-Home Services; Assisted Transportation, Supportive Services; Transportation, do you have numbers like how they broke down? During budget, I always like to see what makes up one million four hundred thousand dollars (\$1,400,000). How many meals? How often? How much transportation? How does that all break down? You can follow up later. I do not expect you to throw all these numbers out now. Can you provide a breakdown on what type of impact we are making and how many people we are helping? I know recently we were wanting to put more funds in because we wanted to be sure that we were helping people and eliminating the waitlists in the last couple of years.

Ms. Ishida: I can give you a general breakdown right now.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay.

Ms. Ishida: Currently, we have about two hundred ninety (290) consumers that are receiving home-delivered meals and so the majority of that is from our contractor, Mahelona, which that has been receiving very positive feedback. They

use a lot of organic foods, which are very healthy; the consumers are really satisfied with that. I think that has increased when “word” got out and people heard about our agency. We also have a Mom’s Meals program, which sends refrigerated food from the mainland, that gets a 10-day supply. Both providers are very accommodating, especially Mahelona. Mahelona offers low sodium, chopped, diced, puree, diabetic, vegetarian, a variety of meals to accommodate different people’s nutritional needs. The average right now for both programs is about eighteen dollars (\$18) per meal, but the cost is going up to twenty dollars (\$20). The congregate meal program was at ten dollars (\$10) going up to twenty dollars (\$20), so doubling. Congregate meals are important because they support the caregiver who gets people out of their homes, congregating, getting together with the community, keeping them active, which is important as you know. We have our in-home services which range from about forty-two dollars (\$42) to fifty-five dollars (\$55) per service, including personal care, respite, chores, and homemaker and assisted transportation. We have three (3) current providers for them. I can get you a breakdown.

Councilmember Kualī‘i: Perfect. Mostly a lot of them are with providers, so they provide it to you, so you can just pass it on.

Mr. Ishida: Yes.

Councilmember Kualī‘i: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: Do you have a list of houseless *kūpuna*? Do you keep track of how many *kūpuna* come to you that may be unsheltered?

Ms. Ishida: We have a database which we track the number of calls coming in, which I could get you a list of inquiries that we have when people call, but we do not keep track of people that are in houses, just more inquires that come in through our office or on the phone.

Councilmember Holland: If there is any information that comes up on that, yes, please share.

Ms. Ishida: Sure.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualī‘i.

Councilmember Kualī‘i: The Grant In Aid line item of fifty-nine thousand nine hundred dollars (\$59,900), last year sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000), and so one hundred dollars (\$100) more. The text reads, “Elderly Services,” but sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) does not seem like a lot, so I am wondering what does this cover and do you need more money to cover more and help more?

Ms. Ishida: We dedicated those to the two (2) food banks on the island.

Councilmember Kualī‘i: You support the food banks supporting the seniors.

Ms. Ishida: Correct, yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Has that been fine with that level of funding?

Ms. Ishida: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Ms. Ishida: They are very grateful for our contribution.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions for the Agency on Elderly Affairs? If not, we will move on. Thank you, Emily. Next up, we have the Office of the County Auditor.

Councilmember Kualii: Does it have a tab?

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: It is at the very back of Office of the County Clerk.

Councilmember Kualii: But in the binder, it is just the "COUNCIL" tab.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Yes, the last section. Jade, can you give us an overview. There are only two (2) numbers in there.

Office of the County Auditor

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA, County Clerk: Jade Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk. Currently, the County Auditor position is vacant. We have it on recruitment with HR and I believe it will be going on...I need to double check with Codie, but I believe it will be ongoing recruitment until we have a few candidates.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a question.

(Councilmember Bulosan was noted as not present.)

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The Office of the County Auditor handles the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), so we have it budgeted for FY 2027 the total is three hundred fifty-five thousand dollars (\$355,000), which is for the external audit with N&K CPAs, Inc. We also have in Other Services as we see just some extra money in case of change orders that we experienced this last year. That is it.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Thank you. Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Before, we really "put out hard" to find auditors and we got a number of applicants. While we are on continuous recruitment, we just basically have it out there listed and then we see what comes up...the last time I remembered that we hired someone to prospect, that was the difference from the continuous recruitment.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Previously, we did try and HR assisted us. We did have it posted and they tried to recruit, we really were not very successful, so we did hire a firm from O'ahu who provided, for a lack of a better word, headhunting services.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: It was professional services.

Councilmember Cowden: I was just trying to think what the difference is between now and then, and that was my memory, so that is correct.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: If we were coming around the cycle and wanting to do that again, could either pot of money go toward that purpose or is it all spoken for?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes. I would say that it would be safe to maybe identify some funds, because the money in there right now for Consultant Services is specifically for the ACFR.

