

Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2023-2025) on 2024-12-17 9:00 AM

Meeting Time: 12-17-24 09:00

eComments Report

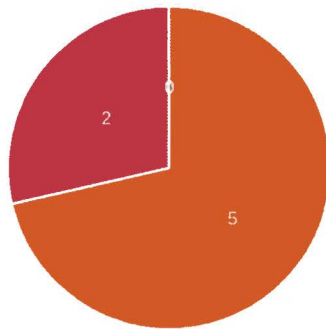
Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2023-2025) on 2024-12-17 9:00 AM	12-17-24 09:00	5	7	0	5	2

Sentiments for All Meetings

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment

Support (0%) Oppose (71%) Neutral (28%)
No Response (0%)



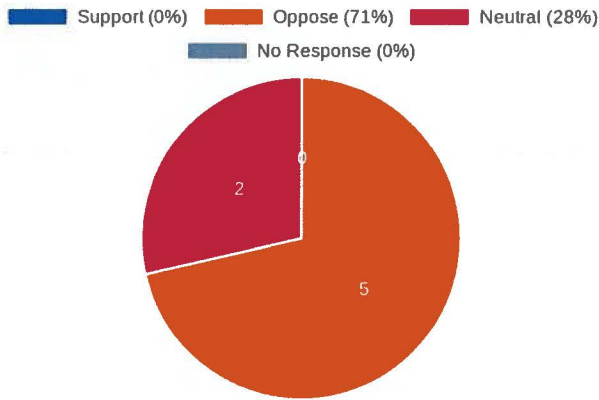
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2023-2025) on 2024-12-17 9:00 AM
12-17-24 09:00

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
A G E N D A	1	0	1	0
BFED-21(33) WILDFIRE RECOVERY GRANTS & REIMBURSEMENTS (BFED-21(33))	2	0	2	0
BFED-21(34) EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT CONTRACT (BFED-21(34))	4	0	2	2

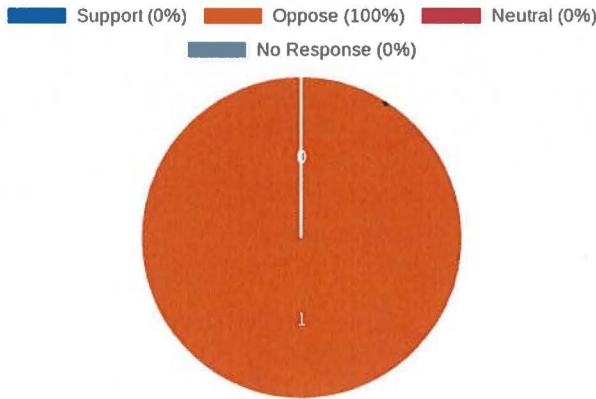
Sentiments for All Agenda Items

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



Overall Sentiment



Edward Codelia

Location:

Submitted At: 1:00pm 12-15-24

Regarding: Proposed Bill Amending the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget for the County of Maui, Appendix A, Part II, Homeowner Programs Revolving Fund, 'Ohana Assistance Program

Date: December 15, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed amendment to the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. While the goal of assisting homeowners through the 'Ohana Assistance Program is commendable, this proposal highlights recurring issues of mismanagement and lack of oversight within both the Department of Housing and this Council. These ongoing failures continue to undermine public trust and jeopardize the effectiveness of programs meant to support the residents of Maui.

The decision to encumber funds for the 'Ohana Assistance Program via a contract rather than a grant is not a minor oversight. It is a fundamental error that demonstrates the Department of Housing's inability to anticipate and resolve legal or procedural issues before they impact the community. The funds, originally intended to provide direct assistance, were mishandled and ultimately restricted to administrative costs for Lokahi Pacific. This error delayed the delivery of aid to families in need, causing unnecessary financial strain on already vulnerable households. It also reflects poorly on the County's ability to manage taxpayer dollars responsibly. This Council, as the body responsible for oversight and budget approval, must also be held accountable.

Budgetary decisions in recent years have demonstrated a pattern of reactive rather than proactive governance, where mistakes are addressed after the fact without implementing meaningful safeguards to prevent them in the future. The continued approval of vague or incomplete proposals, such as this amendment, signals an ongoing lack of diligence. This amendment seeks to re-encumber funds without addressing the systemic issues that caused the initial failure, perpetuating a cycle of mismanagement and eroding public confidence.

