

# **AGRICULTURE, DIVERSIFICATION, ENVIRONMENT, AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**Council of the County of Maui**

## **MINUTES**

**February 22, 2024**

**Online Only via TEAMS**

**CONVENE:** 1:31 p.m.

**PRESENT:** VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Chair  
Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Vice-Chair  
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member  
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member  
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member (In 1:40 p.m.)  
Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Member

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member (Out 3:25 p.m.)

**EXCUSED:** Councilmember Nohelani U'u-Hodgins, Member

**STAFF:**

Samantha Tanck, Legislative Analyst  
Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst  
Maria Leon, Committee Secretary  
Megan Moniz, Legislative Attorney  
Jean Pokipala, Council Services Assistant Clerk  
Richelle Kawasaki, Deputy Director

Roxanne Morita, Council Aide, Lānaʻi Residency Area Office  
Jade Rojas Letisi, Council Aide, Makawao-Pāʻia-Haʻikū Residency Area Office

Axel Beers, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Johnson  
Jared Agtunong, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Cook  
Evan Dust, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Kama  
Michele McLean, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Lee  
Angela Lucero, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Paltin  
Haunani Madela, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez  
Keomailani Hirata, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez  
Sarah Sexton, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez  
Dawn Lono, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Sinenci  
Laura McDowell, Executive Assistant to Councilmember U'u-Hodgins

**ADMIN.:** Michael Hopper, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Department of the Corporation  
Counsel (All)  
Rogerene "Kali" Arce, Director, Department of Agriculture (ADEPT-1(1))

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Koa Hewahewa, Deputy Director, Department of Agriculture (ADEPT-1(1))  
Robert Schmidt, Deputy Director, Department of Environmental Management  
(ADEPT-1(5))  
Cecile Powell, Recycling Section Manager, Environmental Protection &  
Sustainability Division, Department of Environmental Management  
(ADEPT-1(5))  
Michelle McLinden, Environmental Program Specialist, Environmental  
Protection & Sustainability Division, Department of Environmental  
Management (ADEPT-1(5))  
Tess Herman, Recycling Specialist (Abandoned Vehicles), Environmental  
Protection & Sustainability Division, Department of Environmental  
Management (ADEPT-1(5)) Julie Powers, Account Clerk III, Environmental  
Protection & Sustainability Division, Department of Environmental  
Management (ADEPT-1(5))  
Kauanoë Batangan, Deputy Director, Department of Transportation (ADEPT-1(6))

**OTHERS:** Bobby Pahia (ADEPT-1(1))

(4) additional attendees

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

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CHAIR JOHNSON: . . .*(gavel)*. . . Aloha. Will the Agriculture, Diversification, Environment, and Public Transportation Committee meeting of February 22, 2024, please come to order. The time is now 1:31 p.m. Members, in accordance with Sunshine Law, if you're not in the Council Chamber, please identify by name who, if anyone, is in the room, vehicle, or workspace with you today. Minors do not need to be identified. Also, please see the last page of the Agenda for the information on meeting connectivity and remember to silence all cell phones. Good afternoon, everyone. I look forward to chairing a productive meeting, I'm Gabe Johnson, your Committee Chair. Also joining us today is Vice-Chair Shane Sinenci. Aloha, Councilmember.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha 'auinalā, Chair. Happy to join this afternoon, I'm kind of going in between a couple of meetings here, but I am here in my home office by myself.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you for that. Next, we have Council Chair Alice Lee. Aloha, Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Aloha 'auinalā and good afternoon, everybody. Looking forward to hearing three presentations today. Thanks.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair Lee. Let's move on to Committee Member Tom Cook. Aloha, Councilmember.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Aloha and good afternoon.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Good afternoon. Committee Member Rawlins-Fernandez is excused, and let's move on to Committee Member Yuki Lei Sugimura. Aloha, Councilmember.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Aloha. Good afternoon. Trying to sign in.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Oh. If we can let her in when... Okay. And then of course Committee Member Nohelani U'u-Hodgins is excused as well today. We have our non-voting Members with us both Councilmember Tasha Kama is always welcome, but today we have with us Councilmember Tamara Paltin. Aloha, Councilmember.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Aloha 'auinalā kākou. I...I do have another commitment at 3:00, but thank you for letting me join for now.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Certainly. From the Administration we have a long list because we have three Departments so we're...there are...we're really happy that they're here. So, from the Department of Agriculture, we have Director Kali Arce; Deputy Director Koa Hewahewa. From the Department of Environmental Management, we have Deputy Director Robert Schmidt joining us, Michelle McLinden Nuijen, Environmental Protection...Environmental Program Specialist in EPS Division. Cecile Power...Cecile Powell, Recycling Specialist EP&S Division. Tess Herman, Recycling Specialist Abandoned Vehicles EP&S Division. From the Department of Transportation, we have Deputy Director Kauanoē Batangan. And from Corporation Counsel we have Michael Hopper, Deputy Corporation Counsel. From our Committee Staff we have Sam Tanck, Legislative Analyst. Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst. Megan Moniz, Legislative Attorney. Pauline Martins Committee Secretary. Jean Pokipala, Assistant Clerk. Today on the agenda Members we have three...three items, three different Departments. ADEPT-1(1) Operational and Budgetary Review of the Department of Agriculture. ADEPT 1(4) [sic] Operational and Budgetary Review of the Environmental Protection and Sustainability Division. And ADEPT-1(6) Operational and Budgetary Review of the Department of Transportation. All of which are under the purview of the ADEPT Committee. These items are informational only and no legislative action will be taken today. Thank you, Members and Administration for being here today. Let's begin with public testimony on all items on the Agenda. Oral testimony via phone or video conference will be accepted in addition to in-person testimony. Individuals wishing to testify in person may sign up with a Staff member at the entrance of the Chamber. For those joining the meeting via Microsoft Teams, those wishing to testify can let Staff know by using the raise your hand function if you wish to testify. Once you've been added to the testifier log, Staff will lower your hand. In accordance...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 items are called upon the agenda or after the Administration's opening remarks. When testifiers sign up to testify, please let Staff know whether you wish to testify at the beginning of the meeting or before an agenda item. Otherwise, Staff will assume the testifier will testify at the beginning of the meeting. Testifiers wanting to provide video or audio testimony should have joined the online meeting via the TinyURL link or by calling into the phone number noted on

