

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

Council of the County of Maui

MINUTES

November 17, 2025

Online Only via Teams

CONVENE: 10:05 a.m.

PRESENT: VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Chair
Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Vice-Chair
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member
Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Member
Councilmember Nohelani U‘u-Hodgins, Member

EXCUSED: VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member

STAFF:

Clarissa MacDonald Legislative Analyst
Tiare del Castillo, Legislative Analyst
Megan Moniz, Legislative Attorney
Criselda Paranada, Committee Secretary
Lei Dinneen, Assistant Clerk
Ryan Martins, Council Ambassador

Residency Area Offices

Roxanne Morita, Council Aide, Lāna‘i Residency Area Office
Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros, Council Aide, East Maui Residency Area Office
Buddy Almeida, Council Aide, Makawao-Ha‘ikū-Pā‘ia Residency Area Office
Bill Snipes, Council Aide, South Maui Residency Area Office

ADMIN.:

Caleb Rowe, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Department of the Corporation
Counsel
Zach Edlao, Ocean Safety Bureau Chief, Department of Fire and Public Safety
Jon Kaneshina, Ocean Safety Operations Manager, Department of Fire and
Public Safety
Pat McCall, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
Duke Sevilla, Pool Manager, Department of Parks and Recreation

OTHERS:

Garrett Hall, State Trauma Program Manager & Acting State Emergency
Medical Services Chief, State Department of Health
Kirsten Hermstad, Executive Director, Hawaiian Lifeguard Association
John Pele, Executive Director, Maui Hotel & Lodging Association
Naomi Cooper, Deputy Director, Maui Hotel & Lodging Association

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

Testifiers

Mike Moran

Testifier 1 (The Royal House of Hawai'i)

Johann Lall

Kai Nishiki

Jordan Ruidas

(30+) additional attendees

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

CHAIR SINENCI: . . .*(gavel)*. . . Aloha kakahiaka, kākou and lonoikamakahiki. Will the WASSP Committee meeting of Monday, November 17, please come to order. I'm Shane Sinenci, your Committee Chair. And mahalo, Members, for taking the time to attend this morning's meeting. Just a friendly reminder for members of the public to please silence your cell phones and any noise-making devices. Members, in accordance of the Sunshine Law, if you are not in the Chambers, please identify by name who, if anyone, is in the room, vehicle, or workspace with you today. And minors do not need to be identified. Again, please see the last page of the agenda for information on meeting connectivity. Joining us this morning we have Committee Vice-Chair Gabe Johnson. Aloha kakahiaka.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Good morning, Chair, Councilmembers, community members. There's no testifiers here at the Lāna'i District office. And I'm alone on my side of the office, and I'm here and ready to work. Happy Monday, everybody.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo for joining us. Also joining us in the Chambers we have Member Tom Cook. Aloha, good morning.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Aloha, good morning, Chair. No testifiers in the Kīhei office and looking forward to the meeting. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo for being here. Also joining us online is Council Chair Alice Lee. Aloha kakahiaka.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Aloha, Chair and everyone. Thank...I'm home alone in my office. Nobody is here but me. I want to thank you for scheduling this matter so expeditiously. Appreciate it. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yes. Mahalo, Chair, for bringing it to our attention. Also joining us this morning is Member Tamara Paltin. Aloha kakahiaka.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Aloha kakahiaka and lonoikamakahiki.

CHAIR SINENCI: Lonoikamakahiki. Member Rawlins-Fernandez is excused for this meeting.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

Also joining us today is Member Yuki Lei Sugimura. Aloha.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. I just got trans...translation from Member Paltin about that Lonomakahiki [sic]; is that right?

CHAIR SINENCI: Lonoikamakahiki.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh, I said that. Yeah. We want more rain, so keep on going. Good morning, everybody. Nice seeing so many of you here. And looking forward to learning more about what you're going to be presenting.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yes. The makahiki season, our winter season, brings more rain to our island so --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah, good.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- yes.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: We need it.

CHAIR SINENCI: And then also joining us in the Chambers is Councilmember Nohelani U'u-Hodgins. Aloha.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Lonoikamakahiki, Chair. Aloha. Aloha, everyone.

CHAIR SINENCI: From the Department of Parks of Recreation we're expecting Director Pat McCall, should he show up after his morning meetings. But joining us this morning we have Mr. Duke Sevilla. Aloha and good morning. From the Department of Fire and Public Safety we have Ocean Safety Bureau Chief Zach Edlao. Aloha. Morning. As well as Ocean Safety Operations Manager Jon Kaneshina. Aloha, Jon. Mahalo for being here. For the Department of Corporation Counsel, we have Mr. Caleb Rowe. Aloha.

MR. ROWE: Good morning, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Good morning. Our Committee Staff helping us to conduct this morning's meeting is Ms. Criselda Paranada, Ms. Clarissa MacDonald, Ms. Tiare del Castillo, Ms. Megan Moniz, Ms. Lei Dinneen, and Ms. Jean Pokipala. Mahalo, everyone. Members, on today's agenda we have one item, Maui County Water Safety and Drowning Prevention, WASSP-1(14). And, Members, without objection I'll be designating the following as resources under Rule 18(A) of the Rules of the Council because of their expertise on water safety and the challenges we face in Maui County. Online, we have Mr. Garrett Hall with the State Trauma Program Manager & Acting State EMS Chief. Also joining us today in the Chambers is Ms. Kirsten Hermstad. Mahalo for coming this morning. And she's the Executive Director for the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association. Also joining us in the Chambers, we have Mr. John Pele. He's the Executive Director of the Maui Hotel & Lodging Association. Welcome. And online, we also have Naomi Cooper. She's the Deputy Director of Maui Hotel & Lodging Association. So, with that, Members,

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

if there are no objections, we'll designate them as resource persons.

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objection.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Members. Staff, do we have anyone signed up to testify? Okay. I'll go ahead and read the...in accordance with the Sunshine Law, testimony can occur at the beginning of the meeting but cannot be limited to the start of the meeting. The Chair will receive oral testimony for agenda items at the beginning of the meeting and as the item is called up on the agenda. Testifiers wanting to provide video or audio testimony should sign up in the Chamber, join the online meeting via the Teams link, or call in to the phone number noted on today's agenda. For individuals wishing to testify via Teams, please raise your hand by clicking on the raise-your-hand button. And for those calling in, please follow the prompts via phone- star-5 to raise and lower your hand and star-6 to mute and unmute. Staff will add names to the testifier list in the order testifiers sign up or raise their hands. And for those on Teams, Staff will lower your hand once your name is added. Staff will then enable your microphone and video and call the name you're logged on in or the last four digits of your phone number when it's your time to testify. Written testify [sic] is always encouraged and can be submitted via the eComment link on mauicounty.us/agendas. Oral testimony is limited to three minutes per item and will be accepted at the beginning of the meeting and prior to the Committee's deliberation on each item of the agenda. If you're still testifying beyond that time, I will kindly ask you to complete your testimony. Please ensure your name appears in Microsoft Teams as the name you prefer to be referred to or "anonymous" if you wish to testify anonymously. If you're in person, please notify Staff that you would like to testify anonymously. Otherwise, please state your name for the record at the beginning of your testimony. Once you're done testifying, or if you do not wish to testify, you can view the meeting on *Akakū* Channel 53, Facebook Live, or mauicounty.us/agendas. Again, mahalo for your cooperation in advance. And we'll now proceed with oral testimony. Staff?

MS. DEL CASTILLO: Chair, the first testifier signed up is Mike Moran, to be followed by the Royal House of Hawai'i.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Mr. Moran.

. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .

MR. MORAN: Aloha, Chair and Committe Members. Mike Moran. A big mahalo to...to you for scheduling this meeting on this topic, which is literally life or death for our residents and our visitors. And mahalo to...to Chair Lee for...for instigating the idea to get this going. I'm going to try and approach this from...even though it's all...you know, we...we're concerned about everybody's welfare in life but looking at it from the two different perspective [sic]. For the visitors, I would offer that...for several years I used to swim at Wailea Beach. And I...I would go very early in the morning before the...the visitors were coming out, before all the chaise loungers were on the beach. And you...you pretty much had the...the shoreline to yourself. And, of course, that time of

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

the day, vast majority of time, everything was pretty calm, so it was easy. And I...I'm practical. I swim very, very close to the shore knowing that there's no ocean safety officers there, but, obviously, most of the visitors do not. And when they...when they . . . *(indiscernible)*. . . well, the visitors should be going where there's...where the ocean safety officers are. When you look at it from their perspective, they're paying a very high rate to stay at the two major resorts that are right there at Wailea Beach. And to...for them to be expected to not go out to that beach and enjoy it but to...to drive several miles up to one of our Kama'ole Beaches that has lifeguards is simply impractical. So it...we have to do...provide some kind of safety there. And when I used to go early like that, I would...I could talk to the workers at the hotels and...and I trusted what they told me. They said, you know, they had employees who were certified to be...to...to serve as a ocean safety officer. They weren't...that wasn't their job, but they were on there. And if somebody called and said, hey, emergency, these guys could be right out there quickly. But, of course, that's not the same as having a safety officer looking all the time. And for the most part, if the visitors just went out— directly out, it was pretty...they were pretty visible. But quite often they wouldn't. They would go out to where water was deeper and then head south around the point. Now, they're not visible, and the conditions can change, and you're not only going out early in the morning. So we have to address something about that for the visitors, and I'm just addressing South Maui. I know this is an islandwide...and...and I'm trying quickly get to the...to our residents. Honestly, I was astounded when I saw how many of...of our residents here drown. How...how many of our keiki don't know how to swim. It seems incomprehensible. But . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . but that's a sterotype, oh, you live on an island . . . *(inaudible)*. . . by the ocean. Sure, everybody grows up here knows how to swim, and then when you hear that's not the case. And I try to get the impressions why. And one of the sad things...I said, well, isn't it taught in schools. And the feedback I got, well, most of the schools don't have pools so they have no way to...to...to teach swimming at the school. And I said, yeah, we have...but we have community pools. Yeah, but that's County. See, the schools are State and then the pools are County so it doesn't make much sense. . . *(timer sounds)*. . . I don't know how much of that is valid. And I'm sure you'll let us know that this morning. So, thank you very much for the opportunity to address this issue.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Mr. Moran, for your testimony this morning. Members, any questions for Mr. Moran? Seeing none, thank you for joining us.

MR. MORAN: A hui hou.

MS. DEL CASTILLO: Chair, the next testifier is the Royal House of Hawai'i, to be followed by Johann Lall.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha and good morning.

