

PUBLIC HEARING

MAY 25, 2022

A public hearing of the Council of the County of Kaua'i was called to order by Arryl Kaneshiro, Chair, Committee of the Whole, on Wednesday, May 25, 2022, at 8:31 a.m., at the Council Chambers, 4396 Rice Street, Suite 201, Historic County Building, Līhu'e, and the presence of the following was noted:

Honorable Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Honorable Mason K. Chock
Honorable Felicia Cowden
Honorable Luke A. Evslin (*via remote technology*)
Honorable KipuKai Kualii
Honorable Arryl Kaneshiro

Excused: Honorable Bill DeCosta

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

“C 2022-101 – Communication (05/05/2022) from the Mayor, submitting his Supplemental Budget Communication for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 and Proposed Amendments to the Budget Bills, pursuant to Section 19.02A of the Kaua'i County Charter,”

which was ordered to print by the Council of the County of Kaua'i on May 13, 2022, and published in The Garden Island newspaper on May 15, 2022.

SCOTT K. SATO, Deputy County Clerk: We received no written testimony, we have no one on Zoom, and we have one (1) registered speaker, Lonnie Sykos.

LONNIE SYKOS: I would like to thank the Council for the hard work that you put into the budget this year, and every year. It is a daunting task handling the operations and finances of this County. The same commendation to the Administration, including all the different parties involved in this. This is a massive undertaking every year. We thank you. However, the first axiom of politics is whoever controls the process, controls the outcome. It does not matter what the stated outcome is supposed to be or would like to be, if the parties involved in controlling the process want to have a different outcome. What I am up here today for myself and for the public to ask is, what are the policy objectives that are being fulfilled by all these different line items in the budget? For disclosure, I do not own a transient vacation rental (TVR) and my personal employment for the last forty-seven (47) years has been in or was based in Hawai'i. As an example of what I am asking, we recently saw an attempt to raise taxes on TVRs. From my perspective, that is utter hypocrisy. The attempt was to deal with some of the symptoms of the policy of the County not trying to understand what caused the problem to occur, why

the problem continues to occur, and thus, provides the opportunity to figure out how to change policy, so that the actual outcomes do occur. In regards to housing, which we have listened to the conversation about funding, the County did not require employee housing to be built for the thirty (30) years that the tourism industry developed. As a result today, we are one of the few places in the world that is a resort destination, that did not build housing for the labor population, as well as, the whole point of being a destination is to increase property values and sell real estate. Thus, that population will grow as well.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: That is your first three (3) minutes. Is there anyone else in the audience wishing to testify? Seeing none, you have your final three (3) minutes, Lonnie.

Mr. Sykos: Thank you. Knowing that the population would grow, in hindsight, was a policy decision, whether it was actually made or whether it occurred solely through the lack of making decisions about anything. However it occurred in hindsight, the decision was, no employee housing was built. Today, we are faced with the dilemma of a significant portion of our labor population not earning enough money to rent in our economy. Therefore they are forced off the island. What is the solution to that? The solution to that is both the Mayor and the Council creating policy. To the public, I am kind of a “wonk” so I know the answer to the questions I am about to ask. Basically, what is the financial policy in general for the County Council for the County? Who would answer that question? I would expect the Chair of the Finance & Economic Development Committee, but the rules of this County Council are, only the Council Chair is allowed to talk about policy. I believe that is correct. The other members are not allowed to broach the subject without the permission of the Chair. For the public, we can look in hindsight and see what policy was, by what occurred. What we have no idea about is what the policy is today. Policy is a word that comes out of the dictionary of politics. There are three (3) types: regulatory, restrictive, and facilitating. Good policy has seven (7) characteristics, and on and on. If you do not know all of this, take a Political Science 101 class. What the public does not know is what the policy is for any issue. Whether it is housing, the on-going expenses of human resources abuses of our employees, whether it is the transportation costs, et cetera, what is the factual mission of the bus based on its scheduling, homeless, economic development, et cetera? We have no policies, thus, we have no idea how to measure the value of our tax money when it is spent. Council Chair, policy, please. Thank you very much.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: Okay, thank you very much. This is a public hearing so there are no questions.

Councilmember Cowden: No clarifying questions?

Council Chair Kaneshiro: Yes, not in a public hearing, right? Okay, you can ask a clarifying question.

Councilmember Cowden: I am trying to understand what you are saying. Are you saying that we do not have a collaborative approach between the

Mayor and the Council? We have the General Plan Update, visioning statements, et cetera.

Mr. Sykos: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: You are saying we do not have a collaborative approach where the policy is developed? I am just trying to understand what you are saying.

Mr. Sykos: Policy gives you the overriding guidance for, say, housing. Policy would be, we will put some percentage of money from somewhere, somehow. Then, policy is like your bureaucrats versus your technocrats. The policy then gets turned into whether it is ordinances or a change in how business occurs.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, thank you.

Council Chair Kaneshiro: Are there any further clarifying questions from the Members? If not, is there anyone else in the audience wishing to testify? Seeing none, this public hearing is now adjourned.

There being no further testimony on this matter, the public hearing adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



SCOTT K. SATO
Deputy County Clerk

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