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today's agenda. Written testimony is encouraged and can be submitted via the eComment link at [mauicounty.us/agendas](http://mauicounty.us/agendas). Written testimony is encouraged and can be submitted via the eComment link at [maui...mauicounty.us...oops I think I just said that, mauicounty.us/agendas](http://maui...mauicounty.us...oops I think I just said that, mauicounty.us/agendas). Oral testimony is limited to three minutes per item, if you're still testifying beyond that time, you will hear a second timer go off after 30 seconds, and I will kindly ask you to complete your testimony. We ask that you state your full name and organization, but if you prefer to testify anonymously Staff will identify and refer to you as testifier. Please also indicate the agenda item or items that you are testifying on. Once you're done testifying or if you do not wish to testify, you can view the meeting on *Akakū* Chanel 53, Facebook Live, or [mauicounty.us/agendas](http://mauicounty.us/agendas). Thank you all for your cooperation. Chair will maintain decorum at all times; any person who behaves in a manner that disrupts, disturbs, or impedes the orderly conduct of any Council meeting can, at the discretion of the presiding officer or majority of present Councilmembers, be ejected or banned from the Council meetings, or if participating remotely, muted or dropped from the meeting. Examples of disruptive behavior include heckling, shouting, the use of profanity, threatening or slanderous remarks made to any Member of the Council Staff or general public. Committee Members, I'll now proceed with oral testimony. Staff has been monitoring individuals joining today's meeting by phone and by video, and we'll do our best to take each person up in an orderly fashion. At this time we'll call upon testifiers wishing to testify at the beginning of the meeting. Staff, will you call the first testifier?

**. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .**

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the first and only person signed up currently to testify is Bobby Pahia, and he's going to be testifying on ADEPT 1(1).

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay, Mr. Pahia.

MR. PAHIA: Aloha mai kākou. It's good to be here in these Chambers where...my name...my name is Bobby Pahia. I'm with Hawai'i Taro Farm, and I represent 25 individual farming operations on my farm. Today I'm here in...to testify to the Council, and I ask them to strongly support the budgetary requests of our Director and Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture. There's...there's two...there's two words that...that come in my mind and, you know, right from the beginning, I got to congratulate each and every one of you for standing up and putting forth the Department of...the Maui Department of Agriculture. Number one, first word is food security. I'm hearing rumors from the State level that they want to defund this organization. I am totally against that. You know, food security is a big issue, and by having another advocate in the industry is only going to help us to address food security, and we need all the help we can get. The other phrase or word I like to use is the political will. You over here has demonstrated that you have the courage and the political will to stand up for food security. As you all know, we are in a very insecure state regarding food security. And that is evident...okay...that is evident by our State Agriculture budget, which has been less than half a percent over a very long period of time. I congratulate you again because

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you guys are the shining light in our State in regards to agriculture. So, I commend you, and I strongly ask you to...to give the Department of Agriculture their requests for funding...for continued funding. So, thank you very much today, and you all have a great day. Mahalo.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Pahia. Let's see if we have any questions for you. Members, do we have any questions for Mr. Pahia? We do have one from Councilmember Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Pahia, for your testimony. I...I did hear the Senate talking about how it could be a duplication but, in your opinion, has the State Department of Ag adequately addressed our issues like coconut rhinoceros beetle, little fire ant, coqui frogs, miconia and their threat to our food security?