Transparency and accountability remain glaring deficiencies in this process. There has been no detailed explanation of how the re-encumbered funds will be allocated, particularly how much will go toward administrative costs versus direct assistance. The public deserves clarity on how their money is being spent. Furthermore, there has been no indication that the Department of Housing or this Council has implemented measures to ensure similar mistakes are not repeated in future fiscal years. The absence of clear safeguards leaves room for continued inefficiencies and, potentially, misuse of funds.

This situation reflects broader issues in how Maui County handles its budgetary responsibilities. Time and again, funds are allocated or reallocated with little oversight or accountability, and public dollars are squandered while residents bear the consequences. These repeated failures, whether through negligence or lack of competence, ultimately harm the community by delaying services, increasing costs, and fueling public skepticism.

To restore trust and improve accountability, I urge the Council to require greater transparency and stricter oversight measures for the Department of Housing. A detailed, public report on the allocation of the \$2,718,266, including a precise breakdown of administrative versus program costs, is essential. An independent audit of contracts and grants managed by the department should also be conducted to assess compliance and identify systemic issues. Furthermore, the Council must commit to improved scrutiny of budget proposals, ensuring that similar missteps are caught and addressed before funds are allocated.

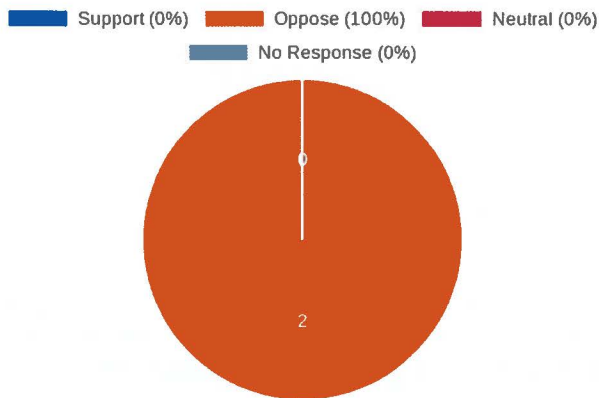
The 'Ohana Assistance Program was created to help homeowners, but the mismanagement of its funding has delayed assistance and left residents waiting for relief. This is unacceptable, and it is the responsibility of both the Department of Housing and this Council to address the failures that brought us here. Only by implementing concrete measures to improve oversight and transparency can Maui County fulfill its obligations to its residents and ensure taxpayer dollars are used effectively.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Edward Codelia

Agenda Item: eComments for BFED-21(33) WILDFIRE RECOVERY GRANTS & REIMBURSEMENTS (BFED-21(33))

Overall Sentiment



Edward Codelia

Location:

Submitted At: 10:25am 12-16-24

Testimony Opposing the Amendment and Contract with Tetra Tech

December 16, 2024

My name is Edward Codelia, and I am submitting this testimony today to express my strong opposition to the proposed amendment and allocation of funds for a contract with Tetra Tech to provide emergency management consulting services. While I fully support the County's efforts to enhance emergency preparedness and

resilience, I must urge caution regarding the selection of Tetra Tech for this critical role.

Concerns Regarding Tetra Tech's Qualifications and Credibility

Tetra Tech's documented history of legal and ethical violations raises serious concerns about its reliability as a contractor for Maui County. Notably, the company has been involved in multiple high-profile controversies, including:

1. Falsification of Environmental Cleanup Data:

o Tetra Tech faced lawsuits and federal investigations for falsifying soil and air quality tests during its cleanup of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in California. This misconduct endangered public health and resulted in a \$7.5 million settlement in 2021.

2. Whistleblower Allegations:

o Employees alleged that Tetra Tech ordered staff to manipulate data to pass regulatory standards. These accusations led to further scrutiny and eroded public confidence in the company's integrity.

3. Federal Investigations and Lawsuits:

o In other cases, the company was accused of mismanagement and fraud in its contracts, including underperformance and failure to deliver promised outcomes.

Given these precedents, awarding a contract to Tetra Tech poses significant reputational and financial risks to Maui County.

Inadequate Alignment with Maui's Needs

The scope of Tetra Tech's proposed services is overly generic and lacks a clear demonstration of how it will address Maui's unique challenges. Maui's isolation, wildfire risks, and vulnerabilities to hurricanes and flooding require a contractor with a proven track record of success in addressing similar conditions. Tetra Tech's proposal heavily relies on workshops, virtual meetings, and basic documentation reviews, which do not reflect the urgency and complexity of Maui's recovery and preparedness needs.