Councilmember Kualii: Fully for the ACFR. What is the line item named Other Services totaling one hundred eighty thousand dollars (\$180,000) for?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: That would be for potential change orders.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We received a change order this past year for the audit, because of the delays.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes.

(Councilmember Bulosan was noted as present.)

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: And we are still on that route of delays and catchup.

Councilmember Kualii: What do you call it when we...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: The performance audit is in the Council Services budget.

Councilmember Kualii: It is in our Council budget, okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: He answered my question. My memory is we have done at least five (5) performance audits that we have contracted someone to do.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: But it does not come out of this budget.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: It is not within the Auditor's budget; it is within the Council's budget.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: There is no auditor to implement a performance audit budget, if we put money in it, so it is in our county budget. Jade, we have been receiving lots of questions regarding the Auditor. I was here when we went through the entire process of trying to interview, but historically, how much did we spend on the Office of the Auditor when it was fully staffed?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: It was probably a little over one million dollars (\$1,000,000).

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: So, if we are trying to get an auditor in, we would be spending one million dollars (\$1,000,000) just to have a body, an office, etcetera?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes, bodies, staff to support the Auditor, and in addition to that, we also had to rent space.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Do you remember if that Auditor went out for other services to get audits done also?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: I believe so, yes. I think he did maybe two (2) small ones, if I am not mistaken, in-house, and then the rest they contracted out.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Okay. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: To follow up on that, in essence, the performance audits would sort of be the same thing as what the Auditor would go out and do.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: But the Council would be deciding which...because we vote as a group rather than the Auditor deciding or does the Auditor come back to the Council?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: I believe if there was a County Auditor, the Auditor would have, I think they accept some input, if I am not mistaken, from the Council, but ultimately the decision would be with the Auditor him or herself.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: The way it is structured is that the Auditor creates an audit plan and presents it to the Council. They can take the recommendations or requests from the Administration, from the Council, and from the public, but the total discretion of the audits being made rests with that auditor. That is the reason we had difficulty because we were trying to find an auditor that would do audits and not just be a contractor of audits. If we are going to hire someone to be a contractor of audits, then it is a waste of money because the expense that comes along with the Auditor's position and office is tremendous. Committee Chair Kaneshiro, you bring up a good point. When we went through all the interviews of all of these applicants, and I believe there were over one hundred (100) applicants throughout the years, most of them did not even meet the minimum

qualifications. The ones that came in were not at a level that could do audits. They could manage audits, but then you are defeating the purpose of having an Office of the Auditor. I am hoping that one day if anyone out there knows of someone that is competent and qualified in doing government performance audits, have them call us. We definitely want to see that happen, but to hire someone that will only contract audits outside...

Councilmember Kualii: We can do that.

Council Chair Rapozo: ...we can do that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I remember at one point it was a Charter Amendment that added the Office of the Auditor. Do you remember when that happened?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: 2008.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Since that happened, there was an Auditor for a few years, like three (3) years, is that right?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: I am not sure how long...

Councilmember Cowden: It was not a long time.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: It was not a very long time.

Councilmember Cowden: We have all been getting calls about that and throughout the time people say, "We do not have an Auditor because we do not want to be audited," and that has not been accurate. That is what comes to me. You may know this answer, it would take another Charter Amendment to remove that requirement.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Has that been something that has come up to your knowledge?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: No.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: It has been discussed, but I have not seen a proposal that actually was provided to the Charter Review Commission.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: I think that is the problem. When you come up with a Charter Amendment that says, "the County should have an Auditor," everyone is going to vote for that. Whether how functional that position will be or how well it works with the County or what it cost, yes, everyone will vote for that, when we say it is not working, it costs the County a lot of money, we can do internal audits. We should get rid of the Charter language, but I do not think that will ever change. I do not think people will ever vote to get rid of an Auditor from the Charter. That is just my inkling on why no one has ever done it.

You are going to up it out there and people are going to say, “Oh, they do not want accountability,” when the other half is the functionality of actually having it. We have it in the Charter, but even if we have it, it might not even serve the purpose we want. Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: I think the Councils going forward should always be striving to fill that position. I think an independent auditor is a good thing, but to fill it because the Charter said you have to fill it and you fill it with someone that cannot do the job, then you are defeating the purpose, and you are costing the taxpayers money. It is out there for any applicants, but to find someone qualified in government auditing and pay them what we are offering to pay them, it is very difficult. Unless the Salary Commission revisits their pay, go across the country see what these folks are getting paid, and compare it with the market in Hawai‘i, it is not just a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). A CPA is a requirement, but it is not...you need to be familiar and versed in performing these audits, and that is the challenge. I know there is some noise outside that constantly says we are not hiring the Auditor because we do not want to be audited, and that cannot be farther from the truth. That person who is making all the noise wants us to hire an unqualified, incompetent person, yes, we can do that, but then it will cost the County money.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: The County does get an annual financial audit.