MR. PAHIA: In my opinion, definitely not. You know, in regards to addressing those issues, number one, we need the capacity to address it, and what does that equate to? Funding. And that goes right back to our funding in agriculture from our legislators and from our...our, you know, policymakers. But I see this Department of Agriculture as a shining light to the rest of the state and the rest of the islands because we need to use every component that's out there. We need to leverage that for creating policy that advocates for food security. I mean the Maui County Department of Agriculture and for all of you who supported it, we're the shining light, we're the example...we're the example for the rest of the state. So, imua...imua and mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Mr. Pahia. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay, before we move any forward, I want to recognize Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez; she jumped on the call. So, aloha Councilmember, welcome...welcome.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha 'auinalā. Aloha 'auinalā, Chair, everyone, mai Moloka'i nui ahina. I'm at the Moloka'i District Office alone on my side of the office. E kala mai for my technical difficulties. I'm happy to be joining and ready to work, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Any other questions for our testifier, Members? Seeing none. Thank you once again, Mr. Pahia. Thank you.

MR. PAHIA: Mahalo.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Staff, will you call the next testifier, please?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, there is currently no one else signed up to testify. If anyone would like to testify, can raise your hands...hand on Teams or approach the podium.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay, Members, seeing there's no more individuals wishing to testify, I'll now proceed with the agenda. Any objections, Members? Okay.

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COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

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

**ADEPT-1(1): OPERATIONAL AND BUDGETARY REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE (Rule 7(B))**

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you. ADEPT-1(1) Operational and Budgetary Review of the Department of Ag. In accordance with Rule 7(B) of the Rules of the Council, the Committee will receive presentations and discuss matters relating to Operational Budgetary Review of the Department of Agriculture. Once again, no legislative action will be taken today. Members, with the FY 2025 budget deliberations around the corner, I've invited the Department of Agriculture along with the Department of Environmental Management and the Department of Transportation to...to present today on their FY 2024 budgets and to invite them to let us know their priorities for FY 2025. I would like to hear first from the Department of Agriculture, a relatively new Department with the herculean task of supporting and promoting local food production. Director Arce, thank you for being here today. We look forward to hearing from your presentation, and the floor is yours.

MS. ARCE: Good afternoon, Councilmembers. Thank you, Chair, for inviting us to present on the Fiscal Year 2024 budget. We have a slide presentation; we have our first slide there as our title slide. We can proceed to slide number two, please. So, the responsibilities of our Department is to provide advocacy and reduce regulatory barriers on all matters that relate to agriculture. I'd like to reiterate that we are not...we don't have the enforcement responsibility. Next slide. This is a snapshot of the Agriculture Department's Budget, which reflects an overall 556.40 percent increase with a total budget of \$9,172,000...9...1...\$9,172,081. The increase is attributed primarily to the transfer of the agricultural grant funds associated with the Office of Economic Development Agriculture Grant contracts awarded in Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023, prior to the establishment of the Department of Agriculture. Next slide. The increase is also reflected by the Department's expansion. Unlike the rest of the County Departments, the new Department of Agriculture is expanding its staff to facilitate its responsibilities to provide advocacy and reduce regulatory barriers in agriculture related matters for Maui County. This fiscal year we have increased our total staff from six to ten with a grants management specialist III, an ag part maintenance specialist, a food access coordinator, and an agriculture advocate. If you recall in the previous slide, there are two more positions needed to be created and established with the Department of Personnel Services. Next slide, please. This is the organizational chart that reflects the current department structure. As you see, we have three divisions created: the agriculture field operations division, the grants division, the administrative division, and food security...well actually there's--excuse me--five divisions. Okay next slide, please. Within the operations budget is the professional services budget, which covers general office needs to conduct departmental operations. We contracted GUILD Consulting in