Moreover, the \$141,434.31 allocated for these services appears excessive given the deliverables, which include standard training materials, reviews of existing County documents, and facilitation of brief workshops. The County's limited resources would be better spent on actionable, community-driven solutions, such as wildfire mitigation measures or localized training for emergency responders.

Legal and Ethical Accountability of the County

By proceeding with this contract, the County risks being complicit in awarding public funds to a company with a questionable ethical history. This could result in legal challenges or public backlash, further eroding trust in County governance. Additionally, the lack of a transparent bidding process undermines confidence in the fairness and equity of this decision.

Recommendations

To ensure the integrity of Maui's emergency preparedness efforts, I recommend the following:

1. **Reject the Current Proposal:** The Council should deny the amendment and reallocate funds to alternative projects or contractors with stronger credentials and an unblemished record of performance.
2. **Conduct a Transparent Procurement Process:** Future contracts should be subject to a robust competitive bidding process to ensure that Maui County partners with contractors who demonstrate ethical practices and proven results.
3. **Engage Local Expertise:** Maui and Hawaii have many capable organizations and experts who understand the island's specific needs. These resources should be prioritized to ensure community-based solutions.

Conclusion

The decisions made today will have far-reaching consequences for Maui's safety, trust in governance, and financial stewardship. I implore the Council to act in the best interest of our community by rejecting this contract and holding Tetra Tech accountable to a higher standard of scrutiny. Maui deserves partners who prioritize transparency, integrity, and meaningful results.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward Codelia

Edward Codelia

Location:

Submitted At: 10:25am 12-16-24

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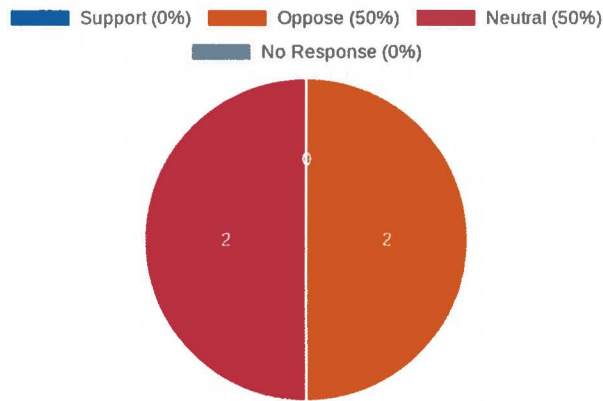
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Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward Codelia

Overall Sentiment



Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 2:33pm 12-17-24

It sounds like the county's money would be better spent hiring a staffing or recruitment agency who understands how to fit candidates looking for jobs with vacant roles matching their skills. I would propose you use the money for this marketing contract for a company that specializes in RECRUITMENT instead of marketing. People know the County has a lot of vacant positions - the problem is not the marketing. Based on hearing the presentation, it sounds like this marketing agency is not good at the matchmaking necessary to fill these roles with qualified people efficiently. If you have people applying for multiple roles but just not the right role, that is what staffing agencies and recruiters excel at.

We have a number of locally owned staffing agencies - Altres, ProService, Employer's Options... that would be better suited to solve this recruitment problem than a marketing company that has failed to move the needle.

As a side note, I don't think \$38k salary is competitive. That amounts to around \$18/hour which is not a living wage on Maui. No amount of marketing is going to fix that low wage - that is probably why retention is bad.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 2:00pm 12-17-24

I don't think the county can throw money at the recruitment problem to this marketing company and expect new results. People need flexibility and higher pay rates in order to afford living here. The policies need to be flexible to allow parents to work schedules that match their children's school schedules or work-from-home policies. Wages above \$25/hour with flexible schedules, generous paid leave, and/or hybrid/work from home policies would probably result in an overwhelming number of applicants. I've been part of hiring teams that advertise those 2 things and they are overwhelmed with applicants.

The more steps that people have to take to apply, the lower the applicant numbers will fall. Requiring people to take unnecessary tests for entry-level positions are adding to the problem. If there are urgent positions needing to

be filled - hold a hiring fair and be ready to interview that day and hire if the applicants are qualified. If the problem is this serious you need to act with urgency, not contract a marketing company to tell us what we already know.

