KŌMIKE ALOHA ʻĀINA

Council of the County of Maui

MINUTES

October 20, 2025

Online Only via Zoom

CONVENE: 1:43 p.m.

PRESENT: VOTING MEMBERS:
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Chair
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Vice-Chair
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member
Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Member
Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Member

EXCUSED: Councilmember Tasha Kama, Member

STAFF: Tiare del Castillo, Legislative Analyst
Kirsten Szabo, Legislative Analyst
Megan Moniz, Legislative Attorney
Jennifer Yamashita, Committee Secretary
Jean Pokipala, Council Services Assistant Clerk
Ryan Martins, Council Ambassador

Residency Area Office (RAO):
Keomailani Hirata, Council Aide, Molokai Residency Area Office
Roxanne Morita, Council Aide, Lānaʻi Residency Area Office
Mavis Oliveira, Council Aide, East Maui Residency Area Office
Bill Snipes, Council Aide, South Maui Residency Area Office
Buddy Almeida, Council Aide, Makawao-Haʻikū-Pāʻia Residency Area Office

ADMIN: Thomas Kolbe, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Department of the Corporation Counsel

OTHERS: *Resource Personnel:*
Kuhio Lewis, President & CEO, Hawaiian Council Representative; Producer of "Mele ʻŌiwi Ē: A call to remember who we are and where we come from"
Dr. Michael Jackowitz, D.O., Producer of "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka"; Founder and President, WitzEnd Production

Testifiers:
Starr Kalāhiki, Cast Member of "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka"
Carol Lee Kamekona
Nara Malia Cardenas, Cast Member of "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka"
Jasee Law

Others (35)

PRESS: *Akakū:* Maui Community Television, Inc.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: . . .*(gavel)*. . . . Aloha ʻauinalā kākou. Let's see, 43 i hala ʻo ka hola 1, a ma 20 o ʻOkakopa i ka makahiki 2025, a e ʻoluʻolu mai e hoʻomaka Ke Kōmike Aloha ʻĀina. ʻO wau ʻo Keani Rawlins-Fernandez, ka Luna Hoʻomalu o kēia kōmike. Aloha ʻauinalā kākou. It's 1:43 on October 20th, 2025. Will the Kōmike Aloha ʻĀina please come to order. I'm your Chair, Keani Rawlins-Fernandez. There are currently no testifiers at the Molokai District Office. I kēia lā me ko kākou Hope Luna Hoʻomalu ʻo Tamara Paltin. Aloha.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Aloha ʻauinalā kākou.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha. Committee Member Tom Cook, aloha.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Aloha, good afternoon. There's no testifiers in Kīhei office. Looking forward to your meeting.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. And I believe Committee Member Tasha Kama is excused today. Committee Member Alice Lee, aloha.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Aloha, and all the way from Tulalip, Washington. Achuk [*sic*].

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Achuk [*sic*]. Good job in pronouncing Tulalip. And Committee Member Shane Sinenci, achuk [*sic*].

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Aloha ʻauinalā and achuk, [*sic*] Chair. Happy to be here, and happy to see our representatives from the Hawaiian Council. We had such a great time, it was a hoʻomaikaʻi, very good job. That was an awesome production, so thank you.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: And I'll call on you for further remarks after we close public testimony.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Oh, hiki. Mahalo.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. And then we have Committee Member Yuki Lei Sugimura. Aloha.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Aloha. I love to see my favorite over here, which is Kuhio Lewis, and what you're going to present. So, thank you for bringing this forward. Thank you.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. Okay. And then we have two Councilmembers who are Non-Voting Committee Members, Councilmember Gabe Johnson and Councilmember Nohelani U'u-Hodgins, who are always avail...who are always welcome

and invited to join us. Our Committee Staff is Committee Secretary Lori Ann Tengan [*sic*]; Legislative Analyst Tiare del Castillo; Legislative Analyst Kirsten Szabo; Legislative Attorney Megan Moniz; and Council Services Assistant Clerk Lei Dinneen. Oh, and then we also have Deputy Corp. Counsel Thomas Kolbe from Department of Corporation Council. Aloha. We have one...

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: I think your Secretary is Ms. Yamashita.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh, sorry. And aloha for being with us, okay, Jen...Jennifer Yamashita; is that right? Yeah. Committee Secretary.

ITEM 1(10): ʻŌIWI ARTS AND LEADERSHIP

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: We have one item on today's agenda, ʻŌiwi Arts and Leadership. Since this is a 7(B) presentation with no legislative action, we'll jump straight into the presentation before receiving testimony. *(pause)* Okay. Okay. So, Member Sinenci kind of jumped the gun a little bit in providing some context on why we have the agenda item that we do today. And we have joining us today Kuhio Lewis, President and CEO of the Hawaiian Council, and Michael Jackowitz, D.O. Producer of "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka," and founder and president of WitzEnd Productions. If there are no objections, Members, I would like to designate Mr. Lewis and Mr. Jackowitz as resource persons in accordance with Rule 18(A) of the Rules of the Council. Are there any objections?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Okay. Mahalo, Members. And I invited the two of them to come today because, as Member Sinenci explained, he and I attended the Hawaiian Council's convention in Tulalip, Washington, on October 6th to the 10th. And...oh, okay. You know what? I'm just going to...I don't want to steal some of the opening remarks that they have, and then I'll just add a little bit more after they do their opening remarks. So, we'll have Mr. Lewis from Hawaiian Council share some opening remarks, and then I asked if we could also...if you all could see the video that we got to see while we were at convention. And then we'll invite Mr. Jackowitz to...WitzEnd Productions to provide opening remarks. And then he also has a video that I...I asked if...you know, for him to share so that you all can get a little snippet of what we got to experience while we were at convention as well. So, Mr. Lewis.

MR. LEWIS: Yes. Aloha. Thank you, Chair Rawlins and Councilmembers. I'm Kuhio Lewis with the Hawaiian Council. Very honored to be here. I've never been asked to debrief about our convention in a Council meeting before, but it's super exciting that we're here, and we get to do that. We just concluded our annual convention. This is our 24th annual convention in Tulalip, Washington. As everyone knows, we now have more of our people living outside of Hawaiʻi than in our islands, which is really the reason why we decided to move our convention around. It was also held on...on fellow native tribal lands in Tulalip. It was very exciting to be able to strengthen bonds with fellow

native people…but more importantly, it was…it was…we had a great time reconnecting with over 1,300 fellow kānaka that have left our islands, many of…many of whom came from Maui were in attendance at our convention. So, it was a great opportunity for us to get to see them, to uplift their spirits, provide some hope for the future. Our convention was all about unity. It was about coming together. We tackled some tough topics, I…I feel, but more importantly, we really focused on how we could be stronger together. And so, I thought that would be a good prelude into the video that I wanted to share. This is the opening video that opened up our convention. It focuses on the unification of our people. So, if we can play that video. *(pause)*

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Not yet.