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Fiscal Year '23 beginning in March to assess and survey agriculture stakeholders and develop a recommended five-year strategic plan. Their services extended into this fiscal year, and we have paid 171,250 from this budget...this year's budget from the professional services budget, and we expect a final copy of our five-year strategic plan by the end of this month. Next slide. In addition to the strategic plan, there are a number of projects ongoing within the Department, which will...we will provide a summary. Next slide, please.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Test, one, two. Checking, Chair. Mahalo, everybody. I get to talk about the exciting part. Shout out to the grants team, woo woo. These guys are awesome; we got incredible staff. I just kind of wanted to share some of the hard work that they did do, and it's easy for us to report out numbers, statistics, and data but more importantly like the one on one conversations and technical assistance that our grants division provide is...is very huge, taking people from just the product all the way to the stores and the success stories like that I think should be shared and heard. And so I want to mahalo them for the outreach. So, a little bit into the data and statistics of it. We got 27 grants in Office of Economic Development that got transferred and executed by the team in such a...such a short amount of time. Five from Fiscal Year '22, 22 from Fiscal Year '23 equating to \$3.2 million. And then currently in Fiscal Year '24 pending budget revisions and amendments, 29 applications so far, so a total of 56 within the short lifespan of our grants division, so appreciate the hard work from our team. We've also been doing grant readiness programs, workshops. Two that was conducted already and two more in the works for technical assistance in helping our producers, agricultural sector through the process and developing a farmer-friendly process, which I really appreciate. Because when we had adopted a lot of this from OED, it didn't really have agriculture as the priority, so appreciate the team working on making a more farmer-friendly application. Some also pretty good numbers; 90 percent projects funded in FY'24, 70 percent of the applicants who are small farmers, 25 percent women-owned businesses. Funded applicants on three of the islands in the County of Maui. And projects that are funded, food hubs, community kitchens, small farms, educational organizations, conservation efforts, and our very famous MEO micro-grants. Next slide, please.

MS. ARCE: Okay. Kula Ag Park. The operations budget covered the cost of the no trespassing and no dumping signs for the gate entrances and the installation fee for the gate. Other improvements such as the security camera, the main gate and the installation cost were paid by the County of Maui's Office of Economic Development. The State of Hawai'i DLNR covered the cost of the perimeter fencing for both parks, the Kula Ag Park existing and the Phase II Kula Ag Park expansion. At the beginning of the fiscal year, the management of the CIP projects for the parks...for the new park was transferred to the Department from the Office of Economic Development. These projects are being funded by County General Funds, County Government Bonds, and the legislature. Next slide, please.

MR. HEWAHEWA: And as Director Arce pointed out, a new division, our food security division, which we are excited about and wanted to share some of the work. The food security

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division is led by our food access coordinator, who is working on developing the County's food and nutrition security plans, so not just a food security plan but a nutrition security plan, which we really appreciate, which will guide Maui County to improve local food access, nutrition security, climate and emergency resilience, and opportunities for local food producers. Also developing three analyses that are being conducted that will help in developing the food and nutrition security plan. Health needs...a health center needs assessment, consumer needs assessment, and a food supply survey. Next slide. Next slide, please.

MS. ARCE: The Agriculture Resource Event, which we coordinated and spearheaded, was held in September. It hosted 32 agencies with an emphasis on agriculture support agencies, who provided information and resources, ag business support, and emergency response services. In attendance we had 72 producers attend with their families, and 79 agriculture directories were distributed, which we produced last year...well we produced beginning Fiscal Year '23 and are expanding it this year through an AmeriCorps Vista worker at no cost to the department as part of our workforce development initiative. The hard copy is available at our office, and the online version is also accessible on the website. Next slide.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Yeah. Another thing that is developing and still continuing to be prioritized is the CRB Working Group that we launched back in December in partnership with the Office of the Mayor and Department of Environmental Management. And that's something that we take very seriously and that we want to improve on going forward. Mahalo. Next.

MS. ARCE: This is our contact information, our office hours, and we'd be happy to hear from anybody who walks in or contacts us. Next slide. Oh, next slide...next slide, please. Okay. Mahalo.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Appreciate you all Chair, Councilmembers, everybody for all your attention whether big or small it's...it's very impactful. I know we said this last year, and I'll emphasize it again, that for far too long agriculture has been underserved and overlooked, and appreciate all of your efforts for bringing it to priority that it needs. Obviously, the State needs to hear more about why we need this department. So, mahalo everyone for championing it. Aloha.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Director Arce and Deputy Director Hewahewa for your presentation. I'd like to move on to public testimony unless we have any clarifying questions. Seeing none. At this time, if there's anyone wishing to testify on this item, please use the raise hand function, and you will be called upon to testify. Staff, is there anyone wishing to testify at this moment?