TESTIFIER 1: Aloha. I'm speaking before you guys all today as an allodial land tenant and descendent under Hewahewa. And so, this is for water safety and stuff like that. Concerns...the greatest concerns are the visitors and all of that. If you're a visitor, you shouldn't be going to any places that bring you harm or danger because you don't

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

belong...like, if you don't have anything to...like, any responsibility going there, no go, okay, because if my grandma shark wants to have a snack, she'll go ahead. And if my...if grandma . . .*(inaudible)*. . . wants to just swipe you down, girl, she'll swipe you down. But, yeah, don't be going to places where you guys no belong, number one. Then, number two, the greatest concern is how hotels is able for put umbrellas on top the beach and they stay charging people. What, I can do that? I can go to the beach, go...go charge people, go put one umbrella up. I...I going go. Shit, might as well. Then, will there be descendants called to all the parks, the descendants of that area from the Royal Patent, to educate the people how to act, and be, and take care the place when they leave and when they get there because, brah, I don't know. And, yeah, reminder, again, please don't go where you guys no belong because, yeah, there's no connection, you know. And then, like...yeah, you...you know...you know what I'm talking about, girl. Okay. But, okay, thank you. A hui hou.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Royal House, for your testimony. Members, any questions for the testifier? Seeing none, mahalo again. Staff?

MS. DEL CASTILLO: The next and final testifier is Johann Lall.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Mr. Lall.

MR. LALL: Aloha. Johann Lall. I'm testifying on my own behalf. So, first I want to second everything that Mike Moran said, he's a hundred percent right. I...so when I first started living in South Maui and going to Wailea Beach and Ulua Beach, it surprised me that there were not any lifeguards at those beaches. And so, I started asking people who knew about that kind of stuff why that would be. And I was told that it's because there's no County land to have a lifeguard station and all that kind of stuff. However, I think there's an opportunity at South and West Maui, and probably all over the island, to create partnerships between those resorts and the County to put lifeguards in those places. I'm sure they would all...you know, if they look at all the pros and cons, they would probably like to have their visitors be safe and also not to have to worry about the liability of having their own staff do lifesaving actions and...and stuff like that. It's also good for tourism in general. So, you know, I'm just...I'm just thinking if I was the visitor industry, I would want to put money into this, whether it's through taxes, or fees, or whatever, to improve ocean safety because these stories about people drowning, a lot of them make the national news. And that...I don't know how much impact it has on tourism, but it has to have some impact. And just, generally, you want as few people as possible to die. So I would...I would support anything that would improve ocean safety as well as safety in general. I'm assuming you guys are going to get a presentation, so...and I see there's folks from the State. So I would ask them if they see any patterns, spacially like geographically and between the islands. Like, if there's a difference between O'ahu, and Maui, and Kaua'i, and the Big Island as far as the numbers of deaths and how much a pattern they see with where there's lifeguard stations versus not. And another thing I want to point out is that visitors love lifeguards. Like, if you go to Waikiki, you'll see like influencers in front of those lifeguard stations taking pictures. So that's another thing, like, there's always reasons to increase the amount of staff. It also creates jobs for local people. So that's my...my general thing, is

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

to improve ocean safety by increasing the number of lifeguards. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Mr. Lall, for your testimony. Members, any questions for Mr. Lall? Seeing none. Did you have? No? Okay. Thank you for your testimony. Staff?

MS. DEL CASTILLO: Chair, the next testifier is Kai Nishiki.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Ms. Nishiki.

MS. NISHIKI: Aloha and good morning. I was actually hoping to testify after the presentation because I think probably some of the things I would comment on in my testimony might be covered. But I didn't...I didn't see a full slide set for the...for the presentation. So I'm just not exactly sure everything that would be...be covered but, of course, would like to advocate for ocean safety to get higher wages. And this is actually for all of our first responders, as well, because of the immense responsibility and also that it does support our local folks, our local workforce. And so, we definitely want to encourage...you know, like my son, I was encouraging him to be a ocean safety officer, but when you try and compare it to what you can earn in, you know, being a waiter or in the visitor industry, it's just not comparable. And so, I think that if we want to encourage our young folks to work for the County and serve our community, then we need to have it be a living wage. But I know you guys don't handle setting their salaries, and I know you guys support that, but I think that that's important. But for Kā'anapali, we have been advocating for ocean safety officers to be stationed there and to have lifeguard towers. And I know it's just been a constant discussion item. So I'm really hoping in this meeting you guys can nail down when that's going to be implemented. And hopefully that the State and the visitor industry will be taking responsibility for funding that. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Nishiki. Members, any questions for Ms. Nishiki? We have one for you from Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, thank you, Chair. I just was wondering if Ms. Nishiki was aware the County did fund it for the past couple years for Pu'u Keka'a.

MS. NISHIKI: Yeah. I had heard that, but I was just hoping that the...and then I had heard that the State was supposed to be reimbursing. And so, just...it...it would be great to have a concise update on that. Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, mahalo. Seeing no other questions. Staff?

MS. DEL CASTILLO: Chair, there is currently no one else who is left to testify. If somebody would like to testify in the Chamber, please let Staff know. Or on Microsoft Teams, please raise your hand. This is the final call. Three, two, one. Chair, it appears that no one else wishes to testify.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

. . . END PUBLIC TESTIMONY AT BEGINNING OF MEETING . . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Members, I will now proceed with our first and the only agenda item, WASSP-1(14), Maui County Water Safety and Drowning Prevention.

ITEM 1(14): MAUI COUNTY WATER SAFETY AND DROWNING PREVENTION

CHAIR SINENCI: Members, with the holiday seasons approaching and an expected increase in visitors, I wanted to hear from those on the front lines about the current efforts and challenges in drowning prevention and promoting water safety. This includes looking at areas such as staffing, signage, and community outreach. We're fortunate to have representatives from the Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Fire and Public Safety, as well as the State Department of Health, the Maui Hotel & Lodging Association, and the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association to participate in today's discussion. We also invited the Maui Visitors & Convention Bureau, but they were unable to attend. However, they did provide a brief update on their current visitor-facing safety education efforts, including visitor and media engagement for media familiarization, trips, and individual visits. The Bureau requires participants to sign a waiver and provide them with the sensitive destinations map, safety messaging in itineraries. All media itineraries include language regarding ocean and water safety awareness. On-island visitor outreach, the Bureau distributes safety brochures to visitors who stop by the office and to those who call for information, as well as other collaborative efforts. The Bureau continues to share the ocean safety video created in partnership with the Department of Fire and Public Safety and Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau to raise awareness among visitors. Again, our office received a memo from Council Chair's office requesting a 7(B) presentation on ocean safety. As we enter into the Lono season of increased rains and higher tidal events, we wanted to address the cultural shifts into the winter season. Members, also uploaded on Granicus number 1 is the recent *Maui News* article on today's subject-matter. And with that, I'll turn the floor over to our resources for opening comments, beginning with State Trauma Program Manager & Acting State EMS Chief Garrett Hall, as they have prepared a presentation. Mr. Hall, thank you for joining us this morning.

MR. HALL: Aloha and thank you all for having the State Department of Health. I will be presenting this data. Please...please note that Dr. Dan Galanis, our epidemiologist who normally is the expert on this area to present, has been out ill for quite some time. So I will do my best effort. And, in full transparency, I've been here in the State for about ten months. So if I make any mistakes or say any names incorrectly...or I may just show you a map and ask you all to interpret that map, you'll be able to see the names. I don't want to butcher or disrespect any of these locations as I go through the data. So with that, I'm going to share my screen. And then this presentation will be shared and made available for folks post my presentation, and I'll share with the Staff. One moment as I...so, again, as mentioned, my name is Garrett Hall. I'm Acting EMS Branch Chief

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

and the State Trauma Program Manager for the State of Hawai'i. I've been here for ten months within the Department of Health. And I'm excited to be here with you all because there's always a opportunity for improvement when it comes to drowning and water safety, especially here in Hawai'i. And let me just get past my technical glitch here, and I think you all should now be able to see my slides.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yes --

MR. HALL: And hopefully you all...wonderful. With that, let's...let's...let's jump right in. So the Department of Health...and, again, as I mentioned, Dr. Dan Galanis our epidemiologist and, also, our prior drowning safety coordinator, Jessy Hornor, put together these data to share. And I believe they're very similar to what you all seen in the news article from the public data request that we received here at the Department of Health. So just start off and jump right into the data. And this should be probably no surprise to everyone but...and why we're here, drowning is a significant cause of fatality for the State of Hawai'i. And this is preliminary data through the CDC that is publicly available for ranking all of the states. And you'll see here, behind Alaska, Hawai'i is number two in the nation for drowning fatalities. That is a huge area of concern for us when it comes to injury prevention and traumatic injuries across the State. So what...so a little more detail, the leading cause of fatality injuries in Hawai'i by resident and the victim type from 2020 to 2024. You can see here we have at the top our non...nonresident visitors versus the Hawai'i visitors. So injury deaths are (*audio interference*) identified through underlying causes of deaths and not contributing...contributing causes are not considered. So drowning were the second leading cause of any type of death behind heart disease in accounting for 14 percent of the...14 percent, 200 of the 1,442 total deaths. So was the leading cause for nonresidential...nonresidents under the age of 60, with that being 100 drowning or 21 percent total versus 96 from heart disease. So just to put that in perspective because we don't hear...we hear quite a bit about heart disease and all these other disease states but very little about the disease or trauma and drowning in particular. So you'll see there at the top 49 percent. For residents, it is the 22nd leading cause of mortality. And then drug over...drug overdose is, if you see that on here is...includes only unintentional drug overdose, so when you see that...just for the data. But five percent of Hawai'i residents they're in the ranking of where it falls from fatality injuries across our State. When we...when we dive into this data a little...a little more deeper, and we look at drownings in Hawai'i by environment...so these would be...those vers- total drownings versus swimming pools. So the total drownings is our...yellow box. And then you see our swimming pool drownings in the red line and our ocean and water...saltwater drownings in the blue line here. So this includes 26 deaths, or 6 percent, for drowning that we need additional information on. So just so that you're...you're aware of that. But when we go through this 34 percent, 16 of the 48 total of the victims...the swimming pool drownings...so when we're looking at the swimming pool drownings, the red line across the bottom, were under the age of six. So this included 12 victims who were 1 to 3 years. Less than two percent, five of the victims of ocean drowning, were under the age of 6 years. Most...72 percent or 34 of the 47 victims were residents. All 12 of the victims were under the age of 6 years. So when you're looking at this, there is an issue that needs to be addressed from the child drowning