MR. LEWIS: So, while she pulls that up, the video…so I had our Hawaiian Council staff travel all the states, and meet and connect with Hawaiians that have left their islands. And one thing is that, you know, music always brings people together. No matter where you are on any political spectrum, music will unify. And so, this video starts to speak to that…that fabric that makes us special. Okay. *(pause)*

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. And we're just working on the audio. *(pause)* Okay. We'll just take a one-minute recess if there are no objections.

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. The Kōmike Aloha ʻĀina will take a one-minute recess to just get the audio up and going. So, we'll reconvene at 1:53. Okay. Mahalo. We're in recess. *. . .(gavel). . .*

RECESS: 1:52 p.m.

RECONVENE: 2:20 p.m.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: *. . .(gavel). . .* Please return to order. E kala mai for the technical difficulties. We have the video up and ready to play. And we'll begin playing.

. . .(Mele ʻŌiwi Ē: A Call To Remember Who We Are and Where We Come From video presentation 2:20 P.M.). . .

https://youtu.be/_iuroAx207k?si=tccNzPBZBivOjHjW

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Sarah *(phonetic)*.

MR. LEWIS: The video is obviously delayed on the…

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: You can stop the screenshare now.

MR. LEWIS: But I'll send everyone the link so you can see it. It…it does…it is a moment, but essentially what it…what we had was our…our media team at Hawaiian Council travel

to different states. And they had a chance before convention to meet with them. And what it culminated to was this opening video, where they all had a chance to be a part of the ceremony. Although not all of them could...could be there in person, they were part of our opening. But it just capstones, you know, our people are everywhere, in…all over the world. And yes, it's a sad situation, but it's also an opportunity, I feel, for us to harness the energy and the mana that each of them possess. And that's why we took our convention to the continent, so we can start to build them up and find ways in which we can support them wherever they are. You know, the other...the other thing about our convention is, you know, like most of the people in here, we're all Portuguese, right? We're half Portuguese at least. And if you think about…I'm half Portuguese, and I don't know much about Portugal. I barely know anything about it. I just know malasadas maybe, and...but if...I don't want that to be the narrative for our Hawaiian people, where three, four generations down the road, they don't know anything about Hawaiʻi. And so, we really got to, in this moment of our history, look at how do we…how do we uplift them so that they can perpetuate, cultivate their identity, where they come from, this place, so they can all be ambassadors of...of their homeland. That said, our convention was filled with just enlightening discussions. We tackled some controversial topics. We tackled public land trust. We tackled gaming. You know, that's a topic going on at the Legislature. And where we had it in Tulalip was actually a gaming casino. So, we got to see firsthand, you know, what kind of economic development opportunities came from gaming, but also what challenges come from it. We got to talk about even Mauna Kea, you know, what's happening up there, what's the latest situation there. But overall, it's important that Hawaiians, and even nonHawaiians have important discussions, away from just political settings, but in community settings. And I think that's what the convention had a chance for us to do. One of the real focal points, I felt, of the convention was highlighting a production called "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka." And the reason why Michael is here, and he'll introduce himself in a little bit, is because he's actually from Maui. And he'll...he'll share more about how this came to life. But he is a Tony Award winning producer. He has many successful productions on Broadway. And when he connected at some point in his journey to Hawaiʻi, and the stories of Hawaiʻi, he just...he couldn't turn away. So, he literally uprooted his entire career and life, and moved to Maui, and began the journey. So, he's...he's on his own epic journey, but he has dedicated himself and his future to producing one of the most revered stories. And that's the story of Hiʻiaka and Pele. And we highlighted this musical Broadway at our convention. It's the first time it was ever brought in front of a large audience. And it…probably the most critical audience, the Native Hawaiian Convention. And it was received by a standing ovation for over five minutes. And it was greeted by a line of people as they were exiting the stage. So, I'm very proud to introduce Michael, who I thought would be good to summarize what he was envisioning when this all came into the picture. And I think it's, you know, one of Maui's own, helping us tell our stories in a very cool way. So, I want to introduce Michael Jackowitz to the Council, who can talk more about this special feature that was at our convention.

MR. JACKOWITZ: Thanks, Kuhio. And thank you for inviting me. It's a real honor for me to be here. So, I'm just going to tell you the genesis of how this all happened. So, in 1994, I'm living in New York City, producing theater. And I make my first trip to Hawaiʻi. And

of course, just like the South Park episode, I bought a timeshare. And I thought I was, you know, this haole is now a...a Hawaiian. And I would spend...I'm kidding, but I did that. But every year, I kept coming back, and...and spending winters in...in Hawaiʻi, and just falling in love with the culture. And I...I kind of made the realization that people are fascinated by the Hawaiian culture, but they know virtually nothing about it. And how could I, as a producer, change that? And I just thought somebody should do a once-on-this-island style musical about the Hawaiian gods, and the Hawaiian stories. And I planted that seed, and it sat there for 10 years, 15 years. And then out of happenstance, because I knew if I couldn't find somebody who lived in Hawai'i that knew both the world of musical theater and the world of Hawaiian culture, this was a pipe dream. It was never going to happen, right? And I met Roslyn Catracchia, who was the writer of...of...of the story, in a...in...in...at an opening night, and we were introduced. And I said to her, I...I want to pitch this idea to you. And I pitched this idea, and I said, there's this guy that I've been following. His name is Kealiʻi Reichel. I'd love to meet with him too, and talk to him. And it took me a while to get a meeting, but I did. I got a meeting with him, and I said those words to him. I said, this is a medium, musical theater, that could really introduce the culture to the world in a broad, beautiful way. But I don't know the stories to tell. I need you to help me identify this. And he went and pulled out this giant book, and it was *The Epic Tale of Hiʻiakaikapoliopele*. And I bet you're shocked that I could say that. But . . .*(laughing)*. . . it took me a while. But I...but we went through this book, and he said, this is our *Lord of the Rings*. This is our epic story. And we went on this journey to start putting it together. And I had a challenge ahead of me because I knew this had to appeal to two different groups of people that were opposite sides of the audience, right? One, direct descendants of these...these characters, these...these gods, right? And who knew the stories like they were taught these stories from the time they were six years old. And the other, never heard of it, they just loved musical theater. So, how was I going to do that? That was a super big challenge, super high bar. And so, I put a team together to help me do that. And the Hawaiian team was...Kealiʻi was one of my advisors during development. Patrick Makuakane came on board. Manaola came on board. And we had this great Hawaiian team. And then on the Broadway side, I had Stephen Schwartz, who as many of you may know, wrote *Wicked* and *Godspell* and *Pippin*. And he became our advisor on the Broadway side. And then Broadway set designers and lighting designers and...and music supervisors and orchestrators. And so, we had really, these two worlds coming together. But it had to work for both those groups. And it took a long, long time to make that come together. But I just believed, build it and they will come. And so, I built it. And...but there was a missing piece. And I...I didn't know how...I was having a very hard time getting theater people to take me seriously, and figuring out how to do this. And as Kuhio said, in 2014, I moved here. I'm like, okay. This is going to happen, but it won't happen if I'm in New York. I have to be in Hawaiʻi. So, I moved here in 2014 to make this happen. Brought it basically as far as I could go. And then another happenstance, I met him. And it was the missing piece that allowed me to bring this to the Hawaiian community, right? And we were sitting at this conference, and I'm thinking about ten years of development, terrified of all these aunties sitting in the front row. And how are they going to respond? And what kind of...what were they going to say? Did I offend anything? Did we...did we get it right? And I looked out and they were all just sobbing. And just...everybody was just crying. And it was...and then the