Council Chair Rapozo: Correct.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Every year. By an external accounting firm. This internal auditor might be trying to help them or not, but might be doing more performance audits, and at the end of the day, we can talk about it in our budget, if anyone wants to see something audited, we can talk about it, discuss it, and go and try to contract it out, and fund it. Are there any further questions on the Office of the County Auditor? If not, we will move back to the very beginning. We will go to Council Services. Jade, can you provide a briefing on the Council Services Division?

Office of the County Clerk

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: There have been some major operational changes, all of you have seen, we have our Historic County Building elevator which has been down and has been extremely problematic. Accessibility accommodations. Because the elevator is down, we had to make a lot of accommodations, and I really must commend the staff who really stepped up from setting up the iPads to staffing the downstairs meeting site. They really stepped up and we are extremely grateful. We also have facility issues, as you seen—being that this building is the longest continuously operating County building in the State, although we have undergone renovations and various restorations, we have significant problems with drainage. Thanks to the Department of Public Works, as well as some assistance from the Department of Parks & Recreation, they will be taking care of the sewer line in the next few months. That will hopefully really help. There is a large tree with these roots that have been wreaking havoc on our system. As with an old building, we have the glass atrium that has been leaking, and so we have a lot of those types of things. With the actual operations of the office, we have some vacancies, and we are working on reorganization of the staff responsibilities. We have really worked to continue to get whatever you folks need done, whether it is staffing meetings or getting legislation done, drafted, and passed. Everyone has stepped up to assist.

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

Councilmember Cowden: Were we not going to paint the building? Was that not on the CIP Budget last year?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes, for last year. I am not sure where it is in the grand scheme of things, but it has been discussed and hopefully it will happen within this year.

Councilmember Cowden: We had a lot of static around the elections...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: For election questions, let us wait until we get to the Elections Division.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Let us stick to the Council Services Division for now. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: How you talk about the building in your narrative, this building is like everything. It is the face of our County, it is the "gem," if you will. It is the historical gem, and it must be...the renovations are beautiful, but now underneath if we are having serious problems with plumbing and with the lighting atrium, we have to address that and as soon as possible. I know you had it listed as...and the elevator, obviously we have to do it long-term, but I think it needs to be now. Is there an R&M building line here where we need to put significantly more money into or also in the CIP? Is there Administration supporting us in this because it is a big deal?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The Administration has been extremely supportive, and we will be meeting with them to discuss all of these challenges to make sure that whatever needs to be done is addressed, because, really, it is a beautiful building. You hate to see it deteriorate and truly fall apart.

Councilmember Kualii: We cannot let that happen.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Exactly. We will not let that happen. We will provide any numbers that we have.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: It is hard for me to be nice about this because I think for a few years now, I have been talking about this, this is the seat of local government, as you said, and nothing has been done. Every year, we approve hundreds of millions of dollars for projects that the Administration has and we have an audio-visual (AV) system that is breaking once or twice per month. We have painting, which I asked for last budget, and we did not get the building painted. We have a basement that is usable, but not usable because it needs to be repaired. Yes, we have a sewer line issue that needs to be done, but we can do the cosmetic fixes that have no action or no impact on the sewer. My point is, we approve all of the projects that the Administration is proposing every single year and the

little things that we ask for does not get the priority. This is not the Clerk's fault. I understand she is saying they are very supportive. Yes, they are, we have had numerous meetings, sharing and saying what we need here and it just never gets done. I have asked Jade to even consider...the Council Chair is the Chief Procurement Officer for the Council, for the Legislative Branch. We do not have to go through the Administration. Should we take the moneys from the CIP, put it in our office budget, and we go out for procurement, we go out and hire the contractor to do what we need done, because we are not getting respect we deserve. I say this every budget, and every budget it is, "Chair, we are going to get it done." This building should be meticulous outside. We should not have cracks on the sidewalk. This should be the cornerstone of this County and yet we cannot even get it painted. That is a decision I am asking all of you to make before we get to decision-making, because I am more than prepared to move the money from CIP into our budget and let us go do our own. Let us have a self-contained video system in this building, where we do not have to worry about, "Sorry, we have to take a timeout because something is not working," or at least get the building painted. We can do that. I have been so tolerant and patient and as I look through the budget and I see the millions of dollars that we are approving for the Administration's projects, and I am like, "Hey, can we at least get the building painted?" Can we at least get the building painted?