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

and child safety standpoint too. Nineteen– 40 percent of the pool drownings, were at single-family homes, and the 15 in apartment or condo settings, and nine at hotels. So keeping that in mind, there are some safety measures. I know that the ocean and water safety, and the coalition plans have gone out and best recommendations for keeping pools at homes or apartments safe by having appropriate fencing, that clearly has proven to decrease these types of events in other states across the nation. That has an opportunity here for us because we do not require the same national standard of fencing for child...children around private pools. Can we move on? So when you see that 50 percent of our drownings are ocean related among nonresidents and 34 percent, or 16 of the victims under the age of 6 years old. Thirty-four percent of those two were 16...were 70 years or older. So, clearly, we have a broad spectrum of individuals that are drowning across the State but with the majority of those falling into that realm of nonresidents. Going to move onto the next. So let's drive in a little deeper into specific child drowning and some data that we have in regards to child drowning. So this includes residents and nonresidents when we're looking at the child drownings. And 22 of the drownings were among children residents. Drowning also is the leading cause among nonresidents in a total of 189 deaths. The autopsy records for 9 of the 12 young children who drowned were in pools. And below, 17, or 65 percent of the 26 deaths, were on O'ahu when we look into that. Seven of the pool drownings were single homes, most...nine of...or 60 percent of the 15 deaths, again, as I mentioned, were on O'ahu, so not falling into that realm for Maui. When we go...when we go down a little further, and we get into ocean drownings, let's drive into this. And then we'll have the map here coming up, too, that really highlights Maui and goes into detail of where ocean drownings take place by location too. So at a high level, there were a total of 60...67 in 2023. There was a total of 67 at the high point. And at the low point...the lowest point since 2010, there were 54. When we're looking at these, we did see a decrease between 2023 and 2024 for drowning too. So you can see across here we have our total ocean fatality drownings by victim resident status. We have the total– 800 between this time frame for 2015 to 2024 broken out by year. Our nonresidents is [sic] in the red and then our Hawai'i residents in the blue. And when we dive deeper into this and have another look at just the five-year ocean fatality rates in Hawai'i by resident, and we have that...victim on the left to residents versus County on the right. You can see here we have international, we have our U.S. mainland, our visitors total, and then Hawai'i residents for fatalities. Clearly, we have an opportunity for educating our guests here in the islands when they come to visit, about water safety. And then when we look down across County...and probably one of the reasons why you asked us to come is we look at Maui County with the 45 percent...45.1 there for the rate. So the rate for neighbor islands, 34.5, is more than double that of the O'ahu rate. So when we want to look at this and drill down into a little more detail, what are some of the obvious things that are different between the different counties? Could be things such as visitor population, could be the amount of visitors coming. We know for Hawai'i– it was the Island of Hawai'i– 13 percent. O'ahu, the visitor rate was about 8 percent. But then for both Kaua'i and Maui, it exceeds or is around that 23 percent. So there are some considerations that should be taken into fact when you're reviewing these data. So we go a little further into the data. We then break it down by ocean drownings in Hawai'i by activity type. And what...what actual activities were taking place. And when you look in here and you see . . . (indiscernible). . . emergent are more common for resident

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

victims than nonresident. We have 16 percent versus 4 percent, as well as free diving, 16 percent versus 1 percent. Nonresidents more likely to have been snorkeling, at 48 percent, compared to resident victims at 6 percent. So a big callout with the snorkeling-related incidents for nonresidents. Now let's look at this from a little different view, and this is where I'm just going to ask for, in advance, as I mentioned early, any apologies. So I'm going to populate, slowly, some of the areas of concern across our State that have high numbers of drownings. And we'll focus in...in the upper right-hand corner for Maui County and those areas that populate to. So now, you'll see these populate. We're going to have the...the Nāpili area to a 17. You're seeing the Pu [sic] area first at 22. And then if we keep on going and pulling up...and I do not want to even pretend to pronounce some of these names, so I apologize to you all. I'm probably butchering them already. But you can see the high areas that we have highlighted of occurrences across Maui over the time period from 2015 to 2024. And we'll...we'll provide this information available to you if you would like to drill down. It does have specific dots for residents versus nonresidents. You can see those occurrences. I'm just going to speed through the rest of the other counties so you guys can see that relevance compared to your specific County. But again, you will have this available for you, and we'll drive into some more details specific to Maui in more depth here in a moment. So, as I mentioned, again, the leading causes of death among nonresidents, and we have heart disease as stat number 1 and then drowning right behind that. So that's...I don't know if that's alarming to many people. But I know for me, when I first started to look at it, it was. Note, not shown, there are some homicides, fires, and bicyclists not listed here. But drowning are...drowning is an...a leading cause for nonresidents less than 60 years of age across our State. So let's jump into some County-specific data and trends. And I just put this in here as a reference on ocean drownings for O'ahu from 2014 to 2023 just as a baseline point. But what we'll do is, we'll jump directly into the actual island of Maui and look at the total ocean drownings from 2014 to 2023 and highlight those specific areas. So I'll pause for a moment so folks can read through each one of these, but you'll see we list out the total number of drowning victims, and then we also identify how many of those were nonresident. And so, just keep populating. So this is pretty powerful data when you start to look at the specific areas and regions of the island where these drownings are taking place and the occurrence of nonresident drownings. So I'm going to go back and pause there for a moment, just people can look at that, process the information that's up there. There's a lot of information there, but it highlights, really, the details of what we see when we're evaluating and drilling down into the data of where drownings occur across the island of Maui. And this will be my last slide and conclude my presentation, so I'll be open to any additional questions folks may have. I'll just leave this up here on the screen because this is really the heart, I believe, of the data, of what we were wanting to believe that we would share with you all. And at that time, I will conclude. I believe there's much better experts that are here with us, joining, that can speak about what are some of the injury prevention initiatives and efforts going on. But you all are probably also aware that the State has published and does have funding, due to multiple people, before I even gotten here, a water safety plan that's recognized nationally as one of the best. It's just been rolled out last year, and we hope to continue to implement that, too, and we will be able to share that. I'm sure other folks will speak about that coming up too.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, great. Mahalo, Mr. Hall, for your presentation. And Members, if you can hold...write down your questions to the end of all of our presenters today, and then we...we'll go to Q&A afterwards. I did have a request, next, to have Director McCall. I know he has to leave for another meeting. If...if you want to go ahead and address the Council Committee.

MR. McCALL: Thank you, Chair. Just the fact that the Parks Department is in support of the Ocean Safety Division of the Fire Department whenever we can be. Of course, we're responsible for the safety of our swimmers in our public pools. And I heard someone mention earlier the request for raises in salaries. I know it's not the Council that does this, but the pool lifeguards are amongst the most difficult position to recruit for. Our pool manager is Mr. Sevilla here, does an incredible job in getting them in, but it is a constant state of turnover due to...and...and mostly to the salary issue. But we are also proud to say that we have a pretty strong record of pool safety.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Director. Okay, Members, next– and mahalo for joining us this morning. Our next presenter will be Executive Director Kirsten Hermstad. Again, mahalo for flying in from Kaua'i to join us this morning. Go ahead.

MS. HERMSTAD: Is it on? Oh, it is. Good. Good morning, everybody. Thank you for having me. I'm here primarily as a resource for your future work on this topic. The Hawaiian Lifeguard Association is a Statewide nonprofit. We've been...we were founded in 1991, and it was at a time when funding... County funding for lifeguard programs and junior lifeguard programs was being reduced greatly. And so, Ralph Goto, at the time, who was the chief on O'ahu, founded the HLA in order to raise funds to fill those gaps. And we've gone on to continue to do that ever since. Our Board of Directors is made up of the chiefs of all four counties. So we have representation of all four county water safety departments and a few other [sic]. Jonathan is on it as well. So there's all the chiefs and then usually one additional lifeguard from each county. And a few community members with specialized experience to support us. Our primary mission is to provide water safety education and drowning prevention training to lifeguards, community, and the military. So we have...we do a lot of work producing training standards and things like that and providing free community water safety education. We focus on training the visitor industry folks, so the people who are forward facing who might be giving advice to visitors on where to go, we like to train them as well as community schools. And then we do get into the professional training for lifeguards and...and the military. Part of the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association...one of our programs is the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition, which was founded about three and a half years ago. And one of the major pieces of work that the coalition has done in those three years is to produce what you guys have a copy of here, which is the Hawai'i Water Safety Action Plan. Hopefully, we'll get all of you a real copy of it soon. I only had four with me on Kaua'i, so they don't live...they live on O'ahu, so I only had four to bring with me today. The plan is in response to the National Drowning Prevention Alliance. They challenged every state in the nation to create their own water safety action plan. California was the first to do it, Hawai'i was number two. So we're very proud of this. It was published in January, and we hope that the State will recognize this as, you know, an important piece of information and...and...what's the word I'm looking for...the guide for what we need to

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

do in the State in order to improve some of the data that Garrett has just presented to you. I think everybody who sees that data that Garrett just presented is shocked. You guys are a little bit more aware of it because you've been in the news. Kaua'i was in that position for the last few years that you guys are in now with the number one. So I think you're probably aware of it, but when you think about the fact that drowning is the number one cause of death for our keiki in this State, it just shouldn't be that way. It's shocking. And, I mean, I'm...this is my job, and I talk about it all the time, and I tear up every...every single time I say it. Number one cause of death for our visitors as well, it's just not okay. And the piece that Garrett didn't mention, and it is in your...in your plan here is that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders high...die from drowning at a higher rate than any other ethnicity. And, again, it just shouldn't be that way. We are a community of watermen, right, and so it really shouldn't be that way. So this is a guide. The book is great. It has a lot of the data that Garrett presented to you. It does have the island maps in it that show the hotspots. It also highlights programs that are working within the...in the State to solve this problem, nonprofit organizations who are teaching water safety basics in their communities as...as case studies for what can be done in other communities that are working and doing really amazing work in our State. The other thing that's in here is our recommendations for what needs to happen going forward in order to solve this problem. And the recommendation list is long. It really is long. The coalition met after the book was published and...in May of...in honor of water safety day and month. And we prioritize this list into kind of four categories, and one of the major ones is legislation, of course. So I'm happy to answer more questions about that going forward. The topic of teaching swimming in schools is a big one. We tried to tackle it last year with Department of Education and that might be a conversation for a different meeting. I don't know, but it is, obviously, a goal and should happen, but I think that it's a very heavy lift to make happen quickly. And so, there's lots of other things that can be happening in the meantime. And I...I, personally, believe that the...the solution for swimming in schools is probably a State/private sector/nonprofit kind of partnership where there's some legislation that says it needs to be done and that the State then partners with organizations who are already set up to provide that curriculum to the kids. I think that's probably the easiest and fastest way to make it happen. But, again, that's probably for another...another time. I think what's important, as you go forward, to think about, is that if this is...solving this problem isn't just about teaching people to swim, right? It's about teaching them about risk assessment. Should they go in the water to begin with, right? Being able to identify when it's safe and when it's not. The second piece to that is teaching people how to self-save. So if they fall in, what should they do? If they're suddenly in a rip current, what should they do? Even if you can swim, you can get in a rip and drown, right? So you need to teach people how to self-save, right? Teach them how to float, teach them how to call for help, teach them how to tread water. So those things can be happening long before you actually are trying to teach a young person how to swim in school. And they need...and those are the kind of things that the Lifeguard Association is doing. We're teaching those kind of skills to community members on...regularly. So we're here as a resource for you. I would love for all of you to have this and refer to it going forward. I would also love for all of you to go to our...our website and put your name in- email in for the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition so that you're hearing what we're up to as we go along. We...it's me who does the emailing. And so, I'm not going to send you 100 emails

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

a week, or a month, or whatever. I promise. But you will get important information about what's going on in the world of drowning prevention. So...and I'm here as...whatever you need...resource for questions going forward. Uh-huh.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Ms. Hermstad, for that opening remarks. Next, Members, we'll go to Executive Director John Pele. I'm not sure if Ms. Cooper is online as well.