actors left the auditorium, and all the people in the hallway erupted in applause for the actors as they were walking off. And people were coming up to me afterwards and saying, I don't know who you are, but God bless you, and thank you for allowing our people to tell our stories in the way that they meant...they're meant to be told. And so, I really believe that, you know, meeting Kuhio, and Hawaiian Council, and partnering with them is the last chapter in this epic, you know, tale of Michael Jackowitz to get this thing up and running. But I...you know, my dream is to open a company on Oʻahu, let it sit and run forever, and let...let, you know, audiences see it when they...and learn about these...these...you know, this epic story. And then open a company on Maui. And I always thought of Lahaina as the place to do that. And now I know that's...that's above my pay grade. And there's a lot going on there. But that is ultimately what I would love to see happen. Because this is an epic story. And it was very...I'm...I'm really happy with where we are, and where it's going. And we only showed a 45-minute version of the show in Seattle. We have the full version coming up. And...and, you know, Amy Hānaialiʻi killed it. I mean, she came in to play Pele, and she killed it. And watching her play this role with...with Jana Alcain, who was Hiʻiaka...the two of these women are so powerful, so strong, and they come together. And they're like, wow. It was Broadway-worthy. That's all I can say. Broadway-worthy. And someday, we'll see what happens. But that's my story.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. You know, I think it's a very special...you know, at first I wasn't sure if I was going to jump on board with this production because...you know, the bar, when you start talking and telling stories about Hawaiian deities, is pretty high. And if you don't do it correctly, it...you know, the...there's a lot of things that can go wrong. Not just from Hawaiians that don't like the way you told the story, but you're dealing with, you know, deities. And I got to say that this is probably one of the most proudest productions that I've been a part of because I see the potential it has. And what's even more amazing is that the producer of it is from this island. And, you know, one of the things that I would like to advocate at some point, or even now because...is you don't have much theaters on Maui, or at least the ability...we...we saw what Ulalena did for this community. It uplifted spirits. It provided jobs. You know, the producer of Ulalena was Roy Tokujo, and Roy Tokujo is actually my mom's sister's husband. And so, I grew up in theater. You already know that, right? We do all kinds, we build houses, we do everything. But theater is actually something...production is something that's just innately just somehow in my DNA. So, I'd love to see us look at preserving the Ulalena Theater, which is the only building that didn't burn in Lahaina. And so, that's something that I've been advocating to Administration is, you know, we don't have much places that can do that. You know, the MACC is just too expensive for the average person to use. But if we could find ways to preserve that, it would take ten years to build something like that again. So, just saying that out loud, since we're in the Council meeting. . . .*(laughing)*. . . Something to consider is how we could preserve the Ulalena Theater. It is fully functional, it's well preserved, and it's ready for another show like this to be in it. That said, I will conclude by just saying thank you to the Council. You know, the...the capacity of our organization has grown, obviously, because of partnerships like the one we share with you, as well as the other counties as well. But it's...it's...it's a moment of reflection when you think about, you know, the opportunity we have to convene and to facilitate discussions. Next year, the convention will be back

in Hawaiʻi. We've been moving it around. We had...you know, we went from Las Vegas, then we went to Maui, we went Big Island, and now Seattle. So, it's time we...Tulalip. I got scolded by the chair of the tribe. I said, Seattle, and she said, this is not Seattle *. . .(laughing). . .* this is Tulalip. But the convention will be back on Oʻahu this coming year, this...2026. And would love to continue the partnerships and see how we can bring some important discussions to light. And yeah, with that, thank you so much. Thank you, Michael, for sharing your story. It was a big part of our convention. There was so much excitement, and I don't even know how we're going to top it next year yet. I have no idea. But thank you, Keani, for the opportunity to share.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Absolutely. Should we share the video?

MR. LEWIS: Well, I was wondering. I don't know. The first one kind of looked buss up, so I was wondering if we should.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: They said online it looked good.

MR. LEWIS: Okay. Okay. We...we can.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: It just looked terrible in here.

MR. LEWIS: So, this...this --

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So sorry.

MR. LEWIS: -- video that we're going to show is, it's just a highlight reel of the Hiʻiaka performance that occurred at Tulalip. But yeah.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Sarah? And then while we're waiting for the screenshare and hoping that the video doesn't lag too much behind the audio, what I wanted to add, and, you know, part of the reason of inviting Michael here to share about Hiʻiaka is the power of...of...of telling our own stories, and how it combats the erasure of our people, of our culture, of our kūpuna. And so, this is really important to me, and obviously a lot of...everyone there. And so, it looks like it's...it's ready for sharing. And we also have folks online to testify too, from the cast. Okay. Sarah, go ahead, play.

. . .(The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka video presentation 2:41 P.M.). . .

https://drive.google.com/file/d/14O_4wiThtRW6Wzhglnv7VJQ7YD8k49rh/view

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Sarah, you can stop the screenshare. It's 30 seconds behind again. Mahalo. Okay. Go ahead. Oh, yeah. It's on Granicus, both videos, so hopefully everyone will take the time to check out those two videos in...where the audio and the video match because it's much better that way. Okay. Any other remarks before I open?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So, we're going do public testimony, and then I'll ask the Members for any questions and then…yeah. Okay. All right. And I'm sorry, and it was terrible. Okay. Testifiers wanting to provide testimony should sign up in the Chamber lobby, join the online meeting via tinyURL link to connect to the Zoom meeting, or call in on the phone number and enter the meeting code noted on today's agenda. Written testimony can be submitted via eComment. For individuals wishing to testify via Zoom, please use the raise-your-hand function by raising your hand. Staff will ask you to enable your microphone. For those calling in, please follow the prompts via phone, press star-9 to raise your hand, and when it's your turn to testify, press star-6 to unmute. And if you wish to testify anonymously, please let Staff know in the chat. Oral testimony is limited three minutes. And I'll now call on those on the list to testify, starting with Starr Kalāhiki, followed by Carol Lee Kamekona.