MS. MCKINLEY: No, Staff it does not...sorry, Chair, it does not appear that anyone wishes to testify on this item.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay, Members, seeing there's no more individuals wishing to testify, are



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there any objections to closing oral...oral testimony?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

**. . . END OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON ADEPT-1(1) . . .**

CHAIR JOHNSON: All right. We'll now close public testimony for this item and get into the deliberations. ADEPT-1(1) Operational and Budgetary Review of the Department of Agriculture. Okay. I propose three-minutes per Councilmember for each round of this...this discussion, and we'll just go down the list starting with Vice-Chair Shane Sinenci followed by Councilmember Tom Cook. Vice-Chair Sinenci.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair. And mahalo to Director Arce and Deputy Hewahewa; what a great presentation. You guys are the shining star in my eyes, and mahalo for coming to East Maui to listen to our community and our local farmers. And also a big mahalo for the...the great work with issuing the grants to our local farmers. I think, you know, as Uncle Bobby mentioned, those are helping, you know, secure and promote future farmers for Maui County. My question was for the additional funds, the 8 million or the 9 million, is that all coming over from OED specific for farm...farm grants?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: Yes, those funds have been transferred to our Department.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. And...and --

MS. ARCE: Yeah. That is reflected in the increase.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: -- and that's the...the 500 percent increase. Okay. And then, you know, I'm...I'm as Uncle Bobby said too, even though the State hasn't, you know, increased their budget, we did meet with Senator Hirono last week. and she's got a couple things...you know, she's got a lot of help. She introduced a lot of bills and the 2024 farm bills, so these are--I'll just read it really quickly, Chair. 200 million for ag research, 5 million for rapid ohia death, 150 million for the nutrition incentive program known as DA BUX here in Hawai'i, also prioritizing coffee health research at the USDA to aide producers and combat pests and disease, as well as 15 million for promoting aquaculture research. And then 10 million in appropriations for Fiscal Year '23 for Alaska natives and native Hawaiian students to pursue agriculture as well as 15 million for Fiscal Year '24 to '28. So, I mean there's a lot of support from our Congressional delegates, and hopefully our Department can...can try and go for some of these...the Federal funding that is put out there. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you. Okay, duly noted. Thank you, Vice Chair Sinenci. Let's move on to Committee Member Tom Cook followed by Committee Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. My question is with the Director...Deputy

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Director. How much interface do you have with the Planning Department regarding agricultural lots or ag...ag zoning?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: So, we've been trying to connect with the Planning Department to understand the different divisions and resources they have in there. We've been working with Gregory Pfost, and we're...we have met the other planners. But we haven't really sat down to really get into the nitty gritty of what programs that we can collaborate together and work on. But we have begun establishing that relationship and the process, and really focusing right now on the farmer dwelling issue and keeping in contact with them on...on that. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you for that. How long do we have, Chair?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Three minutes.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Okay. That leads me up to my question...like that's the government side. What are you hearing from farmers, people on the land and so far as their ability to work, whether the Planning Department is assisting them or sort of inhibiting them to working on the farm and getting people to...that they can get the work on the farm.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director or Deputy Director.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Yeah. Just kind of emphasizing what Director Arce was saying; we had a lot of meetings actually in pre-fires because we know that there wasn't a Department of Ag before, and a lot of the planning goals that had to do with agriculture as well as in fire, we knew that eventually we would have to learn but. So, we're not up to speed after the fires, we haven't re...rekindled those relationships, but I know hearing from the farmers is increasing those dwelling sizes as well as decreasing the amount of acreage for ag dwellings, you know, so those--I'm not the subject matter expert on it, but we've been having the conversations and definitely interfacing with our ag community about that. And I know it's important.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: So...so, good this...so there's a couple of...there's some positive movement insofar as to smaller ag lots so they can...they're paying tax on a smaller spot for residential and they're getting credited for more of their ag area?