Desilee Santiago

Location:

Submitted At: 10:30am 12-17-24

I'm not confident that this company, BrandCrafters LLC, would be able to assess and determine what is lacking in our current County workforce. If they can research, and look within DPS (Department of Personnel Services), to see what can be changed and updated, then maybe there's a real chance for fundamental change within the hiring process for all State & County positions. I'm not privy to what the laws or requirements are that DPS needs to follow, however, whatever the policies are, they take an exorbitant amount of time to process submitted applications. Many people do not meet the minimum requirements for entry level clerical positions, which is part of the problem. Mostly all clerical and/or entry level positions are trainable positions. There is no job that someone who is qualified for, they can show up on day 1 and know what to do. They still need to be trained and learn the process of that specific position. Successful recruitment will need to start at the submittal process, and letting the departments determine if someone is qualified or trainable for their positions. The staff at DPS are not the ones doing the actual job or know what is needed for those positions. But the departments that are wanting and needing the staff, they are the ones who would know what is needed.

I have personally waited 2-3 months before hearing if my application was received and if I qualified for a position. 10 out of 13 applications, I got an email that stated, "lacks minimum requirements". You can submit for an administrative review, but the back and forth through email with DPS is exhausting to say the least.

Retention is a little different. People leave managers or supervisors, not necessarily the position. There is lack in trained supervisors, and the office culture has been rough. My last position in the County entailed 3 employees leaving the department, primarily because of the supervisor. They had numerous concerns and complaints to their Admin, that was left unanswered, and no actions were taken to remedy the situation. So instead of filing a complaint with the union, they decided to leave and find a job elsewhere. Some stayed within the County and others went to work at private companies.

Another issue with retention is the lack of pay for employees. The cost of housing and goods/services have gone up exponentially. The workforce is struggling to survive, but the pay stays the same. I'm not sure if the unions need to be involved, but it seems like it's been stagnant for a long time. Then, it's a double whammy when current County employees who apply for various positions with higher pay, get blocked by DPS and have to wait a long time for any correspondence. It's extremely discouraging to deal with when you're already stressed at a job that is understaffed, and you're overworked and underpaid.

I hope that if this company gets awarded monies for this contract, from our taxpayers, that they will be able to assist in fixing a lot of these issues.

Mahalo.

Edward Codelia

Location:

Submitted At: 1:16pm 12-15-24

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT CONTRACT

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed budget allocation for the employee retention and recruitment services contract awarded to BrandCrafters LLC. After carefully reviewing the contract and evaluating the company's publicly available information, I must express my strong opposition to this allocation. It is evident that the selected contractor lacks the necessary qualifications and experience for the scope of work required, which raises significant concerns about the effective use of taxpayer dollars and the County's ability to address its pressing workforce challenges.

BrandCrafters LLC, based on its online presence and portfolio, does not appear to have demonstrated experience in employee retention or recruitment services. This type of work demands specialized expertise in human resources, workforce development, and employee engagement strategies. Such tasks go beyond general branding and marketing, which seem to be the company's primary area of focus. Without evidence of prior success in similar projects, it is difficult to justify entrusting them with this critical responsibility.

The scope of work outlined in this contract involves complex tasks such as talent sourcing, compensation analysis, and developing strategies to improve employee satisfaction and retention. These are specialized

functions that require a proven track record in human resources or related fields. Assigning this work to a contractor without relevant credentials risks ineffective outcomes, wasted resources, and delays in addressing the County's ongoing workforce issues.

Furthermore, this allocation raises concerns about the misuse of public funds. Awarding a contract of this magnitude to a company without the necessary qualifications undermines the integrity of the procurement process and diminishes public trust. Residents and employees of Maui deserve to know how and why BrandCrafters LLC was selected for a contract they appear ill-equipped to fulfill. Transparency is essential in ensuring that public funds are spent responsibly, particularly on initiatives as critical as employee retention and recruitment.

The County is facing urgent workforce challenges, including high turnover, low morale, and recruitment difficulties. Allocating resources to an unqualified contractor jeopardizes the County's ability to address these issues effectively. A misstep in this area could exacerbate existing problems and erode confidence in the County's commitment to solving them. It is vital to redirect this funding to a provider with a verifiable track record and the expertise to deliver meaningful results.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully urge the Council to reevaluate the selection of BrandCrafters LLC for this contract. I recommend suspending or reallocating these funds to secure a qualified provider with experience in employee retention and recruitment. Additionally, I encourage the Council to ensure greater transparency in the procurement process by disclosing the selection criteria and decision-making rationale.

Employee retention and recruitment are essential to the County's operational success and the well-being of its workforce. It is imperative that budget allocations in this area reflect a commitment to hiring contractors with the necessary expertise to address these critical needs effectively. Mahalo for considering my testimony. I am available to answer any questions or provide further insights.

Respectfully,

Edward Codelia