. . .OPEN PUBLIC TESTIMONY (KA'Ā-1(10)). . .

MS. KALĀHIKI: Oh, aloha. Aloha mai kākou.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha.

MS. KALĀHIKI: Mahalo, everyone, for allowing me this time and space to basically share my heart. My name is Starr Kealaheleokalani Kalāhiki, and I am Zooming in from Moanalua, Oʻahu where I am raised. But listening to both Kuhio and Jackowitz talk, and then watching both videos, it's…it's pretty amazing to see all the connections. I'm actually wearing a Pewa print of Manaola's that…he really is the one person who taught me that mele is a poetic expression of time and space, yeah…a poetic expression composed by those who have come before us in their time and in the same space. And so, as vessels of music, when we resonate these stories in these spaces, it's not just art or performance, it is activation. *. . .(laughing). . .* And with that said, as a cast member of Hiʻiaka, not from the original, my personal testimony is, I saw on social media that this was happening, and I saw people that I love get themselves to New York to get Stephen Schwartz on board. And it was like my first learning of connection to this kind of story wherein I couldn't even be jealous. I was just like so overwhelmed and so overjoyed that our story was being told, and by people I love so much. And so, when I was actually asked to join the cast, it absolutely made sense, right? And what they were describing, what…what Kuhio and…and Michael were describing, and what I got…this is kind of…I really…the cast has…hasn't really had an opportunity to engage in receiving response except for what…for the applause on stage, which is one thing, but the eruption of gratitude as we walked through the hallway, just…you know, just trying to get to the elevator or whatever, I remember like turning to Chardonnay, and we were all just…all bawling. And that is like…that…there is never…there's not an equal sensation to that. And I think we're all still processing that. And whatever this is, right? When I bumped into Chair Keani in the elevator, and she says, we're going to be planting seeds. And I thought literally, because I was like, yes, I'll be there. I was actually just recently in Lahaina, because my husband is the kahu of Mauna ʻAla, and so his kūpuna are buried at Waiola, and so it was the first time I have been back to Lahaina since…for a

while. I was a cast member at Ulalena, so was Jana, our Hiʻiaka, so was Moses Goods. And so we have a very, very special pilina to Lahaina. And going just this past couple months ago was...I was afraid about how I would feel, but when I got there, it was just so beautiful, so life-giving. I'm so grateful for what's happening there. And so, mahalo to you all, from the deepest part of me, for all the work that you do, as this aloha ʻāina, carry on. I just want to say, I believe in the power of aloha and of music to save the world. Mahalo.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Ms. Kalāhiki. Any questions for our cast member? *. . .(laughing). . .* Mahalo nui for making time, and mahalo for helping to tell our kūpuna stories. Our next testifier is Carol Lee Kamekona, followed by Nara. *(pause)*

MS. KAMEKONA: Aloha ʻauinalā i ko kākou [*sic*]. Koʻu inoa ʻo Carol Lee Kamekona. Mahalo nui for this time and space to allow my manaʻo to be brought forward. Mahalo, boss. I, too, had the privilege of attending the conference in Tulalip. I wanted to express my deepest and sincerest aloha and mahalo to Kuhio and his staff at the Hawaiian Council, formerly known as Council of Native Hawaiian Advancement, for doing such an awesome job. Hana maikaʻi, paʻipaʻi lima...paʻipaʻi lima. And to Michael, mahalo for bringing our moʻolelo forward to the stage. It's not...our moʻolelos are never told by our people for our people. And for you to take out that Hollywood perspective, I just so loved, because you told it as it was to be told. And I will just add that Pele and Lohiʻau, their chemistry was so kolohe...so, so kolohe. I will say that my...the experience that I took away from that the most was visiting the museum at Tulalip, and having seen pictures and stories of the murdered and missing indigenous women, and the children from the boarding schools. It made us cry, just reading those moʻolelo...for the three of us that went, I went with my two cousins. But also, to seeing the parallel of what they experienced, along with what we experience continuously. Our stories, the genocide, the colonialism, it's the same as our indigenous brothers and sisters. And the clip that you started the conference with, *ʻŌiwi Ē*, this one that you showed didn't do justice to the one that we saw. The one that we saw both days brought tears to our eyes. To see the ʻohana and the hoaloha on Moku Honu. The family and friends on Turtle Island. That our aloha and our identity are ingrained in our naʻau. No matter where our waiwai *. . .(timer sounds). . .* lands on ʻāina, we are together as one. And I'll just close by saying I think the highlight for me was the opening ceremony from the Tulalip people, when the one gentleman was expressing and explaining who was there with him celebrating and performing for us. For us Kanaka, moʻokūʻauhau is very important. It is where you come from...your roots, your ancestors, your kūpuna, your connection. And I cried and I jumped for joy at the same time when I heard that that was my ʻohana. The gentleman that was speaking was my ʻohana that I never knew, who was half Tulalip and half Kanaka. So, mahalo for that connection. And I know...I think you remember the conversation we had when I asked you to please do this on other ʻāina with our indigenous brothers and sisters, so we can know them and they can know us. I know it's a cost burden, but as much as you can, please do it. Mahalo.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Ms. Kamekona. Seeing no hands for questions. So, I'll thank you for your testimony. Okay. And then the last person we have on the list to testify is Nara. *(pause)*

MS. MALIA CARDENAS: Aloha kākou. Mai Hawaiʻi nui --

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha.

