

AH Committee

From: Gordon Firestein <gfirestein@seapact.com>
Sent: Friday, September 13, 2019 2:26 PM
To: AH Committee
Subject: Makila Farms 201H AH-1(3)

Aloha, Committee members,

I am writing again to urge you to disapprove the Makila Farms 201H application.

First: If I understood the developer's remarks at the last meeting, the full build-out of this project would include potentially 49 dwellings: 19 affordable, 15 market rate, plus up to 15 additional farm dwellings, some of which may be on the affordable lots. The developers do not want to exceed the 49-dwelling limit because a sewage treatment plant would be required for 50+ dwellings.

In other words: 49 dwellings on the three lots where, according to the sliding scale provision of the original subdivision, there can be at most 6 dwellings.

If you approve the exemption, you will be allowing dense development in an area where it was prohibited by the original subdivision rules, and where the community has expressed its desire to prohibit such development as part of the ongoing West Maui Community Update process. Do you really want to do this when there are better, more appropriate locations for affordable housing on the West Side?

Second: the risk from wildfire and the difficulties of evacuation are still not addressed adequately in my opinion.

In all of the testimony, I have heard nothing from the developer or the fire department representatives about any actions taken or proposed to reduce the risk in the surrounding fallow fields. It seems to be taken as a given that nothing can be done about the vegetative fuel that will surround the affordable homes on four sides. The strategy seems to be to rely on the fire department to keep wildfire approaching from those fields from igniting homes inside the development. The fire department, for all its skill and bravery, wasn't able to succeed completely with the Hurricane Lane fire. Homes, pets and farms were destroyed. Luckily, only one person was seriously injured. It is incomprehensible to me that we continue to accept this risk, and put people in harms' way, without addressing the fuel that is so threatening.

What could be done? Lt. Oliver Vaas, referring to the Maui County brush code and the future effectiveness of the proposed ag plan, said that "they will get their notices if it looks like the land is becoming a hazard...If we see tall, dry brush, you're going to get a notice." Well, that land is currently full of tall, dry brush and a hazard to the existing development in Launiupoko. The land owned by Peter Martin on three sides of the development is full of dry, tall brush, is a hazard to people currently living in Launiupoko and will be an even more proximate hazard to Makila Farms if it is approved. I don't believe any notices have been served yet, or are even being contemplated.

That would be a good place to start. There needs to be a plan for managing the brush within the development — and with the market-rate 2 acre lots there will be a lot of brush. And there ought to be a plan for managing the brush around the three sides currently owned by Peter Martin. At a minimum, there needs to be some form of fuel break, the wider the better. Lt. Vaas spoke to this as well: "I'd like to see this as a plan for the future, where landowners are responsible for the perimeters of their developments....We have to have agreements between neighboring landowners to protect their properties."

Lt. Vaas also stated that the number one priority is protection of human life. This requires adequate evacuation routes.

The developer's presentation refers to 6 evacuation routes. There are potential problems with all of these routes.

Route 1 is via Haniu to Kai Hele Ku. The problem: this is the main route for the existing Launiupoko development, so it will be heavily used. It is also a circuitous route out, especially for the affordable homes.

Route 2 is via Punakea Loop out to Hokiokio. Part of this route is on a private road, which is posted with signs “No Trespassing, Authorized Vehicles Only.” (See photo 1) It also traverses a cul-de-sac that is open at the moment. But there is no guarantee that it will remain open. I believe the road is owned by West Maui Land, which has already altered the cul-de-sac to reduce the night-time nuisances that occurred in that location. (Photo 2) There is no guarantee that I’m aware of that prevents West Maui Land from blocking the cul-de-sac in the future, cutting off access to Hokiokio.

Route 3 is no longer an option. The evacuation sign shown in the developer’s presentation has been removed. The paved path has been permanently blocked with boulders and a jersey-barrier, with a sign embedded in the asphalt. (Photo 3)

Route 4 is along another private road owned by West Maui Land, with locked gates at both ends. (Photo 4) The plan is to have a West Maui Land employee unlock the gates in an emergency, or the fire department would cut the locks if they had to. In any event, there could be a delay in using this route.

Route 5 is a proposed direct-access from Makila Farms to the bypass. There are significant bureaucratic hurdles to accomplishing this, and it remains to be seen when and how it will come about.

Route 6 is via a paved path at the southern terminus of Haniu Street. That path leads to the bypass. Unfortunately, the pavement was washed away in the September 2015 flood where it crosses the Launiupoko Stream and has not been replaced. (Photo 5) Where the flood debris was cleared from the path, it is only about 6 feet wide. This route is currently of marginal value as an evacuation route given the difficulty of driving over the stream bed and the narrowness of the path.

All of the evacuation routes, except for Route 5 if it comes to pass, depend on the intersection of Road B and Punakea Loop being unimpeded by fire or thick smoke. Again, the fallow fields just to the north of this intersection are a threat. (Photo 6) In that scenario, 5 of the 6 evacuation routes would be unusable.

I would encourage you all to make a site visit if at all possible so that you can see first-hand what the fire risks and evacuation routes are like.

Thank you for considering these factors when you decide how to cast your vote on this project.

Sincerely,

Gordon Firestein

Photo 1: at cul-de-sac of Evacuation Route 2



Photo 2: cul-de-sac of Evacuation Route 2



Photo 3: Evacuation Route 3



Photo 4: Evacuation Route 4



Photo 5: Evacuation Route 6



Photo 6: Fallow fields at intersection of Road B and Punakea Loop