MR. PELE: I'm not sure, but I can share a little bit. Thank you, Chair, for having me here. Thank you, Councilmembers, for having us here. Lot of data that was just presented. I'm here representing the visitor industry, that's...I'm the Executive Director for Maui Hotel & Lodging Association. And a year ago, when I started this position, one of the things that did come up was ocean safety and the drowning, not only of the community members but obviously of our visitor numbers that you've seen in some of these presentations today. And as we talked about it...this is nothing new. I know this is nothing new...new for you guys. So as we talked about it from the hotel side...and we have approached the Administration, County Administration about this to in just initial talks, is how do we get better as an industry and passing on the message, right, because not only is it affecting...and these tragic events that happened this...earlier this year, particular in South Maui, it not only affects the families of the victims, but it affects...we had some of the employees actually acting as life...lifeguards, right? And they...they take it...that's the...they take it as their responsibility. That's how...that's how involved they are in the process, but it's an emotional call for them, right? It...it's trauma on them, and we...we got to kind of recognize that. And as the industry, we got to recognize that. So our...our theory is, how do we get better as an association. I don't represent all the hotels. I don't represent short-term rentals. They're not part of our association. But I will say, as a whole, we want to see how we can progress. We will be reaching out to Ocean Safety as an association, to see what we can do better. But one thing that did...Ben Shank, who was the Manager and General Manager of the Four Season [sic], was extremely passionate about this because his staff did a lot of the rescues. I have a listing of what they've done. He's had...he since relocated, but the commitment is still there and from Wailea...Wailea Community Association. The concept that we're talking about is, how can we enter in perhaps a public-private partnership because we understand there's budgetary concerns. We understand there's workforce concerns when it comes to these jobs and these positions. I think a good example...I got an email yesterday...Kā'anapali Operators Association. I think they're donating the lifeguard...lifeguard stands. They're going to pay for it. They're going to build them. They're going through their SMA permit, I believe right now. And the County will staff those...man those stations. So...well, I'm not sure, but that's what I was told. But there is an opportunity, and there is conversations on our side as how we can enter into these kind of relationships if it eases some of the burden on...on the County to provide this kind of service for the community at whole and for our visitors, so thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Director Pele. Did Deputy Cooper want to add some opening comments? Is she online?

MS. COOPER: Thank you.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

CHAIR SINENCI: Uh-huh.

MS. COOPER: I am online. Thank you so much. I think John has said it well, and I will just reiterate that there's a confusion that often hits the industry. I'm a little concerned that if we do not staff, or we do not put in more effort, that the industry will take more of the toll, and that can affect a lot of the economic value, as well as Maui. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Deputy Cooper. Next, Members, we'll go to Ocean Safety Bureau Chief Zach Edlao and Operations Manager Jon Kaneshina.

MR. EDLAO: Good morning, Councilmembers and everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this critical matter of ocean-related drownings. You know, understanding the circumstances, every incident is a tragedy. These incidents, sadly, happen mostly outside of our established, guarded beaches, which underscores the need for a multiprong safety approach. Challenges we have, you know, is guarding the unguarded. What we do for ocean safety, we have our jet skis that are on the 911 system. And if there is an ocean-related call outside of our area, our Risk Craft Operators will get on their jet skis and make a lot of rescues. So we do have a lot of rescues outside of...our unguarded beaches. Nonetheless, we definitely do need to figure out how we can minimize ocean-related drownings and injuries, not just Maui but all Hawai'i. You know, we know that the visitors here, they come for our beaches and not just for our shopping malls. They see the beauty—they don't see the beast. Everyone sees the ocean as something beautiful—no one sees the dangers there. And it's, you know, our job to educate them and, you know, to minimize these injuries. And we cannot do that if we are not there at the beaches, only if they come to us. Strategies that we employ deep within the community to...includes involvement with modern media, public outreach program such as community events. And our...our educational outreach programs include visiting schools, teaching students about the safety awareness and hazards in and around the ocean. But still, as mentioned before, the schools that have pools, that actually get in the water, makes a better difference than teaching to them. You can talk to them about it but having them in the water to practice safety and stay afloat is a huge difference in Hawai'i. And it's shocking to know that we're surrounded by water, and we need more of that. We need more ways to get the kids in the water to, you know, minimize this. And it comes down to everything. Like, with the pools, yeah, we know from getting more pools open, you also getting the lifeguards there because you cannot have pools if you don't have people to support it. Our Junior Lifeguard Program is a big one here...not in only Maui, throughout Hawai'i. And it's a great...it's a great, great program to have. Maui...Maui, this past year, we had over 300 keikis [sic] from Maui County and seems to be growing and especially the younger ones. Since we introduced our guard start program, which is targeting keikis [sic] from the ages 8 to 11, it's been so many keiki that we have to turn away because we don't have enough people to help supervise the program, especially for span of control. But the amount of young keikis we have is tremendous. But we do have, on the other islands, a lot of nonprofits that help throughout Hawai'i to educate our keikis and, you know, minimize these injuries. We have media ways to approach safety. HLA is a big one. This book that Kirsten talks about, it is in there. A lot that we put together are in there, so definitely take a look at it. We have brochures that...we have, like, visitor brochures such as these. It's going

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

to come out soon. I'll leave this with you guys. There's a lot of safety tips in there, you know, that are...you'll find outside the ABC Stores. But again, it's up to the people to read and take it in. You know, you can provide all these pamphlets, and if they read it, you know, they take it in. If not, what can we do? Collaboration with the Maui Lifeguard and HLA, like I said, is a big one and the nonprofits to help because we need more than just County. We need help. As ocean safety officers throughout Hawai'i we need help to...with all the industries to help us with this issue. You know, the path of expanded services...like we talk...we talking about Pu'u Keka'a, some of the challenges we face, we know that's a target area for Maui County, especially. But permitting right now is an issue for us. The holdback, right now, for that is the permits. If we had the permits there, we can get...we'll...we'll put the guards there. All we're waiting for is the permits. The struggle with the permits we have is, you know, beyond me. We know that the lifeguard towers are not a permanent structure, so these...we need exemptions here. So if...Councilmembers, if there's ways that you can help us to get these exempted, whether it's going up to the Governor to have, you know, towers exempt from being out there, that would expedite a lot. But the struggle with the permits is a big issue for us. And youth services, like we talked about...for Ocean Safety right now hiring is a...is a struggle, not only for Ocean Safety but for other agencies as well. You know, the cost of living...the pay ain't the greatest, so a lot of people, you know, they rather go apply in the private sector because they need money today. They cannot wait to five years to make what they going get. So you find a lot of good people that they'll pass us up just to get...make the money for the cost of living. It's a struggle. And those that do pass, you know, they...we have a pretty rigorous physical agility test that some don't make it. We don't just want to hire any Joe Blow out there. We want to provide you with quality...quality lifeguards out there. So that's a struggle for us, too, is getting all the vacancies filled and doing what we can. And some of the stats...and what...what is really important that I want share with you is drownings. When I reached to Dan Galanis when I seen the stats for Maui County, I asked him, are these stats fatal or nonfatal because the definition of drowning...drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion or immersion in a liquid- water. It can be fatal or nonfatal. So a lot of our calls and lot of the stats I have...when I see the numbers, at first, I'm like, whoa, this is a lot high for Maui County. So just know that it can be fatal or nonfatal, but it's a little...it shows on the slideshows- show. So that seems a little high for what I thought Maui County would be. But if you're...from 2000 what, '20...'21 to '24, it seem a lot high. So I give you a little stats of what Maui County does, and it...this numbers, it grows every year. You can see the amount of visitors of people using the beaches. I'll share you...with you 2025, from January to now, of some of the things that we go through. So we have ocean rescues. We have 403 ocean rescues from January to now. Two hundred twenty of them came from rescue watercraft. So most likely that means the rescue watercrafts are outside our scope, so that's how much they are responding to. We also expanded our lifeguard hours. As you know, right now, we work ten-hour days. And data has shown there's a lot of rescues that happen after our previous [sic] hours of 4:45. So there is a big difference right there, that we are doing. Our beach attendance, we have almost five million right now that attended our beaches compared to last year of three and a half million, just a little over three and a half. We have preventive actions that our guys are up to date on. We have over 40,000, right now, current preventive actions they have done. They have come into contact with about

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

175 [sic] public contacts.

MS. HERMSTAD: . . . *(Inaudible)*. . . 175,000.

MR. EDLAO: Yeah, sorry, 175,000. Thank you, Kirsten.

MS. HERMSTAD: . . . *(laughing)*. . .

MR. EDLAO: . . . *(laughing)*. . . We have medicals. They're...they're up about 268 medicals right now, up to date, 40 of them which needed medical assistance. And drownings at our guarded beaches, what I have on data for us this year, there's one at our guarded beach and nonguarded, I have 11. And, you know, to conclude, we are committed to safety both on and off our guarded beaches. Our prevention programs are...are broad and effective and our goal is strategic, sustainable service expansion to keep our community and visitors safe. And if you guys have any questions, I'm open.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chief Edlao. Mr. Kaneshiro [sic], if you want...Kaneshima [sic], sorry.

MR. KANESHINA: That's okay, Chair. I get it all the time.

ALL: . . . *(laughing)*. . .