MS. MALIA CARDENAS: a i Lehua. Eō e Maui, nā Hono aʻo Piʻilani. Aloha nō kākou pākahi a pau. ʻO wau kēia ʻo Nara Malia Springer Cardenas, a he Hawaiʻi au, he ʻōiwi, he kupa o ka ʻāina a he kamaʻāina au ma Oʻahu no nā makahiki he kanahā. Ma muli o ka pipiʻi o ka nohona ma Hawaiʻi a ka ʻemi [*sic*] o ka hana, ua haʻalele mākou ʻo koʻu ʻohana i ka ʻāina ʻē, a ua noho mākou ma Utah he ʻehiku makahiki i hala, akā ua paʻa ka nohona o kuʻu ʻohana ma Maui, ma Lahaina, Kahului, Waiehu, a i Kula. So, I'm Nara. So, I'm from Oʻahu, but have been on the continent in Utah for seven years. I'm here today as a cast member of "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka," the Maui-built Broadway musical which was met with such enthusiasm at the recent Native Hawaiian Convention. The audience of Hawaiians rose to their feet in recognition of our story, of ourselves. Theater uplifts. I'm here as a cast member of "The Staircase," a play by the phenomenal Hawaiian playwright, Noa Gardner, which was commissioned by a LORT theater in California called the South Coast Repertory Theater, and produced in May of this year. It is an intimate Hawaiian story about loss, and love, and the impossible choice to leave Hawaiʻi for a life on the continent. The audience of Americans rose to their feet in recognition of our shared story of our human selves, and of a deeply resonant, uniquely Hawaiian experience. Theater connects. I'm here as a Native Hawaiian artist and actor, musician, dancer, composer, choreographer, and designer, who left home because I couldn't find paying work. As a single Hawaiian mother raising four children in the diaspora, mental health is an ongoing challenge. Seeing us helps us understand ourselves. Theater heals. So, mahalo, Chair Rawlins-Fernandez, Vice-Chair Paltin, and Members of the Committee. We really appreciate you taking the time to meet today, and for your support of the arts in general, and especially of "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka" as we bring this important work to fruition. Thank you so much. Aloha.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. And seeing no hands for questions, mahalo nui for your testimony today. All right. Nara was the last individual on the list to testify. We'll do a last call for testimony. I see Mr. Law making his way to the podium.

MR. LAW: Aloha. Aloha.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha.

MR. LAW: Aloha Awakea. Aloha kākou. Aloha, *Akakū*. Jasee Law from Kula Uka, Waiakoa ahupuaʻa. The Hawaiian word of the day is ahonui, with no punctuation, spelled A-H-O-N-U-I. It means great and constant diligence and attention. That reminds me of Queen Liliʻuokalani because she's still watching. Mahalo, Luna Hoʻomalu Rawlins-Fernandez. Thank you for sharing your life with us. Due to the delay at the beginning of the presentation, the...that reminded me of the phrase, Maui time. I'm grateful for this time spent with Ka ʻAha o Ke Kalana O Maui. And thank you, and

Michael and Kuhio, and looking forward to seeing your production up in Kula. We need that kind of tourism up there.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Mr. Law. Okay. Any last testifiers? You may unmute yourself if you'd like to testify. Okay. Hearing no one speaking up to testify, if there are no objections, we'll close oral testimony and accept any written testimony into the record. Any objections?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

. . .CLOSE PUBLIC TESTIMONY (KAʻĀ-1(10)) . . .

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Mahalo, Members. Okay. So, I'll open the floor to questions, comments, starting with Member Sinenci, who attended the convention. Member Sinenci?

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair. And thank you. I, too…we…we arrived the night before the convention at like 10:00 at night, and the first person we saw as we drove up to the hotel was Thomas Paʻa Sibbett, and so, he's the co-producer of the "Chief of War" series. And so, we was like…that was the first thing we saw, so we were so excited. We took pictures of him and his son. His son was both in the…the film. So, what Kuhio didn't say was that we had a whole talk about the "Chief of War," and just the…the historical precedence that was said, and Paʻa shared some of the scenes, and…and why he did what he did, or he…he kind of put some scenes together. So…so, that was one of the things that…that I came home with. But to Kuhio's point, and addressing the diaspora, or what we now call the Hawaiʻi pāmaomao of all the…all the Native Hawaiians that have moved beyond Hawaiʻi shores and onto the continent. So, I was appreciative of Kuhio with the…the Hawaiian Council production. It did uplift our people, so mahalo for that. Song, artistry, and acting, all of that really…you know, hit us really hard. But…but the other thing I did want to bring up at the Council was the data collection that you shared…I think Rebecca *(phonetic)* shared. So, there was a lot of data collection, census reports for Native Hawaiians, so that was the important part. And of course, we…we honored some of the…the people that support…I think it was Ms. Sue *(phonetic)* that…that support an ongoing census and getting that data collection, so I thought that was very important for…to move forward the lāhui. And…and again, thank you for offering scholarships to…to the…some of our residents up there. Because you did that, I got to see my…my cousin, Chris Helekahi, he sings up there now. And so, I got to visit him and his wife at their home. And then also, my…my uncle Hilo Lono *(phonetic)*, Aunty Dawn Lono's brother-in-law. And so, we found out that Uncle Hilo is on the Department of Hawaiian Homes list in Wākiu, so that was another presentation that Department of Hawaiian Homes did include, and they shared about the paper leases. So, next year, they're going to come to East Maui and deliver 96 paper leases that I think Uncle Hilo Lono was very excited about because he's getting up in age. And so, he did want to leave some of his grandchildren something in Hāna because all of his grandchildren grew up in…in the Seattle metropolitan area. So…so, hopefully they get a place…you know, he leaves something for his grandkids to…to come home to. We did

venture down to Clark County for our Lahainaluna reunion, where we did meet some of…some of my classmates that right after the fire in Lahaina, they did purchase homes with their insurance money, and moved to…moved to Las Vegas. But we're hoping that they'll continue to invest…they still have their lots in Lahaina, so they're hoping…they…they just…it was a traumatic experience for them, so I think that's why the move. But…but I'm hoping that they will also plan to come back and…and rebuild. So, again, the…the Hawaiʻi pāmaomao, we…we got to meet a lot of our…our family that…that lives on the continent. And we did talk about gaming, but we also got to see how the Northwest tribes--the Muckleshoot, the Snoqualmie, the Tulalip--I mean, they're able to use some of these funds for housing. I know Chair Lee, you always where does some of the revenues come, but for the…for the tribal…the tribes, they get to…to decide where these funding go. And so, a majority of it goes to housing options, whether it's for single-family homes or for rentals. They can provide that to…to the tribal members. And then finally, we did attend the missing and murdered indigenous women talk at the conference, and that was very personal, and…and, you know, very sensitive. But…and we did have the mother of one of the victims on Oʻahu that was there to speak about her whole traumatic experience. But…but I'm glad that Kuhio, you provided a space for them to…to speak and…and share…the women from all cultures to share their experience. And with that, Chair, I just wanted to remind people that this Wednesday, we have the special documentary showing of "We Ride with Her," and it's going to be at the ʻĪao Theatre at 5:30, and it's on the…continuing that discussion on missing and murdered indigenous women, both here and on the continent. So again, mahalo for that, the conference. Maikaʻi.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Member Sinenci. I'll call on Member Cook next, since he has to leave in a little bit.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: I don't have any questions, but I'm listening.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. And then one of the things I'll add to what Member Sinenci shared was one of the kupuna elders in the Tulalip tribe was gifted an artifact from Keʻeaumoku Kapu years before the fire, and after the fire destroyed Na Aikane, the hale and the artifacts within it, the elder felt that that was part of Ke Akua's way of protecting that artifact from the fire, by gifting it to him to take it to a place that was safe. And that now, he wants to return that artifact to Lahaina. And he shared that up on stage, and will be…I don't know if it has…I don't know if there's any update on…on that, but that was…that was really special to…to hear. And that's the power of, you know, connection, and building relationships. I'll…I'll…any other…I'll open the floor to questions before I ask our resource people questions. Chair Lee?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you, everybody. Very, very impressive presentation. Very moving as well. As Mr. Sinenci…Member Sinenci mentioned, you know, I'm always thinking about the economics of things, and so, how…pardon me?

