

TESTIMONY
Offered by David DeLeon
August 2, 2016

HOUSING IS IN CRISIS – THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

My name is David DeLeon and I am speaking in favor of BF-13 (2) as an individual. For the last two years I have been studying the causes of our housing crisis, and West Maui Land's Kahoma Affordable Residential Project was a useful case study in that effort. After learning of the trials by fire that project has gone through, I had to wonder why anyone would attempt to build affordable housing on Maui. So when I first saw this agenda, I celebrated – at last, action on Kahoma – until I noticed the status line at the end of the agenda – “No legislative action will be taken.”

That's a signal from the Committee Chair that this project will face the same fate as the Mayor's Homeless Initiative: it will be stalled indefinitely. That is not acceptable. The funds at least for the Na Hale O Maui portion of this item were dedicated for West Maui Affordable Housing. That's their purpose. The net effect of freezing them with legislative gamesmanship is to keep eligible working families out of homes they can afford. Will this Council seriously accept that?

The last time I checked Maui County was suffering a severe housing crisis. You would think the Council would be working overtime to get as many homes built, as fast as possible. Combined the Na Hale and Habitat elements of this item represent 22 homes for qualified local families. Deliberately sitting on this money would be an affront to those families and to those who have worked so hard to make this project a reality. The overall project will produce 68 affordable homes – homes that local working families can afford despite the red hot real estate market. The developer worked diligently to produce a 100 percent affordable project and stood by it – at great expense – in the face of relentless NIMBY opposition. For it to be deliberately jammed for some unnamed reason at this point would be inexcusable.

Why do I think this is proposal is being jammed? Because it is following the same pattern as the Mayor's Homeless Initiative: “No legislative action will be taken.” And after eight months – the proposal that was drafted to address an emergency has yet to be considered.

So if the Council allows the Chair's stall tactics to stand in this case, as well, I must assume that you folks do not think there is a housing crisis. Because if you believe there is a true crisis, you would not allow such gamesmanship to stall the construction of much needed homes.

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