Councilmember Cowden: I thought we agreed on that last year?

Council Chair Rapozo: We did. It is funded, it is budgeted, it just does not get done. That is why I am saying if we handle the procurement, if we do the procurement, we issue the request for proposal (RFP), because we can, we bypass the entire process, I bet we would get things done quicker. Just something to think about as we go through this budget, because there are a lot of items that we have to go through. I cannot wait any longer.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up to that question. Do we have staff to do the RFP?

Council Chair Rapozo: We would work with the Purchasing Division.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Council Chair Rapozo: We would send the specifications (specs) over, it would be directed from us and not the Administration.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Council Chair Rapozo: And we would put out the procurement for the painters; we would put out the procurement for the plumbers...

Councilmember Cowden: Would that be Jade to do it?

Council Chair Rapozo: Well, her and her staff working with the Purchasing Division.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Council Chair Rapozo: We would put out the contract for the AV system in the Council Chambers, because it is not working. Cameras—we should have no blind spots in this entire building. Our staff is vulnerable every day per week, and how long does it take to get cameras that work? Again, it is the frustration and we went through this and I remember saying almost the same thing at the last budget, and yet the building still looks like “crap” outside, and it should not. This should be the best-looking building in the County. I apologize but it had to be said.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions on the budget from the Members? Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Well, it is not necessarily a question, but it is a statement.

Councilmember Kualii: I have a question.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Can you make it into a question?

Councilmember Cowden: On page 14, I have two (2) Constituent Relations Coordinator positions; it has been amazing, it is really wonderful. I have one (1) of those positions open, so is it something we would consider to take...I am not planning to fill the other position for the next five (5) months, so that we would free up that, but seven-month fund it for whomever takes my position, so they would have that possibility. There should be some excess from that, what has not been spent in that position, so what happens with that excess? Can that be applied to anything? Do we get to have our own carry-forward and use it the next year, or does it just go back to the General Fund?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: It will go back to the General Fund. With your two (2) positions, there is a little something...

Councilmember Cowden: We can talk about offline?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: But I definitely want to keep the one (1) position, but I want to handle whatever has not...

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: I am assuming we need to fund the existing positions by the end of the fiscal year or to the end of the term, I guess, for the Councilmembers that are here that will not be here next term. Would you agree with my thinking that we should not leave any money in there. If the new Councilmembers come in and they want staff, then they have to go through the process, because the Cost Control Commission made a very clear finding that we were funding positions that were not being filled and we were basically “banking.” What we told the Administration not to do, we were doing. Fund the positions to accommodate the Councilmembers that are here, those that have

a potential that incumbents that would keep theirs but for the Councilmembers that are leaving, I would suggest that we fund only until the...

Councilmember Kualii: And the logic, too, would be that we do not have numbered seats where someone is literally filling my seat. It is at-large, someone is filling "a" seat on the Council, but it is not necessarily my seat.

Council Chair Rapozo: Correct.

Councilmember Kualii: So, I agree with you.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up on that. I am not saying to not do that, and when I look at the other counties and then how well-staffed they are, it takes a while to build up and grow staff that know how to make a difference, but it really does make quite a bit of difference. I want to, at least, encourage the body to be...at least it made a big difference for me to have the body be willing to consider funding that for whomever is continuing or whoever gets elected.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, and the funding is our decision, not Jade's.

Councilmember Cowden: Well...

Council Chair Rapozo: She has to propose a balanced budget, and this is her budget.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: We can have that discussion in between the Supplemental Budget.

Councilmember Kualii: I have a question on page 15.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: The Performance Audits line item totaling six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000), typically how much can we get at that price? Do they vary and range from what to what?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The performance audit will really vary depending on the scope, so you could have many small ones, or you could have a few larger ones, which takes time and hours.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay. Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: With that, we are really adding the money from this one for the performance audits to the other audit, so it is kind of almost similar to what we paid for the County Auditor, right, but then it does not include the contract cost that we then pay out anyway?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Right, so the six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) for the Performance Audits would just be for a contract to conduct the audits.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Even if we had an Auditor, we will still be paying the...

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Salaries, plus...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: ...three hundred something thousand for the annual audit.

Councilmember Holland: Okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: The line item called "Council Assistance" for three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000), what does that mean?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Council Assistance was the catchall for...if you remember when the mayor provided, I believe it was one million dollars (\$1,000,000)...