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Are you leading up to advocating --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: A question.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: -- for a casino? . . .*(laughing)*. . . I'm just kidding.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: How did you know what I was going to say? I was just --

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: We know you, Chair.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: -- going to ask you how serious is that being considered, and why did you pick the Tulalip tribe or nation to work with, versus other...other indigenous folks?

MR. LEWIS: I do think that as gaming conversations continue in this State, that Hawaiians be a part of the conversation, so I thought having it at the convention so Hawaiians are very aware of benefits, opportunities, but also the challenges that come with it. I think as...as it progresses, we're going to...at some point, things are going to come to a head, and we're better off educated. Why Tulalip? It's...the Northwest tribes are successful. They're a successful...there's models that are successful, and not to mention, it is also the third largest population of Hawaiians in the nation. So, there's Hawai'i, which is first, there's California, and then there's Washington...so more...more Hawaiians there than in Las Vegas and Nevada. So, for all of the culminating reasons, I felt that was the best option available to us. It doesn't mean that we aren't looking at other tribal areas, but if there's any one thing that I advocate for at...at the Hawaiian Council, it's really economic sovereignty, or it's self-sufficiency. You know, we can fight for days about political sovereignty, but economic sovereignty, I think we can all agree on. How do we advance ourselves financially? How do we be more self-sufficient? And I think there's models that we learned, and that we're going to continue to learn, from the people of Tulalip.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. And one of the things that I learned from one of the tribal members, you know, was that it was an incremental like build-up, that they didn't build the Tulalip casino and resort right away, or hotel, that they started with bingo and slot machine, and then from there, built up revenue, and equity, and borrowing power. And then they built the Quil Creek Casino [*sic*], and then continued to build up more borrowing power, and equity, and capital, and then they built up the Tulalip casino and hotel.

MR. LEWIS: Chair, if I could add --

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Yeah, please.

MR. LEWIS: -- you know, one of...one of the amazing things--and you would like this, the other Chair--you know, the Tulalip people have so much economic power, they literally buy their land back. So, they just bought a mountain...like they bought the mountain back. Because the government took it from them, so they bought it back. I mean, that is like the power that they have. It's not looking at the areas that divide them, it's

looking at what areas they can agree upon and build upon, and that's what the economic opportunities has afforded them, is the ability to just buy their own land, and to buy whatever they like and need for their people. Yeah, pretty cool.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: One follow-up question. I always felt that, you know, there's...there's a risk with gambling, but to start, I thought about, you know, the lottery. But as you had your conversations with those who are, you know, daily involved with operations of the casino, does that generate a lot of crime?

MR. LEWIS: Well, I wasn't in the breakout session that they had, but I will say that we did do some due diligence. We have been looking into it. You know, I think our role...just to be clear, our role at that convention was to convene, was to facilitate and convene, so it was allowing people to have conversations, and not for us to take a position. Yes, there are challenges that have...they've faced, but they've found ways to...they're continuing to find ways to address it as well. You know, they...there's tremendous employment opportunities that come with gaming as well. You know, they charge you for alcohol. It's not like Vegas, where you get free alcohol...you got to pay. So . . .*(laughing).* . . they found ways to keep their people from getting drunk for free. There's other...there's other preventional [*sic*] things that I feel they have. And to Keani's point, it wasn't like they went straight to casinos. They looked, they explored, and they progressed over time. And they're right on...for them, it makes a lot of sense because they're right on the interstate, right? So, they catch everybody going from state to state, or on that freeway. So, they're ideally positioned, and...but their target audience is not their...their own people. It really isn't. . . .*(laughing).* . .

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Member Sinenci?

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: I just wanted to add also, the tribes have a lot of commercial space.

MR. LEWIS: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: So, commercial rentals is another revenue for...for the tribe as well.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah, they own their own gas stations. They own all the malls in the area --

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- amphitheaters, theaters. Yeah. . . .*(laughing).* . .

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Member Paltin?

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Thank you. I think I had a question for Michael. With your production company, are you mentoring Kānaka to also be able to do what you do?

MR. JACKOWITZ: In a...in a word, yes. Part of my kind of vision from the beginning was to include...I said, we're going to basically create a Broadway show in Hawai'i. Like I don't think that's happened before, and I want the people that care about that to have a seat at that table. So, one of the reasons why we're going to premiere the full show next year at Leeward Community College is so that we can have the students work on the show, and learn how to do the show, and get apprenticed with these, you know, masters of...of the art. So, yeah, that's been important to me from day one, and I've just been, you know, surrounding myself with great people to help us do that.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: And then is there a connection between like the Broadway live shows and film at all? Or no, totally different?

MR. JACKOWITZ: No. We'll have...you know, in...in...in the world of the story, when Hi'iaka, who doesn't understand her gifts yet, you know, she'll lean against a tree, and then it will become animated so that the flowers will start to grow, and...and the audience will know before she does what her kuleana is, and what she's doing. And that will be like film. But this is a musical. This is...like this is the Lion King. This is a beginning, a middle, an end. It's a full Broadway-style musical with...with those caliber effects. But not...we're not doing a film.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: And then so, like for those types of things to be successful...like financially, it needs to be in a city. I mean...like would it be successful in Lahaina?

MR. JACKOWITZ: Well, Ulalena ran for 15 years, right, in a 600-seat house. So, yeah, I think it would be. Our intent...can we talk about the intent of Ko Olina and everything? Yeah. So, we're actually looking at building a outdoor kind of structure that could live in Ko Olina, and it could run...start with four...four nights a week, and then go to five, and then go to six, and work our way up, depending on...on how...on how we do. But from the...from the reaction we got and...at the convention, I mean, I think people will be talking about this, and it will become a thing to do when you come to Hawai'i, you know? And so, that's why I like the idea of having one company in...on O'ahu, and one company here in Lahaina. And so, yeah, I think it would do quite well.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: And then like Ulalena, do you see it being like more than just the one for the 15 years? Like, I mean, there's plenty of gods and stories.

