

Great Committee

From: Nohe M. Uu-Hodgins
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2023 9:41 AM
To: Great Committee
Subject: FW: Subject: Urgent Request for Investigation and Action Regarding Recent Tragic Events in Lahaina
Attachments: County Council Testimony_followup.pdf

Importance: High

From: samandias.skd@gmail.com <samandias.skd@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2023 1:22 AM
To: Nohe M. Uu-Hodgins <Nohe.Uu-Hodgins@mauicounty.us>
Cc: Tamara A. Paltin <Tamara.Paltin@mauicounty.us>
Subject: RE: Subject: Urgent Request for Investigation and Action Regarding Recent Tragic Events in Lahaina
Importance: High

You don't often get email from samandias.skd@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Aloha Chair Nohe,

I could not sleep so I came back to my computer to write this letter to you. I hope you see the value. Pls. accept my follow-up letter. Mahalo Nui Loa! Saman

Sep 27, 2023

County Council Government Relations, Ethics, and Transparency Committee
Chair - Nohelani U'u-Hodgins
Vice-Chair - Tamara Paltin

Subject: Further Discussion on West Maui Greenway as an Emergency Evacuation Route

Dear Committee Chair Nohelani U'u-Hodgins and Committee Vice-Chair Tamara Paltin,

I wanted to follow up on our recent discussions and concerns related to the [West Maui Greenway \(WMG\) project](#). After our previous communication, I found it challenging to put these thoughts aside, and I feel compelled to share further insights regarding the WMG's potential significance as an emergency evacuation route and its connection to our schools.

During the recent committee meeting, several parents expressed concerns about evacuation plans, particularly for our children in the event of an emergency. I believe that it is of paramount importance to explore how we can integrate our schools with the West Maui Greenway project. While discussions have taken place in the past, these vital connections do not seem to be part of the current master plan.

To illustrate this point, I have already outlined one potential route from Lahainaluna to WMG. This represents just one of many possibilities that could enhance safety for our students and residents alike. Please see Civil Beat article how our people used the cane haul rd. to flee from the fire. [[Harrowing Eyewitness Accounts Cast Doubt On Official Lahaina Fire Narrative - Honolulu Civil Beat](#)]

Moreover, we have a unique opportunity to engage with landowners to secure the necessary right-of-way for these connections. This is a moment for us to seize this opportunity, led by individuals who are genuinely passionate about the project rather than those who may seek to delay progress.

The master plan for the WMG project has been completed, and it is my belief that we should now shift our focus toward implementation. However, I have been informed that the county and the Maui Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) have engaged another consulting firm to conduct further studies and offer recommendations for the project. This approach raises questions about the expediency of the process.

Upon reflection, it becomes apparent that the West Maui Greenway should be given priority as an emergency evacuation route and as a means of connecting our schools to the WMG. This is a project that merits the attention and coordination of the MPO.

At present, I am uncertain about the MPO's primary projects or areas of focus, aside from updates and compliance-related activities. However, the MPO has stated that it is not responsible for project implementation. Given the limitations we face in terms of resources, it is time for us to embrace innovation and creativity. I firmly believe that by partnering with the Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT), state DOT, and federal agencies, we can pave the way for WMG implementation. Funding should not be an obstacle, and I also advocate for the inclusion of nonprofit agencies in the process. These organizations possess the knowledge, passion, and commitment necessary to make this project a reality.

I have identified several agencies and individuals who are eager to contribute their expertise and resources to the WMG project:

- 1. National Park Service (NPS):** NPS has a history of supporting WMG through grants and pro bono assistance. Meredith Speicher at NPS is a key contact who has been instrumental in the project's advancement.
Meredith Speicher National Park Service, Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
808-594-9113
Meredith_Speicher@nps.gov
- 2. Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT):**
Robin K Shishido, Deputy Director of HDOT, can be a valuable partner in coordinating efforts related to WMG.
Robin K Shishido Deputy Director HDOT Hawaii Dept of Transportation
808.587.2156
robin.k.shishido@hawaii.gov
- 3. Hawai'i State Energy Office:** Kiana Otsuka, the Vehicle Miles Traveled and Active Transportation Specialist at the Hawaii State Energy Office, can provide expertise in sustainable transportation solutions.
Kiana Otsuka Vehicle Miles Traveled and Active Transportation Specialist Hawai'i State Energy Office
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
(808) 587-3807
Kiana.KT.Otsuka@Hawaii.gov
- 4. Jess Thompson**
Program Manager: Safe, Accessible, and Inclusive Mobility (SAIM)
Hawai'i Public Health Institute
808-498-1196
jessicathompson@hiphi.org

I am deeply passionate about the potential of the West Maui Greenway to enhance our community's safety, connectivity, and resilience. This is an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss, and I believe that with the right leadership, collaboration, and commitment, we can make substantial progress.

I kindly request that the County Council Government Relations, Ethics, and Transparency Committee consider the importance of prioritizing the WMG as an emergency evacuation route and connecting our schools to this vital infrastructure. This project should be assigned the highest priority by the MPO, and we should explore innovative

avenues for implementation, including partnerships with state and federal agencies and engagement with nonprofit organizations.

