

HFC Committee

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Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 3:46 PM
To: HFC Committee
Subject: feral cat feeding ban proposal 6.04.041

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I'm sure you all have seen council member Tamara Paltin's May 13 response to those who submitted testimony. In it she stated that a feeding ban would not solve the problem. She also said she did not see how stopping feeding feral cats would help the birds. That's it in a nutshell!

It is my understanding that this issue received a huge amount of testimony. Therefore it should be obvious that a final proposal regarding this matter is not something that can be put forth in the short term.

While I agree that all stakeholders should be working together I am cynical about that possibility.

I am one of many community volunteers who have put in thousands of hours and dollars over the years to provide some relief for this cat overpopulation problem. We have been called misguided, been harassed, forced to operate in secrecy, given false hope of support, and dismissed by wildlife people, the State and the county. The fact that this proposal was put forth without input from Maui Humane Society and Neighborhood Cats reps, leads me to believe something nefarious is going on.

A few years ago at the urging of wildlife groups the county wanted to ban feeding cats in county Parks. But of course these "public" parks are where populations of community cats live because the "public" continues to abandon unwanted cats there. So, only with outcry and advocacy the rule was written such that the responsible work being done by TNRM advocates could continue. However, caretakers started being warned by Park authorities, who did not even know the full verbiage of the rules, that they would be cited for feeding cats. Once again we had to advocate for reason. And again put in many hours to attend meetings.

In 2017 a task force was put together with Parks Dept, MHS, Neighborhood Cats, and caretakers. The idea was to come up with a simple permit process to ensure that the cat management in the parks was performed responsibly. This process fizzled when the county rep conducting the task force retired. We were left with relying on verbal assurances that our efforts wouldn't be hindered for time being. Until now of course with this latest proposal.

Prior to 2017 the MHS conducted public meetings to encourage solutions. These included county officials, wildlife people, TNRM groups. Massive amounts of information were distributed. I hope that some good came from it, in at the least perhaps an educational sense. I know that Maui Humane Society has made a firm commitment to TNRM programs as our way forward with cat overpopulation problems. And I know that more people in the community understand the importance of spay neuter. However there were no strides in the advancement of good public policy.

Member Paltin suggested that a collaborative solution be presented to the committee.

In the past I have not seen that the county has the will to really tackle this issue. I have come to believe that proposals like this current one are the result of secret discussions and misinformation between conservationists and county agencies.

I am asking you to show me I am wrong. If a collaborative process can take place and reasonable public policy suggestions put forth, will the county provide the legislative and financial support needed to once and for all start tackling this?

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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