MR. JACKOWITZ: Well, this one took me 15 years to create. So, let's get this one up, and then we'll see if we can do another one. . . .*(laughing)*. . .

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Okay.

MR. LEWIS: I'll just say too, I just want to add, because the biggest impediment that they faced is the venue. It wasn't...the production came together...you know, it took them a while to find the right...and...and to his credit, he worked with the people that are not easy to work with to get it correct. And the hardest part wasn't even that. It was finding a venue to host it. I mean, we're literally building out a venue for him at Ko Olina, which is why I'm saying don't knock down your theater. Because that's the current plans, if

you never know, they going knock ʻem down. So, it's so hard to find venues to have production in art. And this is the direction I see Hawaiian storytelling going. "Chief of War" is just another way in which we're telling our stories, and we need venues. So…and we can create all the stories you like.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: I mean, a lot of film documentary stuff came out of the fire, and…and like, you know, as a start, we're thinking of what we saw when "Chief of War" premiere came to the MACC. We could do that in Lahaina. We have the amphitheater, and we have a lot of local storytellers, and just recreate that with some food trucks and vendors as well, if anybody can get through the County's permitting event process. But I think…like, you know, when you talk about financial sovereignty, like even when the economy was booming in Maui, in Hawaiʻi, it wasn't financial sovereignty for local people because not everybody had homes when the…the economy was good. So, how…how is the Hawaiian Council focusing on community-based economic development, where the local people are the ones to not work three to four jobs, and afford a house to live in, and quality time with their family? When we say economic things, even in the context of Bill 9 or whatever, when the economy is booming, and the island is full of tourists, it's not improving our quality of life financially.

MR. LEWIS: Sure.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: It's just keeping us afloat, and nobody has space or time. So, how do we, as a body, distinguish between the financial sovereignty that I think that you mean, and the financial economy that is being thrust upon us?

MR. LEWIS: That's a really good question. I mean, that is the crux of where I've pivoted the Hawaiian Council. You know, it…it…before, it used to be charged in policy and all kinds of other areas. If you look at everything that we're doing, it's strictly based on economic development, and I talk about that in multiple ways. One is workforce development. So, the goal is, raise income for families, right? So, like how do we get them out of the 60, the 80, the 100 percent AMI into the…and how you do it is, you just help them with basic certifications for some of them. You know, like an electrician, a licensed electrician versus a nonlicensed, the pay difference is massive. So, if you just help them get that certification, you've just raised the income of that household by 50, $60,000. So, that's one approach. The other is we have a pretty robust business incubator program, where we're helping elevate and incubate businesses. So, we have our Kuhana Business Accelerator program, coupled with our…our marketplaces where we can help move products. We've sold over 5 million Hawaiʻi-based products through that. We also have our CDFI, our loan fund. We loan money, a lot, to businesses to help incubate them, to help get them started. And even in this moment, before the Council meeting, I was meeting with the County to see how we could bring economic development to Lahaina. You know, like there's…there's…obviously there's short-term, there's medium-term, and there's long-term. Like, what are we doing in the short-term? People are starting to repopulate, but where's the economics to support their repopulation in Lahaina? So, it's…it's…to answer your question, yes, there is economics that benefit a few, and then there's economic development that benefit the many. We're focused on developing the many through the programs that we offer directly through CNHA or Hawaiian Council.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: And I just hope those business development and like that…like all of it is great, but some people don't have an idea, and they want to be small business or whatever. Fulfilling existing needs would be the way I would push guys that don't have…like, some people have a dream and fully thought out, and some people just want to be successful, but they don't have the idea. Like one of the recent issues is like EV battery disposal. There's folks that can dismantle an EV battery and hook it up to a solar panel, but we don't have nobody doing that in the whole state, apparently.

MR. LEWIS: Sure.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: And…and like, just all those kinds of things that fit the needs, that we have big needs over here, but nobody's doing those works…and I mean, land surveyor. *. . .(laughing). . .*

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. I mean, you'd be surprised the stuff that we've invested in. *. . .(laughing). . .* I mean, we've…we…we've collateralized pigs, as an example, to give them the money. So, we're…if there's any nonconventional approach to helping people, it…you would find it with us. We do all kinds of funky things just to help them because we're trying to work outside of a system…because sometimes the system doesn't work. It's not set up for success. So, we create our own systems. So, you'd be surprised at some of the stuff we've funded. *. . .(laughing). . .*

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Thank you.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Committee Vice-Chair, Paltin. Member Sugimura?

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you. So, amazing, right? So, I stand by the testifier, please open up a theater in Kula, where I live, and that's what he's talking about.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: *. . .(inaudible). . . . . .(laughing). . .*

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: I…I will welcome you. And when you do, I have a yard for you, and my house. But it's…it's amazing. I have been an admirer of Kuhio for many, many years, and I watch what you do, and how you kicked in full blast when we were in deep trouble for the August 8th, '23 wildfires. And…and I believe that you're going to see what those industries are that need help. One of the things that I hope you can focus on also is, Maui has a huge water shortage. Lahaina is huge, under the CWRM or water management plan, which, to me, is not working. And I hope that you can think outside of the box, and help us with this huge problem that we have created with…with our water shortages. And West Maui, we hear about it all the time, and we have this huge housing problem. But I…I look forward to hearing, you know, what you may think of. I'm kind of throwing like something that you probably don't even expect to come out of this conversation because it's not quite economic development, but it's really everything. And even if we have to go Legislature, I'll go with you, you know, to advocate at that level because I think that's really where we need to go for the CWRM problem that we're having. And you know plenty people.

MR. LEWIS: Happy...happy to help, as always, with whatever. Like, you know, I...I agree, water is a big challenge here. I think you guys have an amazing opportunity with the DR...the --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- the CDBG funds that you have, to at least address some of it. And yeah, wherever we can plug in.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Good. I'm going to hold you to it. Thanks.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Member Sugimura. Okay. Any other questions? Oh, Chair Lee, I think she wanted to support having a performing theater up Kula.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: *. . .(laughing). . .*

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Go ahead, Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: No...no, normally you can read my mind, but no, I don't...I wasn't thinking of that. I was just wondering, if somebody makes...fails to make payments on the pigs, are they foreclosed?

MR. LEWIS: That's a good question. You know, they actually did default on their payments. And so, we had the option of going to get the pigs, or just writing it off. So, we decided to write it off. I didn't want to deal with the pigs.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh, you never just take one big imu?

MR. LEWIS: *. . .(laughing). . .*

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah, luau.