MR. HEWAHEWA: Absolutely.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: And then enabling the second dwelling to be slightly larger so more practical. So, anyway that's good. Thank you.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Thank you.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Great...great. Okay. Let's move on to Committee Member Rawlins-Fernandez followed by Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Aloha, Director, Deputy Director. Mahalo for your presentation and all the good work that you're doing. What...one of the things when you're presenting that I was thinking might...might be good when presenting the budget, and I don't think it'll look like this for the next fiscal year, or maybe I'm wrong. But for this first transition of the grants from the Environmental Protection Grants under the Mayor's Office and OED and other places, and it looks like a 66 percent increase in operations; like maybe separating those out like grants and then like operations. And then that way it doesn't look like, you know, the cost of operations dramatically increased by 66 percent. Okay. So, that was just a note. My first question is regarding grants. Do you think that you have the capacity and to...to manage the Maui Invasive Species control grant? It...it currently is not under your Department, but perhaps it should be.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: First, I wanted to clarify the...the transfer of funding regarding agriculture; it was only from the Office of Economic Development. We have not gotten any funding or discussed any funding with Environmental Management. I do anticipate that any ag-related issues or processes in other departments will eventually transfer over in time as, you know, the years go by and as we build. Regarding the second question, our grants division is still in the formation stages, and we don't have enough capacity to secure any grant funding, Federal or State. We do have plans to increase the capacity to be able to have our staff write grant proposals and secure grant funding. In terms of invasive species, we are looking at securing through the...through the HDOA funding that had just come down the pipe that was brought to our desk by Hawai'i Department of Ag Chairperson Hurd, and this will be a collaborative effort through the coconut rhinoceros beetle working group. I do see our Department expanding in addressing invasive species, particularly looking at those . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . that are a threat to agricultural crops, not all the...not all the species, but prioritizing it that way. But being the support to...the on-the-ground support to our partner agencies that already have the expertise and the infrastructure and the tools that have been working hard on the ground. For taking over the MISC funding, if that's what you're talking about, I think we need to have further discussion on how that will roll out. I think they should have the priority to be part of the applicants that, you know...be eligible as applicants because they have...they have the drone, they have the training, and they have a good number of people on Moloka'i and Maui that have been doing great work. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Mahalo, Director. I'll take that as a yes and happy to have more discussion and look to moving that grant under your Department. Thank you. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Let's move on to Chair Lee followed by Councilmember Sugimura.

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COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hello to Director and Deputy. Thank you for your presentation. I just wanted to ask you if you considered having a plan for the future where your grantees are...don't expect to rely on the County for 100 percent funding every year. Because what happens when...when they...your existing pool uses up all the funding, then the next year nobody new can apply; yeah. And I say that because I used to oversee grants, so you may want to consider in the future some kind of incentive program for them to--or 100 percent the first year, 90 percent the next year, maybe 80 percent the next year so that they would think about writing for their grants...for grants other places or getting a sponsor, you know, whether it's a, you know, a...a chain of food stores or supply stores or whatever so that the money can be used, you know...spread out in the future and up and coming farmers have a chance to apply for money. So, I, you know...I hope that you might think about that as a possibility in the future because money is going to be tight for us for quite some time, and we may not be able to add to what you have now. So, how much do you have in grants right now about roughly?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: First of all, I 200 percent agree with you, and I did express that early on in the formation of our Department that in the division for our grants that...that those are things that we need to think about in terms of not making them be reliable...reliant on those grant funds. Maybe Koa can answer the rest of the questions.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: About how much in grants?

MR. HEWAHEWA: Testing. Yeah. Closely to about 7.2 million so, 3.2 that was inherited from OED and then 4 point...where's my numbers...

MS. ARCE: Three five.

MR. HEWAHEWA: About 4.235 that we have currently for FY'24.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Uh-huh.

MR. HEWAHEWA: But we'll take that suggestions back to the team and...and duly noted. Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Because another thing to think about is if money remains tight for, let's say, the next five six-years for the County and for everybody --

MR. HEWAHEWA: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: -- and we can't add to your 7 million if...if your grantees know ahead of time that the next year they can apply for 90 percent and the next year 80 percent. . . . (timer sounds). . . The...the difference can also be used for you to hire somebody to

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write for grants. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Well said, Chair Lee. Okay. Let's move on to Council Vice-Chair Yuki Lei Sugimura.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you, Chair. Nice to see you here, Director and Deputy. So, I have questions regarding the Kula Ag Park. And the Kula Ag Park, one of the projects that you are saying is CIP is the booster pump. I will tell you that in my second term that's one of the funds...or part of the funds that we got from the State, and for some reason I remember Mayor Arakawa came to see me, when are we going to do it, and we still not done then. Do you know the status?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: We have our Ag Park maintenance specialist working now with Tom Ochwat and Dan Shupack, our County engineers. And I got word...my office tracked down that yes, the money is in the legislature ready for us. The last...the beginning of the fiscal year has been...we've been dealing with the transition of the projects from OED, and it was a pretty steep learning curve for us to get in the groove of getting the project rolling again. So, right now it's moving along. We do anticipate to get the funding...request for the funding first thing on the next fiscal year. Because there's only five months to draw down, and we're not going to be able to complete the process.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So what about the phase two improvements? Where are you on the Kula Ag Park phase 2?