MR. KANESHINA: Aloha, everyone. I think Chief Edlao kind of hit on almost every topic pretty well. I kind of just want to mention how our guards out there are doing their preventative actions. So all day they're using our PA system to give general warnings to our beachgoers. Whether it be the winds coming up—it's not a good time to snorkel. Or we got some dangerous shore break—it's not the day for boogie boarding or body surfing. If the PA system doesn't work, they're going down to the beach, talking to the tourists or locals individually on a one-on-one basis. We can do that all day, which would make...makes a ton of a difference. But at all our resorts, there's no one doing that. I'm not sure what the hotel workers are doing, but our lifeguards out there, their main job is preventive. They're trying to prevent almost all the injuries. At all the major resorts you don't have someone there that's getting paid to do that. So they're going snorkeling when the winds are up. They're going to go bodysurfing or boogie boarding even though they don't...don't know what to do and they don't know the consequences. So if we can...you know, if there could be something else done to warn our visitors, oh, you know, what snorkeling, the wind is up, don't go out right now. Or the waves are up, no boogie boards are going out . . . *(inaudible)*. . . To touch on the Junior Lifeguard Program—Chief gave you a lot of stats— but we got to turn kids away every year. And it's heartbreaking. We only can do so much. It's only during the summer. And we...we barely get it done. Our guard...our instructors and our lifeguards are...you know, they're...they're working the beach, they're being instructors during the summer, and it's a lot for them. It's a lot for them. Be great if it could be a year-round program where we can hit the winter break, the spring break, the summer break, and just touch more of our local community with that. I know swimming lessons in Maui County—you can barely even pay for them. Even if you got the money, you can't even pay for swim

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

lessons. There's hardly any resources for swimming here on Maui unless you, you know, join a swim club, or what not. So something has to be done with that. As far as the visitors, you know, it's so hard. I know they have safety videos at the baggage claim. They have safety videos possibly when...when you're en route. But I don't...I don't know how good it works because when I go to...on a trip, and I get to the baggage claim, I'm just so excited for my trip, on what I want to do, I'm not going to be paying attention to a video, personally. You know, I'm going to be excited for my vacation. Also, you know, like right before you land sometimes you get the ag form here. If we played a video then, they're not going to watch it either—I don't think—because they barely want to do the ag form you're excited for your trip. I think maybe a better solution would be shortly after takeoff when you're...you know, the incoming visitors are still attentive, kind of excited, possibly paying attention more. That might work out a little better. I just brainstorming on ways we can try and cut down drowning. But all of our guys are working hard out there, and we love what we do. Yeah. It's just Maui's growing bigger every day. I'm just trying to keep up. It's hard sometimes. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Mr. Kaneshina. Next, we have County Pools Manager, Mr. Sevilla.

MR. SEVILLA: Thank you. Good morning. Can you guys hear me? Okay, sorry. Getting a little bit deaf over here. . . .(laughing). . . . So anyway, for me...our pools, the last time we had a drowning was maybe six years ago in Kihei. And that was pretty intense on that situation over there. And there's been other situations in the pool where older people have...well, they say that they drowned, but it was because of some kind of health reason—a heart attack or something like that. But...but because they found water in their lungs, yeah, and they drowned, and stuff like that, so the cause of death was drowning. For us, you know, it's been a struggle to provide learn-to-swim lessons in our pools. And one of the reasons why is because of our lack of people wanting to be pool lifeguards and there's not much money in that. And so, what they do is they come into the pools, and then eventually they learn stuff from us and then they go to ocean. Which is okay because then they going to the finest guys right here, you know what I mean—you moving to a good situation. The thing is, is that learn-to-swim is such a survival mechanism that we truly need for our kids. And I just going throw this out there, back in 1993 this lifeguard, Rowan Hayes (*phonetic*), for Ocean Safety came to me, and I was working with Maui Youth and Family Services at that time, and we created the Junior Lifeguard Program that is...is happening right now. So back then, it already started. Right now, these gentlemen are doing a great job...is that they need more help, and I see that because it's so vital. The pools, when we had enough lifeguards, we were doing our own Junior Lifeguard Program within our pools, and that started back with Nani Wilson (*phonetic*) a long time ago. I got to give some of these guys some...some kudos because they were out there, and they were helping. You know what I mean? They were thinking ahead. And so, you know, they were doing it. Right now, we have partnered with Hawai'i Swim Team (*phonetic*) to do learn-to-swim classes. You know, we've partnered with a swim club, and we want to do more of that. It's just that we got to make sure that we have everything in line. And that's one of the things. We've had...we've been having discussions with Lokelani Intermediate School and with other some...other schools because they're close by to provide classes. The only thing is that the time, the time is really important, and if we do have staffing at that time. And one

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

of the things that we do understand is, is that, you know, pools can get very territorial with who utilizes the pools. You know what I'm trying to say? It's like, I want my lap time—you know—I want my water aerobics time. And so, when you start taking away these times for certain individuals, you're going to get some pushback. The thing is, is that...we all got to realize is that what's important for the future is our kids. You know, and I started looking at that, and I...you know we...myself and my Recreation Technician, Sirena Lacour, we been kind of like brainstorming how we going to present more learn-to-swim programs. So that's why we're reaching out to the schools a little bit more, and the schools are reaching back out to us. So it has to be a group, a community issue. It's not just a one-time issue. You know, in my mindset, you know, one of the things, too, is that parents got to get out there too. You know, they come to the pools, and they expect us to watch their kids, you know what I mean? In reality, we have set rules. If your kid cannot swim, you got to be in the pool with your child, you know. And in other areas, is that they want to bring all these water wings. It's such...you know, it's not a safe thing to do. It gives them a false sense of security having water wings, you know what I mean? So we discourage that a lot of times. They say, why, why can't you do that, and we have to tell them because this is...it's not a great way of teaching kids how to swim. So we see that we have to step up the game a little bit more. But again, we need staff to help us do that too. Now, with community...you know, I started to think about it as we was talking. You know, we could do stuff if the County Council can put funds aside and go to the surfing community and ask them, hey, you guys like learn how to life...lifeguard? You guys like learn some lifesaving techniques? We bring them on board. Teach them for free. Why got to be spending money? Another thing, too, is...is that in the past, in the pools, we stop letting people, like...like, practice holding their breath, and stuff like that...you know what I mean? And I starting to look at this in a different venue because we have so many divers here in the islands, right? They fish, they dive, and stuff like that. They...they got to have a place for train. Sometimes the ocean is not the best place. You got to have some place to practice. You know, so pools, we need to change our mindset on that kind of stuff too. And one of the things that we got to understand is, what is shallow water blackout? Lot of people don't know, what is shallow water blackout. We got to educate why people go unconscious, and then they're drowning, you know what I mean? That kind of stuff. So a lot of education needs to be put out there. It's not only for our keiki, the people that live here, but the tourists, you know. To me, you know, I...I was talk...talking to my lifeguards at one time, and they said, hey, maybe we got to open up one snorkeling class within the pools. Maybe these people don't know how to snorkel, and we can provide, you know, classes like that. So sometimes we got to think out of the box of how to help community and, you know, people to be safe. Because even our local residents, a lot of them, they don't know how to snorkel. You know what I mean? So we...we got to look at that. But again, the funding, the staffing. All of that comes into play. The thing is we all got to be proactive in trying to find a solution for this. And yes, you right, we are surrounded by water. How do we work that? You know, when I first came out of the military back in '70...'78, yeah, what I found out was that, like, maybe 90 percent of the people couldn't really swim. When I say swim, you got to swim laps, man. You know what I mean? You got to be in condition because when you go in the ocean, you got to be in condition a little bit because when you swimming against the current, it ain't easy, you know. So I think a whole bunch of things that we think about,

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

we have to incorporate, you know, conditioning, education. It's...it's huge. You know, so it's just not one part that we could fix. It's a whole big part. And all of us got to be part of it. It's not just ocean safety got to fix them just because they have, like, towers there and towers here. Jon is correct, how we educate those people coming from the mainland? You know, that's a big one. You know what I mean? So we got to reach out to them. You know, it's like...it's not only mai tais and cocktails over here, and you can come and...and cruise, but you got to look out for your own health and safety too. So there's a lot of things that we can all, you know, consider and make better. It's just that how do we do that, the communication. And that's all I got.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Mr. Sevilla. Members, before we go into questions for our panel, we'll take testimony again. Staff, anyone else wishing to provide testimony?

MS. DEL CASTILLO: Chair, the first testifier signed up is Jordan Ruidas.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Ms. Ruidas.

. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR WASSP-1(14) . . .

MS. RUIDAS: Aloha. Aloha. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I did not know that this was happening today, but I was alerted. And if you guys don't know, my other half is an Ocean Safety Lifeguard. So this hits really close to home for me. I do...I do not have anything prepared, so I'm just going to speak from the heart. Our Ocean Safety Lifeguards are considered first responders, but I think that they should start to get paid like true first responders. When things happen on our beaches, they are usually the first ones to respond, even if it means they're going on the jet ski to respond. These men love their jobs, but it's really heartbreaking when I hear them have to talk about getting a second job, maybe thinking about leaving this current job due to the lack of pay. Honestly, they don't want to have to leave, but they're thinking about it because they don't get paid enough, and that's really sad. I...you know, talk about the drownings, I know you guys have been working really hard on getting a tower put at Kā'anapali. I know there's been some hiccups with Sheraton, but we really do need a tower there. Also, as far as junior lifeguard, my other half has done the Hāna Junior Lifeguard, I think, three years in a row now, which he loves because he's from Hāna, and he loves to give back to his community. But, man, I tell you, he goes into Hāna thinking going have 15 people because that's what signed up. And he shows up to the beach and get, like, 45. And...which he loves it. It's great, but we definitely needs to put more funding into these programs because more and more keiki are coming out, especially in our rural communities where they don't get a lot of opportunity to do stuff like this. So when there is stuff in those communities, they come out strong. But, yeah, I don't...I don't know what else to really say. I just really, really urge you folks to put more money into these guys' budgets because they do amazing work. They not only keep the tourists safe, but they keep our local families safe. Just this last week, when all of us knew we should probably not get into the water, our men were out there saving tourists from going into the water. And while that is their job, it weighs heavy on our hearts because we are praying that they come home to us and our families. And it's

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

very frustrating because due to the lack of knowledge with the tourists, our people are going and putting their lives in danger for these people. So I do agree, a lot of times it needs to be the hotels that put out more education. A lot of times these...these tourists say, oh, the concierge said it's okay to go out there when it's absolutely not okay to go out there. But also, a lot of people that end up in these situations are people that are staying in short-term rentals where there is a lack of educational materials. They...they think, oh, I come here all the time. I come here every year, I already know. . . .(timer sounds). . . I stay in a short-term rental, there's nobody there to educate better. I'm not going to take any more of your guys' time. Again, thank you for the chance to testify and give my mana'o. I appreciate you guys always. Mahalo nui.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Ruidas. And mahalo, Malu (*phonetic*). Members, any questions for the testifier? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

MS. DEL CASTILLO: Chair, there is currently no one else who is signed up left to testify. If somebody would like to testify in the Chamber, please let the Staff know. Or on Microsoft Teams, please raise your hand. This is final call. Three, two, one. Chair, it appears that no one wishes to testify.

CHAIR SINENCI: Did Mr. Nakoa want to provide testimony?

MS. DEL CASTILLO: He didn't raise his hand.

CHAIR SINENCI: He didn't raise his hand. Okay. Members, any objections to closing public testimony on this item?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, mahalo.