MR. LEWIS: No. So, we let them keep the pigs. But yeah, I mean, it's just...you know, sometimes families are...they just...they need help, and that's all they have. And you're going to find a way to help them, no matter what. I mean, if there is a mission that we have, I feel like we're fulfilling it by just giving them hope. And so, that's...yeah, we do all kind of stuff that I know the Council wouldn't do. *. . .(laughing). . .*

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Very good. *. . .(laughing). . .* Thank you.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Mahalo, Chair Lee. Okay. And then...okay. Mr. Lewis, I heard you say that someone's knocking down the Ulalena Theater. If you could share with us how we can support that structure to be not knocked down or saved? I don't know if...

MR. LEWIS: Well, there's redevelopment plans that are going on in Lahaina, as everyone is aware. And right now, they're trying to...what is that street, Tamara, Luakini?

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: They're trying to move the...or put double infrastructure because all of our infrastructure is under Front Street, and they chose Luakini. But...I mean, what's wrong with Waineʻe?

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. Well, I think there's a way to just go right around it. I mean, Luakini actually runs through Foodland, not through the theater. So, they could...they could not touch it. But I just...it would be sad to see that theater, given what it represents for the community, but also, just being...there's a reason that didn't burn down. I mean, I don't know if we've looked at that, but there's...there's...there's hope there. And so, we'd like to see it revitalized. But currently, to answer your question, there is plans to connect Luakini, and the Foodland and theater are in the crosshairs.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: And it's owned by Weinberg, and they're working with John Smith in the Office of Recovery.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Hmm. Okay. And then the...the theater would be large enough for Hiʻiaka?

MR. LEWIS: Yeah, it would be, actually.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MR. LEWIS: But I don't...I mean, I just think that even if Hiʻiaka or any other production, it's such a symbolic location that I feel could be the beginning of restoration in terms of economic revitalization. It could become a piko, you know, where you start to synergize around something that people start to gather around, and everything is...so I would just like to see that. And they know, the Coun...the Mayor knows, so...

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Like the royal complex area.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Because that is right next...Mokuʻula, Mokuhinia. And --

MR. LEWIS: Totally.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: -- oftentimes, like it feels like when you go to the commercial side, and then when you go to the royal complex side, they're talking about two totally different worlds that are abutting each other. And that could bridge the gap, you know. Because with the theater, you have all the commercial of that. And then the royal complex, if you're telling stories about Hawaiʻi, whatever, that could be a good bridge. Because when you go to the commercial meetings, and when you go to the cultural meetings, your head is on a swivel stick 180, you know?

MR. LEWIS: Yeah, I agree. But that area is significant. There's a lot of cultural significance in that...in that area. So, I think that's a good point is, what you put in that theater could be a bridge.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Yeah. And like you were saying, about attracting...about being like one of the things that is a to-do for when tourists come here. Like how when folks go to Vegas or New York, and shows is like one of the things that people ask…did you go and see Wicked, The Lion King, you know, whatever...whatever it is. So, when people come here, like did you go see Ulalena? Did you see Hiʻiaka?

MR. JACKOWITZ: Yeah. I just wanted to say that I've spent a lot of time over the last ten years making sure that it's not just something that tourists are going to like…like there's not a Hawaiian who won't go see that, and be moved by it, and touched by it. And so, it is really geared for both audiences. And that is why it took a long time to make it happen, and pull it all together. But I just want to say it's not necessarily just like, oh, the tourists are going to come, and the tourists are going to love it. I mean, they will, but...but that's not the whole…that's not the entire story.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Absolutely. And mahalo for emphasizing that point. Last year at the week-long Kuhinia Maui, Ulalena was the...one of the last ways to mark the one year of the fire. And I...I think...well, for me, just like hearing folks talk about how healing that was for them, that, you know, arts and performing arts has that...that power to connect, to heal, to uplift, and that it, you know, should be treated more as essential instead of frivolous. And that being the ones to tell our story to our next generation is...is really important, and something that we need to invest in. So, I just...I...I really mahalo you both for being here. And, you know, aside from the Ulalena building that we're talking about, and having the powerlines or whatever infrastructure go around the building, is there anything else that we can do to...to help support this work?

MR. JACKOWITZ: Well, kind of my dream is, as decisions are being made in the world that are, like I said, way above my pay grade, that you guys know that there's this little project called "The Epic Tale of Hiʻiaka" that would serve really well in a theater…in the theatrical space. And you know how to find me. And we'll...you know, we'd love to be a part of that renaissance of...of Lahaina.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. And nothing...nothing, really. I mean, I will reach out if there is, but last year we launched…as a way to economically stimulate, and also to bring hope, we launched the Lahaina Festival. So, we plan to bring that back again this year. Kind of behind schedule, but yeah, we're working on that. I just wanted to let you know that since economic is being discussed here. So, we plan to have that in November some time.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Awesome. Mahalo, mahalo. Okay. If there are no other questions or comments...

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Can you repeat that last November part?

MR. LEWIS: We're going to be bringing the...so the Lahaina Festival that we held last year will be sometime in November, latter part, just before Thanksgiving. We're looking at having the second annual Lahaina Festival. Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Oh, we're...we're also trying to plan something, a pop-up mākeke with Lahaina Strong and Daryl Fujiwara to coincide with the invitational tournament.

MR. LEWIS: Okay, good. Because that's when...actually, I just talked to Daryl about it. So, maybe we can make 'em one thing.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: We're kind of working with Kim Thayer too, with the ERC, but we kind of branched off and made our own Lahaina ERC. But yeah, if...if you're working with Daryl, he knows everything pretty much --

MR. LEWIS: Okay.

VICE-CHAIR PALTIN: -- what we're doing.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah, sounds good.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Any other comments, questions? Okay. Seeing...okay. I thought you was going to ask another economic development question, Chair Lee. *. . .(laughing). . .* Okay. So, if there are...or I'll invite you to share any closing remarks before we adjourn the meeting.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you, everybody, for the opportunity to come and share. It's good to see all of you.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. And *. . .(laughing). . .* mahalo again, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Jackowski...no, I'm sorry, Jackowitz. And mahalo, Mr. Nick Carroll, for being with us, and the cast members for providing your manaʻo during testimony. Okay. If there are no...any objections, we'll defer this item.

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS (excused: TK).

ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.

CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Members. Okay. It's 3:39 on October 20th--oh, Staff, good, yeah? Okay. And the Kōmike Aloha ʻĀina is now adjourned. *. . .(gavel). . .*

ADJOURN: 3:39 p.m.

kaʻā:min:251020min:ds Transcribed by: Daniel Schoenbeck

CERTIFICATION

I, Daniel Schoenbeck, hereby certify that pages 1 through 23 of the foregoing represents, to the best of my ability, a true and correct transcript of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not in any way concerned with the cause.

DATED the 6th day of November 2025, in Wailuku, Hawaiʻi

Daniel Schoenbeck