Councilmember Cowden: Oh, okay, right. I actually had asked for that and we have not really managed to utilize that.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: For those that did not hire staff...

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, so then this is still allowing room for whoever gets elected next time, this is where they would have room to pick that up.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: And that would be through a money bill.

Councilmember Cowden: A money bill would be made and that assign to them.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The same way it was done prior.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: Right under that line item, there is Council Chambers AV Improvements—is that work all completed?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: That has been a work in progress. We are trying to see, as I am sure all of you have noticed that there are little glitches and there are improvements that need to be made, and so we are hoping that this money, whether it is a standalone system, as Council Chair Rapozo has...

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes. I would feel much better putting that in the CIP and again, this temporary band aid...Councilmember Holland's microphone today is driving everyone nuts in here, and it is not the first time. That microphone has a problem that we cannot fix. Things like that drive me nuts because the last improvement we made was, I believe, four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000), and we cannot fix that. We cannot fix that echo. There is a problem. I would much rather put these funds in a CIP and like I said, go out and let us do a package deal, get a vendor that can come in, and completely fix this once and for all. Tying all the systems together. The echo is not supposed to happen when we spend that kind of money. Maybe it does not bother you when you hear that echo, but it bothers me and that poor lady that is over here has to monitor that. Again, Committee Chair Kaneshiro, I think you said these are things that we will be deciding as we get the Supplemental and during decision-making, but I do not want to keep money in a pocket that we are going to be paying money for these people that...we had this room full of people from O'ahu, I do not know what the bill for them was, they were all here with step ladders, etcetera, and they cannot fix it. Let us find a system, buy it, make it work, and be done with it.

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

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: There is something that I wanted to point out on page 17, Automobiles for eighty-five thousand dollars (\$85,000). That is no longer needed. The vehicle has been received. It was just put in there...we just did not know when it would be coming in, so with the help of the Department of Parks & Recreation, both Preston and Pat really assisted us in getting the vehicle.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: Was your plan then to correct that in the next comeback, so we can use it for something else? Thank you. I was going to ask about that. I was not sure if there was a third vehicle coming or if we were all done.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: I noticed we have that charging station in front, but that was through the Department of Parks & Recreation budget, right, and not in our budget.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: That was not in ours.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further questions for the Council Services Division? If not, we are going to move to the Elections Division. It was really late when I was looking at this and I did not realize that the Elections Division was on the last page. Lyndon, can you give us a brief overview and then we will go into the budget.

LYNDON M. YOSHIOKA, Deputy County Clerk: Good morning, everyone. I am Lyndon Yoshioka. We are entering into an election year, so the budget is a little higher than it typically would be. A lot of it is related to salaries and we anticipate some retirements, so we had to put additional money into the vacation and credit payout. We face constant challenges and we are constantly trying to improve. The primary focus this off year has been

to really tighten up the Mail Voting Section, especially the scanning of return identification envelopes (RIE), which is time-consuming, but a necessary part of the process. Related to that is updating the signature database that is used to compare and validate signatures on envelopes; they go together. I am kind of jumping all over the place, but I thought it was important to bring up. For the Voter Services Section—in the past we have used what this device system called “poll pads” to register people. We have encountered a little bit of an issue with them not being able to do exactly what we wanted the poll pads to do, so we are going to go back to using paper applications like we had done, two (2) to three (3) elections ago. Going back to doing that, it should provide for a uniform process for all voters (inaudible). Like we do here, we have facility issues on that side as well.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes.

Mr. Yoshioka: I think the building was renovated in 2010, but plumbing issues. A lot of the windows are starting to rot, as well as the metal door leading to the basement, so at some point it will need to be replaced. For highlights, we did have staff work really hard to “shore up” the signature database. We spent a lot of time cleaning that up and getting that up to speed in preparation for this election. We did make some good progress with any continuity planning. We got some bodies there to get some of the experience, institutional knowledge that is required for people to take on that role, and I think we did a good job there, so I am comfortable with that. That is all I have.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any questions? Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: The RIE—can the voters accept something that looks totally different or they may not even notice, you are just doing it for your purposes of processing?

Mr. Yoshioka: Are you talking about the envelope processing part?

Councilmember Kualii: You said, “streamline return identification envelope.”

Mr. Yoshioka: In our office process...from the voters' perspective, they will not...we are trying to see whatever we can do to...Election Day for those folks is brutally long, so we are trying to maybe front-load some of the work so that they do not spend that forty-hours plus.

Councilmember Kualii: It is always best to improve the process so that...

Mr. Yoshioka: We are trying.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: I have been noticing over the years that the volunteer rate is going down, considering staff as you mentioned, some changes...