. . . END PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR WASSP-1(14) . . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, Members, let's go into our...open the floor for questions and comments. We'll go ahead for three minutes, and we'll start with Committee Vice-Chair Johnson. Oh --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- Committee Vice-Chair, we just got word that Mr. Hall was pulled off for an emergency meeting. So we...we don't have him for Q&A in this portion. But if you do have questions, Staff can...can send questions to the Department of Health.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. My question for Mr. Hall and Department of Health is, why is Alaska so dangerous? That was off...off...it doesn't make any sense to me. Like, why...I figure Hawai'i and Florida would be the leading drowning but where...Alaska was. That's...anyways, that's for a later conversation. But anyways, you know, the Junior

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

Life Program...Junior Lifeguard Program is so important. And I agree with what Jordan said, as well as Kai Nishiki, that we have to pay our folks better to do this kind of work. On Lānaʻi, some years we have Junior Lifeguard, some years we don't, and I don't know if that's on funding. So if anyone would like to speak to that. I...I know...just like what everybody said, it's when people here there's a Junior Guard Program, everybody runs to sign out. There's a very big demand for it. I really like the...the...the discussion over, like, how...you know, where should the funding go. You know, it...should it go into more PSAs, should it go into public-private partnerships, more jet skis, boats, and choppers? I...I think there's so much to be discussed on this when...when we look at how...how dangerous our...our ocean is. And that's maybe something someone can answer, too, is...is our ocean just extremely dangerous, or is just people just extremely ignorant falling into the ocean. It's really fascinating to see all the stats. It's crazy because there's so many people that I consider water people, watermen, waterwomen that use the ocean and...and yet we have such a high rate. And there's stuff...I think there's a lane for the County. A lot of the things in the Water Safety Plan I saw were State-based, but a lot of things here that we can look at on the County side. So maybe...I just...what Mr. Sevilla said about shallow water blackouts and more training for our ocean water users, I would support that. And I would...let's find a way to...to give more classes at our public pools. That's...that's what I'd like to stick with. So my...my question is, is...you know, we're around the corner for budget, is there something that the Department could do, like a big priority, big ask right off the bat? Is it more money for junior lifeguards, or more positions, more vehicles? Let's start with that one.

CHAIR SINENCI: Chief, yeah.

MR. EDLAO: Thank you. Just one quick one for Lānaʻi. Yeah. We do have junior lifeguards, but it's getting the kids there to participate. This year we tried. We only had two that signed up. So if you can do anything to help us, we would like a lot more.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Certainly.

MR. EDLAO: We got to figure something out because it did drop. The numbers weren't really high but just to get the kids on Lānaʻi to participate. So anything you can do for this coming year, we can start now to let them know that during the. . .*(timer sounds)*. . . summer we're going to have these programs. And --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: I would love that. Let's reach out. Let's... let's talk.

MR. EDLAO: -- and of course the answer...one of the answers to minimizing drownings is to put more lifeguards out there. But our lifeguards is not just drop a tower and put them there. You know, they deserve so much more--like proper facilities, restrooms, a training break, an office--they need these. Yes, money, of course, to get these positions but it's...it's get--it's getting people to apply for them. Like we all have talked about today, we can have...we can place 20 more towers. Are we going to have that much people to apply for them because we do have a recruit class starting this December, and we had eight positions starting. But we don't...we didn't even have enough candidates to fill, so our recruit class for this December is only four. It's finding the people to apply for

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

these positions. And it's true what Jordan said, there's a lot of our guards that are considering going elsewhere because of the pay. It's tough --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MR. EDLAO: -- living here in Hawai'i. And what can you do? They got to support their families. And as a chief, I would love for them to stay. But as a chief, I got to look out for their families too. And if going elsewhere so they can provide for their family so they can stay here in Hawai'i and not have to leave, by all means. I would hate to lose them, but they will have to do it. Yeah. The money is a big issue for us. And as Mr. Sevilla said, you know, we do gain a lot of pool guards but do...just know, we lose them to Fire too. They leave us, and they go Fire and Police. So it's right down the lane, but it's retaining our guys, you know, giving them the best that we can of... it is, the cost of living is hitting everybody hard in Hawai'i—not just Ocean Safety—everyone. You know, struggles...everything. Watching all you guys' Councilmember meetings, it's...it's money. Everything comes down to...it's...it's a lot to do with living here in Hawai'i. And, yeah, I wish we could put a lot of towers here. You know, the hotel has done a great job. And we got to keep in mind, too, that the hotel is not...their workers is not strictly public safety, they're providing a service to the hotel. So yeah, they can do a lot. Give them credit for what they do. Some might not know, and they might say it. But again, it's...they don't know any better too. You know, maybe it's our job too. We need to educate the hotel members too. And, you know, one of my goals, as a chief, that I still want to do, it's in there, and I would mention it to the Fire Commission, is instead of waiting for schools to come to us, do Ocean Safety presentations, we will go see them. I mean, I just --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MR. EDLAO: -- talk to Mr. Pele this morning to—for his information because I have some ideas that I want to do too for the hotels. But it comes down to our staffing too . . .(timer sounds). . . because we don't have much, yeah.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Oh, Chief, that's...that's my time. I just wanted to ask one quick question, what's the starting pay for a lifeguard? Or is that...do you need more time for that?

MR. EDLAO: Yeah, I think...I think it's around 43, 45, if I'm not mistaken...salary. Don't quote me, though.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah. You're going to need two jobs to...to do that kind of work. But I'll...I'll wait for my second round. I have more discussion. Thank you, Chief. Thank you, Chair.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Vice-Chair. Next, we have Member Cook, followed by Chair Lee --

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- for your three minutes.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: I want to thank you guys very, very...you're doing a great job in the presentation. It's very relevant. It really resonates with me. It's like the fact that permitting is a big deal for pool towers. I've talked to the director about that. And it's...it's kind of like common sense. Why...why is it so hard to put pool [sic] towers at the beach? Why does Planning Department require that you move the containers and all the service equipment someplace else because of quote, SMA? So that's one area that we're aware of. You know, that'd be great to collaborate and work. For the Junior Guard Program [sic], as far as funding, is that part of your Department's funding? Where does that fall in?

MR. EDLAO: The funding, right now, I know we got an increase, which helps us a lot. And we also have a big help from the Maui Lifeguard Association and the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association. So that plays a big part. But again, in...it's...funding has to do, but it's just the staffing. Like Operations Manager said, we turn away so many kids because we don't have the guards to help assist. Right now, this year, what we have done in the past year is because there's so many keiki signing up, we staff two ocean safety officers per district to run the program. But what we don't want to do is leave our beaches short and...which is...that's why we have to turn away—we don't have staffing. I wish we could have a program...or year-round ocean safety officers, this is all they're focus on, so we can have junior lifeguards during the summer, winter, and so on, a continuous one. But it comes down to staffing for us. A lot has to do with our staffing.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: So my follow-up question. As far as the staffing, we hear that across the board for the County, low-paid positions that don't pay a, you know, livable wage. And so, anyway, if you...the path...help...help us, the Council, the path forward of what potentially we could do. I think you've...we've all advocated for that many ways and many times. So it's not...you know, we'll give you the money, but we have to...I'm saying that I think the Council...I know I am, but I think the Council is willing to fund these programs to increase the wages to make these...you know, these vital services that are for our community. We have the Transient Accommodation Tax. I've always thought...I mean, the purpose of that was the tourism paying for the services, like the hotels, everybody. So anyway, you . . . (timer sounds) . . . how can we create funding? Or how can we pay people in positions if the positions won't allow it?

CHAIR SINENCI: Mr. Sevilla, did you want to --

MR. SEVILLA: Yeah. One of the things that I see for...to help with more kids to be in the program is transportation. They need transportation. That's, like, key. And I remember a few years when...where was I? I was working with Maui Youth and Family Services at that time and was running the Central Youth Center. That's where we created the Youth Trans with MEO. And MEO used to bring kids down from Upcountry to our...to our

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

center, and then they would go to all the canoe clubs because that's one...was one of the things that they needed to do. So I think...I believe partnership with...with the...the transportation infrastructures that we do have over here, it can happen, you know what I mean? It's just a matter of, like, providing . . .(timer sounds). . . the funding, and the commitment, and to see how...how it can work. You know what I'm trying to say? Is you got to organize that. And I...I think it'll work, you know what I mean, because that was one of the problems that I see when you...you got to transport the kids around, that's why . . .(inaudible). . . --

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair. My time is up. Sounds like that'll work.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Cook. Next, we have Chair Lee, followed by Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah . . .(inaudible). . . --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, Chair, Mr. Edlao is going to answer his question about --

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh. Sorry, Chief, go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- money.

MS. EDLAO: I just wanted to clarify via text from Chief Ventura, the starting...the salary for ocean safety officer after probation is around 56,000. I just wanted to clarify that. And then I believe Kirsten might have something to add, if that's okay.

MS. HERMSTAD: If it's okay?

CHAIR SINENCI: . . .(Inaudible). . . yeah, go ahead.

MS. HERMSTAD: Yeah. I hope this isn't too longwinded. So HLA, we developed a internship, Junior Lifeguard Internship Program. We received a grant to develop the program, and we piloted it on Kaua'i. And the intent is for that program to spread Statewide. We had thought we'd roll it out one department at a time. But after we did the first...the first pilot, everybody is like, we want ours now. So it looks like that's going to probably be happening soon. But we've learned a few things from that that I think can support some of what everybody is asking for. Part of it was recruitment, right? The...every department, Statewide, is having trouble with recruitment. They have openings, they want more towers, but they can't fill them. We thought, gosh, we have this great group of kids who are coming through the program every year. Some of them are not going to be on the college track, or they're going to need college jobs, so can we train them up so that they become...they are...can become lifeguards when they're 18? So we did the pilot. The first year we put in four kids. We trained them as if they were new recruits. So we put them through a 40-hour work week over spring break. They got exactly the same training as a new recruit would in the Department, and they far exceeded our expectations. In fact, Chief Vierra, wanted to hire them at the end of the week. The other thing that we started realizing was that those kids could become pool lifeguards.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

They could have a nice summer job with the Department of Recreation as a pool lifeguard from, say, age 16 to 18. The Federal hiring age for pool lifeguards is 16, that's not the case across the State. O'ahu does it, but the rest of the islands do not. So we're working now to go county by county to try to get the hiring age changed so that those Junior Lifeguard interns could have summer jobs at their pools, which then would allow them to teach more swim lessons during the summer. And they would be people who would be...would be willing to work for those wages, the pool wages, right? And they would be trained up and ready to go at 18 to go into the regular service. We've also, now, realized that we can double the number of kids we serve in Junior Lifeguards by using those interns as alaka'i in the program so that they're supporting the trainers...the professional lifeguard trainers, and they can more than double the number of kids that they're serving by using those interns. So there's some things we can do short of putting cash in pockets, right, that support the whole system. And so, I think one of the things that you folks could do is work with Department of Recs and your HR departments to see if we can get the hiring age lowered. Chief Vierra on Kaua'i is very interested in actually being able to hire some of those 16-year-olds in the regular service at...for, like, holiday staffing and things like that. They would never be in the tower alone, but they would be supporting on the beach, as well, at a younger age. So that's something that would be a great help. HLA funds it. We have been funding it through grant money to be able to pay these kids. It's pretty incredible to watch them work, and we were all very, very inspired. We even, at the end of the week, had them doing jet ski pickups because they were just, you know, so on it and so well-trained. So it's just a small thing that you can do. Additionally, some of the training that you folks are talking about, we're already doing. So we do a Beach Guardian program that teaches community about how to activate 911, what to do if they're a first responder, before a first responder gets there, all of those kinds of things. So those kind of training programs are available through HLA for the community, the visitor industry, and for schools, et cetera, et cetera. So we can provide support to the Department for that as well.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: Can I add something?

