

April 23, 2024/200 S High St Budget hearing

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BUDGET TESTIMONY/OPPOSITION TO \$1.5million dollar allocation to Land Trust.

With all due respect to our Councilmembers - I am tendering this testimony without identification. I am a lifelong resident of Hawaii living all of my adult life on Maui. I am a graduate of Kamehameha Schools. I have no affiliation with any parties referenced in this testimony. I do not currently sit on any Boards or Commissions public, private or non-profit.

Why no identification? Based on various broadcasts of Council hearings, it has become clear that citizens that participate in the democracy and engagement of public policy risk humiliation, derision and possibly punitive action. When people show you who they are... believe them the first time.

The August 8, 2023 devastation in Lahaina - I am personally involved with friends and family who ran for their lives with nothing but their pockets. Some could not. We all want to make this better and faster. I do not believe allocating \$1.5million dollars to a start up Land Trust is the best use of our resources today.

1. The Land Trust is a start up. Yes, it appears a truly eleemosynary effort of philanthropy. As a start up – they have publicly admitted they are feeling their way around. As a start up, the budget allocation will likely be used for start up costs: salary, bricks and mortar lease, office furnishing/supply, and if there is any remainder -possibly 'studies'.
2. Instead, if the Land Trust has public support, that is where the start up costs should be gathered. From individuals and other entities who have examined the structure, goals, capacity and capabilities. By using the budget mechanism, the County is acting as a collection agency on behalf of a start-up. Requiring citizens to pledge their tax dollar donation to an unknown entity.
3. The founding leader/CEO is a sitting member of the County Council. It appears as a truly charitable act. However, when I have been appointed to a Board of Directors – it has been ingrained that as a Director, we enter into a fiduciary responsibility to the entity or non-profit. There is no remuneration or benefit for services or activity. All efforts are to benefit the non-profit or entity.
4. As an elected member of our governing body – the County Council - isn't this the same pledge we can expect a Councilmember to uphold on behalf of the people of Maui? I don't know that anyone can serve two masters.
5. By approving this budget item, the optics are not good. Are all of the Council Members 'taking care' of their brethren? Did the sitting Council member figure out the system to create 'talking points' during the upcoming election? Yes, the sitting Council member has indicated they may step down from the non-profit. However, it is clear that the fiduciary aspect is still questionable.

Thank you for your courtesy and consideration.