Mr. Yoshioka: Funny you mentioned that because I was speaking to a former temporary (temp) worker who works downstairs in the Voter Server Center ask the person, "Hey, are you coming back?" and they said, "Heck no." It is kind of toxic down there and what was really troubling for this individual was the people who were giving the staff downstairs grief were supposedly friends, so she said, "No, I am not coming back." It is difficult for us because you are talking about a few years of experience that we lose, training-wise, so unfortunate, but...

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: There has been so much, I am just going to use a general word, "Static" from the community around the elections process. Can we help some way by adding a little bit of funding to be able to make sure that we are staffed up enough or whatever is creating the conflict that causes the loss of confidence and then perhaps difficulty towards our people who are doing the job? What can we do to ensure that we do not repeat that?

Mr. Yoshioka: I do not know that throwing money at it will necessarily solve a lot.

Councilmember Cowden: Another body would not help?

Mr. Yoshioka: No. The staff has been working hard even in the off-year to find bodies, so I think we will be okay, but the point I was trying to make is having someone who had worked two (2) or three (3) prior elections helps a lot because they already have that basic experience rather than starting from someone new who does not know anything. Trust me, we have had discussions about this statewide. It would be an effort to try and influence "free will" and I do not know we are ever going to do that.

Councilmember Cowden: Some of these things happen at the State level, it seems like that is where some of the conflict is, but I just want to say chain of custody, that sounds like just a staff, just is counting issue.

Mr. Yoshioka: I have to tell you I hate that term because that is not a term that elections officials use.

Councilmember Cowden: That is that term or that phrase, so it seems like might not be hard to fix or I do not know.

Mr. Yoshioka: Well, I do not think there is an issue with that. That was something that was created on their part.

Councilmember Cowden: Created at the airport?

Mr. Yoshioka: No, they created that issue. It was not, in our view, an issue.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. That was just a simple question, the answer sounds like, "No." I am just saying if there is an identified line item that we could add a little bit of funding to strengthen confidence, I am just very willing to support that. I

do not know the process well enough to tell you what you need to do or what needs to be done, I am just saying I am willing to put a little more money, and I am saying that might not help.

Mr. Yoshioka: If I can think of something, I will definitely let Jade know.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The Council has been extremely helpful and supportive, and we are very grateful for all of that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Council Chair Rapozo.

Council Chair Rapozo: There was talk at the Legislature of increasing the number of voting spots, polling places, I have not followed those bills, but can we expect more places for our voters to vote or is it going to be the same as the last election?

Mr. Yoshioka: It will be just the one (1) site we have down in the basement. I have not checked the status of the bill, but I do not believe it will move forward and I think the deadline has already passed. We do not plan to have more than the one (1) site down in the basement. We did studies in the past, and the numbers that we have are old, but I think we did an estimate a few years ago and again, I am going off memory, but I think we are talking about one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) per site.

Council Chair Rapozo: Just the last couple of elections, the complaints, because we have more people now, the roads are more crowded as opposed to twenty (20) years ago that it is becoming a real difficulty for those people on the other ends of the island. Understanding that they can just mail in their ballot or go to a ballot drop box, but for those who insist on voting in-person, it is deterring some people from coming in because of the traffic.

Mr. Yoshioka: I would like to also note that given the number of voters who would potentially use the in-person site, you know not to always fixate on the cost, but the per-voter cost would be quite high.

Council Chair Rapozo: Was it on Maui that the last voter voted really, really late?

Mr. Yoshioka: Kapolei, I think.

Councilmember Kualii: Kapolei.

Council Chair Rapozo: And the residents had the same complaints because they were so limited to where they can go. I was hoping the State would fix that, but it does not sound like they did.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: They can vote earlier, walk-in voting, if the building is open.

Mr. Yoshioka: Oh, correct. We have walk-in voting at least ten (10) days before the elections, and on Saturdays as well.

Council Chair Rapozo: But again, it is only here. That is the dilemma a lot of people have, they are living in Kekaha and they have to drive all the way to Līhu'e to vote.

Councilmember Kualī'i: To go to Costco.

Mr. Yoshioka: Exactly.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Council Chair Rapozo: Do not shoot the messenger, I am just relaying what the constituents are complaining about.

Councilmember Holland: Are you saying it costs about one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to run one of those polling sites, the day of the Election, right?

Mr. Yoshioka: No, for the duration of the Voter Service Center period, which is at least ten (10) days prior to Election Day.

