

Resolution

No. 25-171

URGING THE DIRECTOR OF WATER SUPPLY
TO FIND THAT PHASE I OF THE PULELEHUA
PROJECT IN WEST MAUI IS EXEMPT FROM
THE COUNTY'S WATER AVAILABILITY POLICY

WHEREAS, the devastating August 2023 Maui wildfires exacerbated Maui County's existing housing crisis, causing disruptions to housing, livelihoods, income, and daily life; and

WHEREAS, the wildfires resulted in the destruction of 1,256 owner-occupied units and 4,271 rental units, with a total of 5,527 residential units lost; and

WHEREAS, many wildfire survivors face uncertainty over housing, job security, and health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study found that more than 40 percent of respondents continue to reside in temporary housing; and

WHEREAS, a third of wildfire survivors continue to receive full rental support, while others pay rents above pre-fire market rates, with larger units nearly doubling their pre-fire rent; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency approved a one-year extension of the Individuals and Households Program, concluding February 10, 2026; and

WHEREAS, as temporary programs near their expiration dates, ensuring stable, affordable housing for all fire-affected households remains a challenge; and

WHEREAS, most displaced residents express a desire to remain on Maui, with many hoping to return to West Maui in the coming years; and

WHEREAS, the slow pace of rebuilding permanent housing and the limited number of temporary housing units available in West Maui may not be sufficient to accommodate all residents planning or hoping to return; and

Resolution No. 25-171

WHEREAS, the Pulelehua project is approved to build 800 residential units, with Phase I composed of 240 rental units that are 100 percent affordable and could house between 700 and 1,000 people; and

WHEREAS, the Council approved land-use entitlements for Pulelehua, which was established as West Maui Project District 5 on November 18, 2011, under Ordinances 3887, 3888, and 3889; and

WHEREAS, the Council adopted Resolution 23-206, FD1, entitled "URGING THE MAYOR TO EXPEDITE ASSISTANCE FOR THE PULELEHUA AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT IN WEST MAUI," on October 6, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Pulelehua's Phase I has been graded, with retaining walls erected, and two wells drilled; and

WHEREAS, but the project cannot move forward until water issues are resolved; and

WHEREAS, the County's Water Availability Policy exempts the following:

"Residential development projects with 100 percent affordable housing units and are within the service area of the department's central or west Maui water system"; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Water Supply has applied this exemption to other projects; and

WHEREAS, Pulelehua's Phase I appears to qualify for the exemption; and

WHEREAS, the developer, Maui Oceanview LP, is working on a residential workforce housing agreement with the County; and

WHEREAS, Pulelehua would provide long-term housing close to employment centers in West Maui; and

Resolution No. 25-171

WHEREAS, Lahaina's recovery will not only be dependent on immediate relief, but will also require long-lasting structural support, including permanent housing for displaced families; and

WHEREAS, Pulelehua is positioned to provide much-needed affordable housing to the West Maui community in the aftermath of the August 2023 Maui wildfires but requires an exemption from the County's water availability policy; now, therefore,

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

1. That it urges the Director of Water Supply to find that Phase I of the Pulelehua project in West Maui is exempt from the County's Water Availability Policy;
2. That it encourages the Director of Water Supply to negotiate with Hawaii Water Service Company, Inc. and Maui Land & Pineapple Company, Inc. to explore conveying additional storage, including water tanks and reservoirs, to allocate additional water to the West Maui water system;
3. That it further encourages the Director of Water Supply to work with Maui Land & Pineapple Company, Inc. and other private well owners to allocate additional water to the West Maui system; and
4. That certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Water Supply, the Board of Water Supply, and the Mayor.

INTRODUCED BY:

Tamara A.M. Paltin

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