I want to express my gratitude for your attention to this matter and for your dedication to the well-being of our community. I remain available to provide further information, support, or assistance as needed.



Saman Dias
Chair Maui Bicycling League
808-209-2542
maui@hbl.org
www.mauibike.org

From: Nohe M. Uu-Hodgins Nohe.Uu-Hodgins@mauicounty.us
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2023 9:19 PM
To: samandias.skd@gmail.com
Cc: Great Committee Great.Committee@mauicounty.us; Tamara A. Paltin Tamara.Paltin@mauicounty.us
Subject: RE: Subject: Urgent Request for Investigation and Action Regarding Recent Tragic Events in Lahaina

Aloha Saman,

Mahalo for your testimony. I have cc'd the GREAT Committee staff.

Nohe

From: samandias.skd@gmail.com <samandias.skd@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2023 8:52 PM
To: Nohe M. Uu-Hodgins <Nohe.Uu-Hodgins@mauicounty.us>; Tamara A. Paltin <Tamara.Paltin@mauicounty.us>
Subject: Subject: Urgent Request for Investigation and Action Regarding Recent Tragic Events in Lahaina

Date: Sep 27, 2023

County Council Government Relations, Ethics, and Transparency Committee

Committee Chair - Nohelani U'u-Hodgins

Committee Vice-Chair - Tamara Paltin

Subject: Urgent Request for Investigation and Action Regarding Recent Tragic Events in Lahaina

Dear Members of the County Council Government Relations, Ethics, and Transparency Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my deep concern and distress over the recent events that have unfolded in Lahaina, particularly the tragic loss of over 100 lives and the displacement of over 7,000 individuals due to a

devastating incident. These events have had a profound impact on our community, and we must take immediate steps to ensure that such a catastrophe never occurs again.

The Maui Fire Prevention Bureau plays a critical role in safeguarding our community from fire hazards and promoting public safety. Their core responsibilities include:

1. **Education:** The Fire Prevention Bureau is responsible for developing and implementing programs that increase public awareness of fire safety. This encompasses educating the community about fire risks and preventive measures.
2. **Enforcement:** Code enforcement is a vital function of the bureau, focusing on the enforcement of fire codes and regulations. This includes inspections, investigation of complaints, and ensuring compliance with fire safety standards.
3. **Prevention:** Fire prevention is at the heart of the bureau's mission. They are tasked with abating fire and life-safety hazards before they can cause injury and property damage.

In May 2022, I initiated correspondence with the Fire Prevention Bureau regarding my concerns about fire prevention and safety in our community. I outlined the need for proactive measures, such as press releases and public service announcements, to engage the community in fire prevention efforts. I did so under the assumption that these requests aligned with the bureau's core responsibilities.

However, despite my efforts to bring attention to potential hazards and the importance of prevention, I received responses that indicated a lack of resources and insufficient action. These emails serve as evidence of my attempts to address the issue and the responses received from the Fire Prevention Bureau.

The tragic events that have befallen our community in Lahaina are a stark reminder of the consequences of inaction and inadequate allocation of resources when it comes to fire prevention and safety. The loss of over 100 lives and the displacement of thousands underscore the urgency of ensuring that the bureau fulfills its basic responsibilities.

I kindly request that your committee:

1. Initiate a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding these events, with a specific focus on the actions (or lack thereof) taken by the Maui Fire Prevention Bureau in response to concerns raised by community members.
2. Evaluate the adequacy of resources allocated to the Fire Prevention Bureau and other relevant agencies responsible for ensuring public safety and fire prevention on Maui.
3. Recommend necessary policy changes, resource allocations, or personnel adjustments to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.
4. Ensure transparency throughout the investigative process and actively engage with affected community members to provide updates and gather additional information.

In addition to my correspondence with the Fire Prevention Bureau, I also escalated my concerns to various offices within the county government, including the Office of Climate Change, Resiliency, and Sustainability, the Mayor's office, and the Mayor's PR communication department. I requested a public announcement to educate the Maui community about fire prevention. Unfortunately, no action was taken in response to these requests.

The loss of over 100 lives and the displacement of thousands in our community are tragedies that should never have happened. We owe it to the victims and their families to thoroughly investigate the circumstances surrounding these events and take swift and effective action to prevent such disasters in the future.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and your commitment to the safety and well-being of our community. I am ready and willing to provide any further information or assistance that may aid in your investigation.

Thank you for your prompt and earnest consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,

West Maui Community leader

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Saman Dias". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Saman" being more prominent and the last name "Dias" following in a similar style.

Saman Dias

Sep 27, 2023

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808.587.2156
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Kiana Otsuka Vehicle Miles Traveled and Active Transportation Specialist Hawai'i State Energy Office Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
(808) 587-3807
Kiana.KT.Otsuka@Hawaii.gov
- 4. Jess Thompson**
Program Manager: Safe, Accessible, and Inclusive Mobility (SAIM)
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