MS. ARCE: Same thing; they're discussing the...the...the lots and the planning, like how it's set up. Maybe Koa got more information, the right words to say.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Yeah, right now we're we...we meet...Chair, sorry. Yeah, we meet every single Tuesday on this particular project. There's movement. The fence...the exterior fence is completed, I believe. So, that's a big...a big win because there's a lot of dumping, as you guys know, that goes on is happening. And then working on the water transfer station that's going to happen for the particular project to ensure that there is adequate water for the development of...of that park. That's where we're at; we had like four different alternatives. Just recently bringing on our new ag park maintenance specialist made us think of a fifth option that now we're trying to entertain. So, as that develops, we will be in contact and let you know how that happens.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: That's great.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Yeah, thanks.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: And then the Kula Ag Park Committee, I know that the...the

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last meeting that you had is related to all of this because it was the existing Kula Ag Park tenants that were concerned about their leases. So, did all of that get resolved?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: Not sure about the leases. We...

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, they're concerned about being able to transfer their lease to their child or somebody in their family, you know, to take over the...their lease, and that was the part that, you know, my office had heard about, and I wonder if that's still lingering. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . .

MS. ARCE: Okay. Well, so for that part we...our Department wants to abide by the bill, and transferring leases are...is possible if they go through the process. It's not legal if they just give their family member or give a friend. It...it has to go through the process spelled out in the...I think it's Bill 160.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, that was the problem; right. So, when that changed...oh sorry, I'll wait.

CHAIR JOHNSON: We'll do a second round for that one.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah. Thanks.

CHAIR JOHNSON: I love getting in the weeds with Department of Ag, but I got some questions too. So, I wanted to kind of follow up on the Kula Ag Park conversation. The booster pump. Correct me, I'm not...I don't know the term, or I mean the actual tech, but is that a booster pump of potable water?

MS. ARCE: Agriculture water.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. So, there's still no potable water on the Kula Ag Park; right?

MS. ARCE: None.

CHAIR JOHNSON: So that makes that...that they can't have any of those ag dwellings or ag labor dwellings; is that right?

MS. ARCE: Right. So, regarding having dwellings on...on the Kula Ag Park, the answer is no because it would...it would be viewed as a residential and it's --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. ARCE: -- it's agriculture.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. So, the next--I'm just going to pivot one of my questions. So, the

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grants managers, we love them, we need more of them, we know it. It's...it's important to have the grants manager...the grants manager...manager our grants to the community, but also a grants manager that pulls money down from the Feds and whatnot; right. So, is there any intention to expand your grants manager programs? It's a grants manager III; is that correct? I don't know if I've ever heard of a grants manager IV but, you know, sometimes we have to kind of recruit grants managers because...but if the pay isn't good, we all know they're...they can go do that in the private sector. So, that's kind of the concerns that I have. Director, can you speak on that?

MS. ARCE: Yes. So, the grants management specialist that we have are...they do have grant writing percentage in their PD. But because we only have two, they're only able to manage the contracts that we've received from OED and are currently awarding. We do have plans to add on a...another person and maybe create a PD that has an increased percentage in grant writing. And then that will build our capacity.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. ARCE: So, if that answers your questions. And you know we...I...I feel like we've built the department and expanded really quickly considering how much time it takes to --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Sure.

MS. ARCE: -- create a position and establish it through the Department --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. ARCE: -- of Personnel Services, and we do not dictate the salary because it's a vetting process that occurs in the jurisdictions. So, unfortunately that is something we don't have control of --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. ARCE: -- in terms of salary.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah, I understand that. My real quick last question. Coconut rhino beetle, we know it's a huge issue. I'm glad you have some discussion on it; do you have actual number of monies that you putting towards coconut rhino beetle control all...total...in total?

MS. ARCE: No. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . No, I don't. We just began our coconut rhinoceros beetle working group in December, and we're looking at some sort of budget at the moment.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. ARCE: Off the top of my head, I recall about 650,000.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you for that, Director. We're going to do a second round because I saw a few...oh I'm sorry, Councilmember Paltin, beg your pardon.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. I also wanted to touch on the coconut rhinoceros beetle. I know that the Administration is engaged with the REPI program regarding the axis deer issues, and I just was wondering if you guys had thought to engage the REPI program for biosecurity as the Department of Defense brought the coconut rhinoceros beetle into Hickam Airforce Base and failed to contain it up and down the Wai'anae coast, and now it's on every island. They had a biosecurity plan that's been sitting on the shelf since 2015, and so this is a problem they caused which they should address. And instead we're...we're spending millions as a state. It affects all palms, not just coconut, and so I just was wondering if there's been any communication with the Administration about biosecurity through the REPI program. You know, there's not just coconut rhinoceros beetle the travel back and forth from Guam. We could have brown tree snakes. We already have the little fire ant. And all of these, an ounce of prevention can prevent millions in the back end, which is much less effective. So, I just was wondering if there's any talks within the Administration about pursuing comprehensive biosecurity for Maui paid for by the military to offset the impacts that they're causing to our food security.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director or Deputy Director.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Chair, I'll take that one. Yeah, just the short answer on that one is yes. I also play co-lead with the Natural Culture Resources and the recovery efforts and, you know, recently we...we scaled down from 90 community projects down to 12, down to nine, now...now down to like our top four projects, and priority number one is biosecurity control --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Great.