Councilmember Holland: Because historically we just had Election Day and you only voted on that day. I am wondering what the cost is if we were to add two (2) sites, one (1) to the far north and one (1) to the far west? I am just wondering if you can estimate what that costs will be to add two (2) sites, and then like the staffing needs, etcetera, because I do agree there is some concern about that. I think one of the ways we might be able to do this and I am wondering if you would consider that this year is really advertising that advanced voting opportunity because I think a lot of people might not be clear that you can vote weeks in advance, in-person. I think we can probably do a better job of trying to get that out this year of letting people know about the advance. This is just a suggestion. Can we do anything like that?

Councilmember Kualī'i: Do you mean on the Election Day, two (2) more sites?

Councilmember Holland: Yes.

Councilmember Kualī'i: What do you mean?

Councilmember Holland: Yes, on Election Day two (2) sites just for the one (1) day, because like you said when people go to Costco, they can go and vote, so I think advanced notice is important. I am also wondering how close you are following the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAFE) Act?

Mr. Yoshioka: I have not looked at it.

Councilmember Holland: Okay. In the last two (2) weeks, I dropped off on where the status of that bill is.

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes, so did I.

Councilmember Holland: One of the radical things that we learned at the National Association of Counties (NACo) Conference was that there is no implementation time, so if that federal bill passes, we have to immediately pivot to in-person voting. I know that it was still very active two (2) weeks ago. It is also the one that limits women from being able to vote if they change their name without having all the marriage certificate and documents each time to vote, and so I am just wondering if we are following along with what would be expected if that bill does become law. There were Oregon county members that were at NACo were speaking about how they only do mail voting, they have zero (0) in-person voting and they have been doing that for thirty (30) years. They are panicking trying to figure out how they would even implement an in-person voting program. I think it is smart if we want to think about what exactly those things would change and what that cost would be if that does happen and we do have some crazy pivot where we have to create in-person voting and we do not really know how to do that without our election just falling apart, which a lot of other counties are worried about.

Mr. Yoshioka: I cannot speak for the other counties, but if we were required to do that here, the only thing I can think of off-hand would be...we would not be able to get enough voting equipment, first of all.

Councilmember Kualii: It takes a while to implement.

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes, you do not just go out and get this off the shelf at Costco. The voting system vendor will need to be the one providing us with equipment. They have a lot of contracts nationwide, I mean, we are basically in the same boat.

Councilmember Holland: I think it would be worthwhile following it along because...

Mr. Yoshioka: The part of it, too, is the argument as I understand it as also being made is that states determine time, place, methods, so regardless of whether something is passed at the federal level, there are some debate as to whether or not it needs to be...

Councilmember Holland: Okay, I hope you are following up...

Mr. Yoshioka: Not as much as I should.

Councilmember Holland: I am concerned about if it does need to be implemented, what would that even mean for us and if we could even pivot quickly to meet the need of our voters, to be able to get to the polls.

Mr. Yoshioka: I have some ideas, but I do not think it is appropriate to share them on the record, because those are just my opinions, only.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I saw something about going back to precincts, there was definitely a request. Is that what the bill is, at the State level that did not pass? Is there a chance that we are going back to precincts? The County does not have a choice,

right? We do not get to make a choice whether we are going to do a precinct or not, so if people are frustrated at us for not offering precinct voting...

Councilmember Holland: Do you mean in-person?

Councilmember Cowden: That is in-person.

Councilmember Holland: With every precinct.

Councilmember Cowden: I used to love that. It was really nice. It was a community event, but that has been asked for, I see it again and again, but it is not up to us to determine that, right? The decision is totally up to the state. I wanted to make that clear so that people do not get angry with the Elections Division. It is not their choice to be able to decide whether there is...

Councilmember Holland: I do not want anyone to be angry either, but I think it is our choice.

Councilmember Cowden: Is it our choice that we can do precincts?

Councilmember Holland: The counties control elections.

Councilmember Cowden: We can do precincts?

Mr. Yoshioka: No.

Councilmember Cowden: That is what I was trying to find out.

Mr. Yoshioka: No, because State law divvies responsibilities for elections. We are responsible for voter counts, voter registration, absentee voting process, and the voting service center. The State is responsible for the voting system and the employment, maintenance, and the calculation of voted ballots. It is not really entirely up to us to determine, I mean, we could if there is political will, you folks can fund a few million dollars and we can get our own voting system, but I highly recommend against that.

Councilmember Cowden: I want to say for the record, if there was a precinct, I would probably put in Hanapēpē and Kīlauea, so it is not so far if someone lives in Anahola to drive all the way to Hā'ena. A day to vote...I would not be opposed to that, let me just say that. I do not know what it would cost, obviously, we are not geared up for that, but I would be willing to work with that.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Kualī'i.