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, go ahead.

MR. EDLAO: To touch up with Councilmember Cook, so a goal I have too, for Ocean Safety and with how you guys can help us too...because I'm looking at creating, like, an Ocean Safety Prevention Bureau, which is primary focus on education. So when you guys see the positions come in the budgets, I'd appreciate ayes. Yeah. You'll see a lot more within the five years because we're growing it. And that's my goal, is to...to get away from the guys that are working on the beach too. So you guys will be seeing things coming in the budget. And the request for these positions is ultimately for minimizing drownings so it's...and I'm sure we can speak about that when the time comes, but you'll be seeing it coming in the budgets the next five years.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Chief. Next, we have Chair Lee. Go ahead, you have three minutes.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. Chief...is it Edlao? Chief Edlao?

CHAIR SINENCI: Edlao, yes.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Edlao, okay. So I...I hear a lot of concerns, but I also hear a lot of answers, and I'm wondering why they haven't been implemented, yeah. So you have a Council here that is very supportive of what you do. But what we need will be a plan and...which is prioritized as well as specific funding requests. So that's up...you know, uppermost in our minds, and hopefully you can provide that to us before we work on the budget because without having a concrete idea of what you need, it's hard for us to proceed because as the legislative body, we don't get to participate in the...with the administration of your program. Like, for instance, with regard to prevention...and you may want to break them up into, like, maybe four or five different big categories: prevention, equipment, training, et cetera...compensation. But prevention, where people...the kid...the kids could be trained by...by...in schools with presentations from retirees. It doesn't have to be, you know, current workers. Could be retirees because you're...you're short-staffed already, as you say. So bring them in. And then, with uniforms. And then you could also have the hotel association or others help you with public information and education. You know, they...they could handle that part. And then with regard to the DPS, and civil service, and so forth, this is where maybe the...the Council can help you. We're more than willing to provide the adequate funding that is required and seems to be lacking. But we...we do need a plan, and it can't be, like, all over the place. It has to be a specific plan with specific information on what your requirements will be. So hopefully, you and others can get together and...and...and divvy up the responsibilities so that we will know exactly what you need. And believe me, every Councilmember, I'm sure, will be more than help...happy to support what you're doing. And then, maybe at some point, somebody can provide us a clarification of drownings and non-drownings. I...I think . . .(timer sounds). . . that's kind of misleading. So maybe, Mr. Edlao, you could tell us more about that. Which stat do you follow?

CHAIR SINENCI: Chief.

MR. EDLAO: Okay. So for the clarification with drowning and fatal/nonfatal, that would be more for the EMS because when I reach out to Dan Galanis, the numbers they had were a lot higher, it seems, as far as fatal drownings. So a lot of people, they hear drownings, they think it's fatal. But the...the stats that Dan said he got from EMS for the EMS, whatever they submit. For Ocean Safety, we do not really know the fatalities unless we see it because we don't get that kind of information because of the HIPAA law. So when we're treating patient, and they leave, that's what we know. But it comes down to whenever it goes to the ER, that's how the stats get provided, I believe. Mr. Hall is not here to talk on it, but that'll be more for the State. And then I'm not sure if you were...what Kirsten talked about, if you got misdirected a little bit, that is for Maui County. A lot of the things she mentioned is not what we're doing, so it's not for Maui County.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

MS. HERMSTAD: Not yet.

MR. EDLAO: Not yet. So we haven't even talked --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: -- about that part for Maui County. But, like, for my part is expanding Ocean Safety. Our admin staff is for...in the future of creating a prevent...Ocean Prevention . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . Bureau.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah. And then...then who...whoever talked about risk assessment, that's something to teach the young kids. That's very important because, you know, they...they need to make a decision whether to jump in that unknown water area or not. And it has nothing to do with knowing how to swim. It's more like trying to survive in a situation you're not familiar with. So I think, you know, you going to the grade schools every year and reinforcing that information with these young kids, that's going to be probably the most important aspect of prevention. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo.

MR. EDLAO: . . .*(Inaudible)*. . . that is what we talk about, what we teach our Junior Lifeguard Program kids and all the Ocean Safety presentations we do. That is the topic--prevention and risk assessment.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chief.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair. Next, we have Member Paltin, followed by Member Sugimura.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. My first question is, if they could be transmitted to Mr. Hall, would be if Hawai'i is number two in the State, why are we...for drownings, why are we not following the national standards for pools? Also, if he's open to clarifying the data, like Chair Lee said, fatal versus nonfatal, as well as if there is an underlying medical condition because, you know, if somebody dies from a heart attack on land, it's not a drowning. But if they die from a heart attack in the ocean, then it's considered a drowning. So if they're open to getting more accurate data in-- like, clarifying those statistics. For Ocean Safety, I was wondering if you folks keep a record of how many kids are turned away annually from which districts. So if we did have money and staffing to support that, we would know where to put it. And then, for the pools, I think we had a similar Hawai'i Swim Club learn to swim in Hilo, but we had to use Hilo High School pool because it was treated as a fundraiser where the swimmers could earn money for travel for, like, States, or whatever, off-island swim meets. I don't know if that's a possibility here where if the swim teams provided a learn-to-swim service, they could use it as a fundraiser. And maybe there could be a number of waivers, if people can't afford to pay for the swimming. I don't know if it's, like, concessions. And then, I guess, for Mr. Pele, do they still have that visitor industry

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

television channel where they can air, like, multiple videos and maybe partner with the schools. Like, I remember Ms. Suzuki made a video about the tubes that the Rotary had put up around the island but more than just one video because there's all kind of aspects. So those are my questions.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I don't know if the Staff needed me to repeat any of the transmitted ones or they got it.

CHAIR SINENCI: She got it.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mr. Sevilla.

MR. SEVILLA: So, you know, we talk to our HR about lifeguard shortages. And so, we've come up with a little plan, and the plan is to do on-call 16-hour weeks. So we had to take one position, and we kind of chopped it off a little bit. And so, we going to...we...we got...we're going to . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . put down eight positions to do on-call so we can get more people on staff when we short. Now, there was a thing done years ago, before I came into, you know, the County, Parks, and I think it was done by Allen Shishido guys, I believe. And what they did is they...they broke down how much staff needed in each pool. And right now, I'm below the minimum because some of the pools are running only three staff and those pools supposed to have at least six, seven staff, Kihei pool. You know, so we are running short. And I got to give credit to my lifeguards because they're out there doing a little bit more than what they're expected to do, you know what I mean? And we are doing our best to keep the pools open, to keep the community happy, you know. And so, we are looking at every which way to help keep the pool staff. And with the learn-to-swim, Hawai'i...Hawai'i Swim Club, they...they do it, you know, on...it's a freebee thing.

MR. KANESHINA: Maui Swim Club.

MR. SEVILLA: Yeah. Maui Swim Club.

MR. KANESHINA: Maui Swim Club.

MR. SEVILLA: Sorry, Maui Swim Club. And the thing is...and that's with Kiki Matsumoto. And, you know, they do a great job. This last July, August, they did 100 kids, you know what I mean? So they help out quite a bit. And we got to reach out to other swim teams if they want to do that, too, you know. And, yeah, you right, I think there is some people that want to do it as...what you call that...as a fundraising kind of thing. It's just something that...it has to go through permits to see how that can work. I've never done that before, that's why.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Maui Swim Club, they only teach in Central?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

MR. SEVILLA: Yeah, only Central.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: But most of the drownings is in the West and South Side, maybe that's why. Oh, I think Jon wanted to...

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, Mr. Kaneshina, go ahead.

MR. KANESHINA: Just to touch on Maui Swim Club, and it's just affecting the local kids, yeah. We're not...there's no visitors. But we turned away about...almost 300 people when we...we take...we only can take 100 because it's all kōkua, and we can only do what we can do. So we take 100 every summer. But this past summer we almost turned away about 300.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And is there any plans to implement the intern program like Kaua'i?

MR. KANESHINA: That...that is unsure. We haven't really talked about it much with our Department. But that's something that sounds very interesting, very interesting-- but we would have to talk about it more as a Department.

MS. HERMSTAD: Sorry. Our plan is to all...support all four counties in developing an internship program.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And were there County of Kaua'i ordinances that you needed to change to allow for younger kids?

MS. HERMSTAD: No, uh-uh. Mayor Kawakami was very supportive. We went to him first. He was very supportive. . . .(timer sounds). . . And no, there was nothing that we had to do specifically to allow them. And primarily...and HLA paid for it, so the County didn't have to pay. Although, since we've had the program, the Mayor is now behind putting it permanently in the budget so that we can pay the interns. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Nice.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Next, we have Member Sugimura, followed by Member U'u-Hodgins.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you. This is so interesting. Really, really appreciate it. And I am very interested in your statement about creating a bureau. What does that mean?

MR. EDLAO: Well, I'm sorry, more like a division. So, like, right now we have our ocean safety officers guard the beach. Where, primarily, if we can have additional staffing to create a division where their focus, like I said, is mainly year-round to education. Because what I see...and as of today, even prior...Commissioner Pele can attest to that too because I brought it up, is education-- outside...how we reach the visitors? What do we do? We know that there needs to be more because...because of...of all the drownings.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

So if we have a division in the Ocean Safety Bureau, they go out, educate, you know, to work with the hotels, work with the schools. They reach out, not wait for those guys to reach out to us. Year round, that's a full-time job, going out educating, spreading the awareness, working on focusing on social media because as ocean safety officers it's tough to do this while you're safeguarding the beaches. And, you know, that's my vision in the, you know, years is to expand, but we cannot just expand the bottom. Right now, we have 79 ocean safety officers, and our admin staff is thin. So if we grow the bottom, we got to grow the top, and we need to branch off. It'll be similar to, like, how the Fire Department, you have your Health and Safety Bureau, your Fire Prevention. We're growing at that pace, and we need to expand. I talk to it...this idea to the Chiefs in our conference and, you know, they thought it was a great idea as well because there's no division in Ocean Safety specific to focus on education. We need to look otherwise instead of keep things same. And to expand and to go that route, where their primary goal is to focus on that, that could be a big factor in minimizing --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Drownings.

