

COUNCIL OF THE COUNTY OF MAUI

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, ETHICS, AND TRANSPARENCY COMMITTEE

February 28, 2024

**Committee
Report No. _____**

Honorable Chair and Members
of the County Council
County of Maui
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii

Chair and Members:

Your Government Relations, Ethics, and Transparency Committee, having met on January 23, 2024, and February 6, 2024, makes reference to Resolution 24-10, entitled “APPROVING THE APPOINTMENT OF KATE BLYSTONE AS THE PLANNING DIRECTOR.”

Resolution 24-10’s purpose is to approve the appointment of Kate Blystone as Planning Director, in accordance with Sections 6-2.5 and 8-8.2 of the Revised Charter of the County of Maui (1983), as amended (“Charter”).

Your Committee notes that Charter Section 8-8.2 provides that the Planning Director be appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the Council. In addition, Charter Section 6-2.5 provides that the Council confirm or deny the confirmation within 60 days after receiving notice of the appointment by the Mayor, or the appointment will be deemed confirmed. Accordingly, the deadline for the Council to confirm or deny the appointment of Ms. Blystone as Planning Director is March 5, 2024.

By correspondence dated January 5, 2024, the Mayor transmitted a resume for the appointee. By correspondence dated January 18, 2024, the Mayor transmitted the County of Maui job description for the Planning Director.

Your Committee notes that Section 2.14.070, Maui County Code, lists minimum qualifications for the position, including five years of experience in the field of planning, at least three of which must have been in an administrative capacity, either in public service or private business, or both, and three years of managerial and budgetary experience.

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Your Committee received comments from the Mayor, Managing Director, and Ms. Blystone regarding the appointment before interviewing Ms. Blystone.

The Mayor said Ms. Blystone is a person who makes the right decisions for the right reasons and added that he is impressed by her courage to take on the position of Planning Director.

The Managing Director said he appreciates Ms. Blystone's enthusiasm, energy, and optimistic, "can-do" attitude.

He added that Ms. Blystone's support for the Department's staff, both professionally and personally, was one of the key factors to choosing her for this role. The Managing Director said he believes this quality will help to strengthen the Department and retain and recruit employees.

According to her resume, Ms. Blystone has more than 20 years of experience as a land use planner and community engagement specialist in the public, private, nonprofit, and education sectors of the planning profession in Hawai'i and the Pacific Northwest. She obtained a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Eastern Washington University in 2012. She was also a Lecturer on Urban Planning at Western Washington University in 2013 and 2016.

Ms. Blystone said she is humbled and honored to be considered for the position. She said she was validated to take on this role after receiving positive feedback from mentors and community members.

Ms. Blystone acknowledged the difficult challenges the County is facing. She said her planner skills and her determination to approach this position with humility, patience, compassion, and persistence make her the right person for the job.

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When asked about collaborating with the Council on large projects like improving the permitting process and the recovery and rebuilding of Lahaina, Ms. Blystone reiterated the importance of reliable communication between the executive and legislative branches of governments, including County departments.

Ms. Blystone said she has never managed a budget at the County level before, but noted her budgetary experience while a Project Manager at Bowers + Kubota Consulting and as a Program Officer at the Hawai'i Community Foundation House Maui Initiative.

Your Committee expressed concern with Ms. Blystone not having an American Institute of Certified Planners Certification even though the certification is not a requirement for the position.

Your Committee thanked Ms. Blystone for her willingness to serve and expressed support for her appointment.

Your Committee voted 8-1 to recommend adoption of Resolution 24-10. Committee Chair U'u-Hodgins, Vice-Chair Paltin, and members Cook, Johnson, Lee, Rawlins-Fernandez, Sinenci, and Sugimura voted "aye." Committee member Kama voted "no."

Your Government Relations, Ethics, and Transparency Committee **RECOMMENDS** that Resolution 24-10, attached hereto, entitled "APPROVING THE APPOINTMENT OF KATE BLYSTONE AS THE PLANNING DIRECTOR," be **ADOPTED**.

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This report is submitted in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules of the Council.



NOHELANI U'U-HODGINS, Chair

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Resolution

No. 24-10

APPROVING THE APPOINTMENT OF KATE BLYSTONE AS THE PLANNING DIRECTOR

WHEREAS, by letter dated January 5, 2024, Mayor Richard T. Bissen, Jr. notified the Council that he appointed Kate Blystone as the Planning Director effective January 22, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Charter Section 8-8.2 states that, "The planning director shall be appointed by the mayor with the approval of the council and may be removed by the mayor"; and

WHEREAS, Charter Section 6-2.5 provides that the Council shall confirm or deny the appointment within 60 days after receiving notice of the appointment by the Mayor; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Maui:

1. That it hereby approves the appointment of Kate Blystone as the Planning Director; and
2. That certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Mayor and Managing Director.

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY



VICTORIA J. TAKAYESU
Corporation Counsel
County of Maui

LF2024-2199
2024-01-04 Reso Appoint Blystone PLN Director

INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alice L. Lee".

ALICE L. LEE

Upon the request of the Mayor.