Councilmember Kualī'i: In general, the counties serve as a subsidiary of the State. We were created by the State, initially. Especially with something like elections, I am sure we could have funded it, but we would have to do it with the blessing of the State. We would have to work with the State. We could not just go off on our own...

Mr. Yoshioka: No.

Councilmember Kualii: ...and start doing elections...

Mr. Yoshioka: No, I think it would be enabling legislation.

Councilmember Kualii: My question is along the lines of volunteers versus staff, because I think when you give us any type of estimate for what it would take to do something...in the old days, when we had all the precincts, and across the country, not just here in Hawai'i, rely really heavily on volunteers and people were so proud to run a precinct. It was pretty much all volunteers. You only had so much staff to support all these precincts, but it would take a whole lot of volunteers. The way things have changed is not really out there with all of that, correct?

Mr. Yoshioka: That would be my opinion. That story I shared about...

Councilmember Kualii: And so for the estimates that you put together for us, I think you should do it with all paid staff, just because.

Mr. Yoshioka: What do you mean when you say all paid?

Councilmember Kualii: When you said one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) a site, I do not know if that included some volunteers or not.

Mr. Yoshioka: Given that we have staff now, we would have...one of those would be the supervisors, but the rest would be short-term volunteers.

Councilmember Kualii: Part-time hires, right?

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Holland.

Councilmember Holland: I want to be clear on this because it feels like a little confusion on what *kuleana* is what? We can choose to have in-person polling places without the approval of the State, correct?

Mr. Yoshioka: If you are talking about voter service centers?

Councilmember Holland: Yes.

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes.

Councilmember Holland: Because on the day of an election, we could, without getting State approval, have two (2) sites that were in-person for the day.

Mr. Yoshioka: We can do that.

Councilmember Holland: That is what I was interested in.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: We would not call it a polling place, because that gets...

Councilmember Holland: Oh, okay. But we control that decision.

Councilmember Kualii: Like we do this one here.

Councilmember Holland: Right.

Councilmember Kualii: We have one (1) now, you want three (3).

Councilmember Holland: Right. Thank you. I wanted to be clear.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Bulosan.

Councilmember Bulosan: Coming back to the facilities issues, echoing Council Chair Rapozo, is there anything glaring that...considering and weather and this situation...

Mr. Yoshioka: I mentioned about the frames and the doors corroding...I think there are more pressing things that moneys could be spent on, which is why I am not requesting for that to be done now, but it is has to be on our radar. It is going to need to be fixed at some point, maybe next budget.

Councilmember Bulosan: I am asking because I am not sure if these two buildings are connected on some infrastructure, that would make sense if we work on one, we would probably...

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes, the plumbing. There is a line that serves both buildings and they are working on that.

Councilmember Bulosan: Okay.

Mr. Yoshioka: That is the main thing.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you to the Elections staff. Marathon. My memory is the 2024 Election, it was almost two (2) days before the vote was solid, is that right? People were still counting.

Mr. Yoshioka: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: Why did that happen when most of the time that is not the case. I think the Election before was a little longer, but it is usually...you kind of know that night. What changed?

Mr. Yoshioka: Part of it is there appears to have been an organized effort to have people turn in their return identification envelopes on the day. There

is a process that is required to vet it, compare the signature, and then have that open and scanned.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Mr. Yoshioka: When an operation our size gets eight thousand (8,000) to nine thousand (9,000) envelopes in one (1) day, that is huge for us.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you for that clarification. I will just reframe one more time and accept the answers that come, but when I am looking at how we throw money at the problem, we only have a certain amount of equipment, so we cannot hire someone else and make it go through the scanner faster. So, it just has its pipeline.

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: I would say it is an act of social resistance, maybe, that happened. Whatever we can do to figure out a way to help soften that resistance and build trust...I am happy to throw money at it and look at it.

Committee Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further last questions? If not, this is the end of the Budget Reviews. I would like to cancel all the budget call-backs. Does anyone want a call-back? I am not going to chair it, if someone asks for one. I would also like to cancel all of the budget call-backs, which were scheduled on an as-needed basis for April 10, April 13, April 14, April 16, and April 17, 2026. The public hearing for the two (2) Budget Bills and the Real Property Tax Resolution will occur on Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. here at the Historic County Building and in Meeting Room 106.

There being no objections, the Committee adjourned the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Departmental Budget Reviews at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Darrellyne M. Caldeira
Council Services Assistant II



Stephanie Funtanilla
Council Services Assistant I

APPROVED at the Committee Meeting held on May 27, 2026:



ARRYL KANESHIRO

Chair, Finance & Economic Development Committee