MR. EDLAO: -- these drownings, yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah, or overall safety.

MR. EDLAO: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So are you talking about, then, based upon what you just explained, kind of like what Chair Lee was talking about earlier, is...is primarily staffing and you would need office space? I mean, it sounds like you need to establish some kind of permanent situation.

MR. EDLAO: So there's a office space that we're working on. Right now, there's paperwork that needs to be signed. But we do have a future location of Ocean Safety with...and a big size lot to...it'll be great. Just that things need to be signed. It's at the old Hertz Rent-A-Car at the airport. So it's worked out with the State. But that still is above me, with Chief Ventura. That is in the play for our new headquarters. And then, like, support from you guys, of course, when we try to expand our staffing, it's for these reasons. You know, to...we trying to do everything we can to minimize it and education is by far...we need to get it out there because we know that there is a lack of . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . education from what we see in the data, right, so...

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. So we'll look forward to hearing more from Chief Ventura and yourself during budget session, then.

MR. EDLAO: Absolutely.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah. Okay.

CHAIR SINENCI: . . . *(laughing)* . . .

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

MR. EDLAO: And we look forward to your approvals.

ALL: . . .(laughing) . . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chief. Next, we have Member U'u-Hodgins for your three minutes.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, everybody, for being here. I appreciate the conversation. I wanted to talk a little bit about our deadliest catch, which is 'opihi and fishing from shore. So I see this graph here, which I do...I do appreciate. And so, I think, for our local people, we could do our own risk assessment and apparently the yellow-bellied 'opihi is worth the risk, clearly. I appreciate it, but it's...it's hardcore. And so, there's that. And I think Member Johnson was asking about how come Alaska is so high, but they also have a deadliest catch, right? They have the whole show—right—the crabs. But I did want to talk about how we can better partner with our visitor industry to do exactly what you were talking about. Officer...Captain Kaneshina, how can I address you? Captain?

MR. KANESHINA: *(Audio interference)* --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Operations.

MR. KANESHINA: Operations Manager.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Operations Manager, okay. Thank you. I appreciated your comments because I feel the same. I don't watch the videos either. And it's not that I don't mean to, I just don't. I'm trying to look for my luggage. I'm trying to figure out what I got to do. The form is now online, but nonetheless we're not watching, we're not paying attention. I think, though, the way maybe we can do that is, one, partner with John folks and the people who bring them in and kind of got to be a little more gruesome about what it looks like. Like, I remember when we had to do the drinking and driving stuff in high school, they showed you the pictures of what it looked like, the car accidents. Right now, we have, like, a beautiful flight attendant talking about the risk assessment. Nobody is looking. Everybody is just looking at that pretty girl or the handsome dude. No one is listening to the stuff coming out of their mouth, you know? And I don't blame them, but I'm just saying, that's not what's happening. Could we be a little bit more realistic and be honest about what it looks like? And can we partner with you folks, John? And if we can't get the airlines to do it, when they check into the hotels, can they give them a pamphlet, like, hey this is our winter months. We're known for surfing, don't go out in the water. John, can we do that with you folks?

MR. PELE: Yeah, I think that...oh, thank you for the question, Member U'u-Hodgins. And I think that is something that the industry has been kind of thinking about. And to go back to Member Paltin's question about the visitor channel, I think there is a visitor channel, Spectrum 153. But again, as we speak about it, and we talk about signage on the beaches, can we --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

MR. PELE: -- put signs out.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah. But we're going to need --

MR. PELE: . . .*(Inaudible)*. . . --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: -- an active audience.

MR. PELE: Yeah. And our experience, like you said, it's hard to get that message through with --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah.

MR. PELE: -- just TV stations and signs because the guest got to want to embrace it, right? We understand --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Right.

MR. PELE: -- it's a two-way street. So how do we get that message out to our guest. Like, hey, guys, you guys need to reach out. Like, some...some of this can be prevented. And the last testifier, that's a big deal for us too, right, because we got to understand these officers are putting their lives on the line on a daily basis.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: For sure.

MR. PELE: I don't know if people process that, right? We think of firefighters and policemen. Ocean Safety, to the visitor . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . it's the same thing --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah.

MR. PELE: -- right? Daily basis, putting their lives on the line. And when it's done by ignorance maybe...I don't...I'm...I'm sorry if I offend you by using that word, and I don't want to offend our visitors. It's...it's a big deal.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: . . .*(Inaudible)*. . . yeah--

MR. PELE: It's a heavy weight, right, on the industry.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: --they don't, maybe, understand their physical limitations.

MR. PELE: Yeah, right. I mean, I've...I've been at hotels, and people have asked me, can we swim out here. And I've gone, hey, do you see...do you see anybody else swimming out there? Like, no . . .*(inaudible)*. . . --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Can I ask one more question because I know we've got

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

only two more minutes left. I heard your comment about permitting, and I know that's difficult because they need the bathroom, and the storage, and the lifeguard tower. John, can we partner with the hotels to provide . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . restrooms and storage, and then maybe we can work on the EP *(phonetic)* permitting, especially for the black sites that's, maybe, listed in here, where we can get the towers up quickly? And then, can our officers use hotel bathrooms and storage in these black site areas if...if at all possible, if there's a nearby hotel?

MR. PELE: That's definitely something that I can bring up . . . *(inaudible)*. . . --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Does that work for you folks? How does that --

MR. PELE: Absolutely I can bring that up.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Is there...is there a requirement of how close the bathrooms and the storage needs to be for your...in relationship to your towers?

CHAIR SINENCI: Chief.

MR. EDLAO: It's not how close, but it's knowing that they have proper facilities and not that of the general public for them --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: -- to decompress, and all that. But the real issue the permitting.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: So any help you guys can do with the permitting, figure out a way around this, that would be a great big part of that. Is--

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: -- this permit process.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: And that's like the State, though, because the beach, right, it's not necessarily us. Or how...how can we help, the County?

MR. EDLAO: I'm sure you guys have connections, maybe reach out to the Governor's Office, but I'm not sure --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: I...I just...I just went...I just text --

MR. EDLAO: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: -- Governor's Office and --

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

MR. EDLAO: I'm not sure how all that process works too.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: -- hopefully they get back to me soon but okay.

MR. EDLAO: But as far as getting all these exemptions, I should say...we need exemptions to get our towers on the beach.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: How much does a life tower cost, a guard tower?

MR. EDLAO: Fiberglass tower is about 120,000 maybe, give or take.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: But to build one, it's a little bit cheaper . . . *(inaudible)*. . . Pu'u Keka'a, I believe, but we had to change plans to make it not a permanent. But it's still...it's still a process. And any help we can get with Pu'u Keka'a right now --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MR. EDLAO: -- really appreciate it.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: No. It's not. It's...it's more than just SMA, it's...it's...yeah, it's beach. Okay. Thank you so much.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member U'u-Hodgins. Members, for a second round I see Member Paltin. Go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I just was wondering if the permits had been applied for because when I called Director Blystone if she could expedite them, she said they hadn't received any permit application. But this was during the Junior Lifeguard Competition. And just was wondering if they've been applied for since then.

MR. EDLAO: So as far as I know, right now, Fire Department CIP Coordinator, he -- they're in the works with hiring a company to oversee the whole project to do all that, so that's where they at. I'm not sure if they --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Applied for the program --

MR. EDLAO: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Yeah.

MR. EDLAO: -- but it's still in that...even to hire a company to do it, it costs...really, it's expensive...expensive.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Yeah, yeah because I was...I was trying to help you guys expedite it, but they said we cannot expedite a permit if we didn't receive the application yet. So

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

I think that's where it's at.

MR. EDLAO: Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: Member Paltin, did you have a follow-up for Director Pele?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I think he answered --

CHAIR SINENCI: He answered your question.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- my question in answering Member U'u-Hodgins' question. I mean, Ms. Suzuki does some great videos with the kids. And I know she did the Rescue 2 one but, like, I agree on it needs to be more graphic because people don't get it otherwise. And I know that's not really welcoming but it's better that they return home alive than feel ungressed [sic] out, I guess.

CHAIR SINENCI: Vice-Chair Johnson, did you have a follow-up for your second round?

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair, my questions were answered. I look forward to discussing this further. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Chair Lee, any follow-up questions for our panelists this morning?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: No, but thank you. It's been a very good discussion, look forward to the next one. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. With that, Members -- oh, we have Member Sugimura, go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Just...just a quick one. Is that Life 2 [sic] program still going on? I remember we heard a lot about it at one point. I think Mr. Yamamoto (*phonetic*) or...or whoever --

MS. HERMSTAD: The Rescue 2 --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Rescue 2.

MS. HERMSTAD: -- I was just thinking about. I was hoping there would be an opportunity because the Rescue 2 Foundation received the State grant and aid to add 400 rescue tubes Statewide. And so, we just had a meeting last week with all the chiefs. We're going to be geo-tagging all of the existing locations and the new locations. And the chiefs are all coming up with a plan on where the additional rescue tubes will be placed. So within the next year we will have, throughout the State, over 400 new rescue tubes.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: That's fabulous.

MS. HERMSTAD: Yeah, really good news.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: All right. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo. Did...before we adjourn, did any of our panelists want to...have...have any closing remarks for us? That was a good discussion, but we did want to thank you, Mr. Sevilla, Manager Kaneshina, Chief Edlao, Ms. Hermstad, for coming all the way from Kaua'i, thank you. And Director Pele, as well as Deputy Cooper online, and Mr. Hall.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: I have one more thing.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: This is probably the most important. Look on page 24, got her picture on this report. . . .*(laughing)*. . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, we . . .*(laughing)*. . .we have our own lifeguard --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: You have to get her autograph.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- on the...on the County Council.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: . . .*(laughing)*. . . Have her sign her picture.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: Staff, is it...is there anything else before --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: . . .*(laughing)*. . .

CHAIR SINENCI: -- we defer this item?

MS. MACDONALD: No, Chair, just your recommendation.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Members, any objections to deferring this item?

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS (excused: KRF).

ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you. And again, mahalo for...everyone for being here answering all of our questions...great questions. And...and we look forward to continue to...to work with all of you moving forward. Thank you. Members, with that the Water Authority, Social Services, and Parks Committee meeting of Monday, November 17, is adjourned. It...it is 12:05. . . .*(gavel)*. . .

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

ADJOURN: 12:05 p.m.

wassp:min:251117:crp

Transcribed by: Tricia Higa

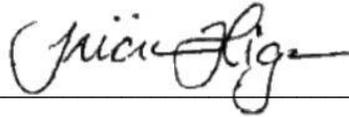
WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

November 17, 2025

CERTIFICATION

I, Tricia Higa, hereby certify that pages 1 through 38 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 27th day of November 2025, in Mililani, Hawaii

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tricia Higa", is written over a horizontal line.

Tricia Higa