MR. HEWAHEWA: -- for invasive species. Understanding that there's going to be a lot of movement all of our environment, soil, mulch, plants, and that's top priority for us is seeking budgets, seeking out all the teams and the different agencies that are going to be working together on this. And we are looking at reporting out that plan sometime in mid-March, so.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Awesome. That leads me into my composting situation. Bringing in compost from O'ahu is a major problem. Last night the Lāna'i Planning Commission deferred the composting situation bill. I just was wondering if you had done any outreach to the Lāna'i Planning Commission. I...I guess my testimony wasn't included in the packet because it was a little bit late. But how important is composting? I mean to prevent the transport of this Home Depot I think, Lowe's. They're major...also major transporters of . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . invasive species.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director, Deputy Director.



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MR. HEWAHEWA: No, as far as the Lānaʻi Plan. No, but that's something that we should definitely...I mean we've taken this seriously for all of our County islands. But no to that specific question. But we understand the...the impact of compost, and maybe DEM can actually talk to that subject...that subject more clearly than I can. But we definitely looking at that. We understand that there's a bunch of moving material, and stopping goods and services is a big deal. It has a huge impact on business, and return on investments, and all that stuff. But for us to prioritizing the health and all the environment is...is critical and priority. But that's a discussion needs...still needs to be had but prioritized.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Department.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Right. Let's go backwards because we'll go with Councilmember Sugimura followed by Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you. So, on the, again, Kula Ag Park. If I go to Bill 160, I think it was, I thought that...that was...the intention was to talk about the new Kula Ag Park and not the existing. And so what happened was the existing ag park resident...existing ag park leases or farmers were being impacted by the same law. Comments?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: You're correct. That's what the understanding from our previous Corp. Counsel advisor...she pointed that out. I guess it's something that has to be brought up again, whether it happens in Kula Ag Park Committee meetings and then transferred to Council, I don't know the process. We're still kind of feeling out how this whole Council thing works, but interested in, you know, finding out how to move that forward or whatever it takes.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Because I think that...

CHAIR JOHNSON: Hold on, let me jump in here real quick because we're doing budgetary review, so if it's a budget question, Councilmember, please feel free, but this is getting leaning to the laws of the Kula Ag Park.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah. So, it is budgetary because it impacts the actual farmers is what I was...the way I was looking at it. And I am getting emails still about the impact of Bill 160. But I'll take it up at another time. I have meetings requested with Corp. Counsel and because of wildfires I think this has been put on the back burners, but still of concern.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

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MR. HEWAHEWA: Councilmember Sugimura, just to let you know, our ag park maintenance specialist is planning a Bill 160 review with all applicants --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh.

MR. HEWAHEWA: -- in the next month.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay.

MR. HEWAHEWA: In March.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Can you invite me also?

MR. HEWAHEWA: Definitely.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Very good. So, also thank you on the...on the grants because I do...I do know this...I did talk to your grants person--not David Nakama, the other, the lady--and she basically reached out and made it so that I think that's what you meant by farmer-friendly grants. Appreciate that because I would get...until you, I would get comments about how do you expect us to write grants when we're so busy farming. So, what kind of impact has that had to reach the everyday farmer that doesn't have a chance to hit your office for help?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director, Deputy Director.

MS. ARCE: I can start.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Go ahead.

MS. ARCE: So, we offer technical assistance, and we will...we will not write the grant for them, but we will help them to capture their words or direct them into becoming grant-ready and having all the documents that they need prior to application. So, it happens in different forms . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . whether it's in person, or on phone call, email. Yeah, that's...that's what we have for technical assistance.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah, it's been helpful, yeah.

MR. HEWAHEWA: I definitely would love the community to have that chance to share out because the...the stories have been incredible, and from our grants management team just working one on one with individuals, it's a huge impact. No words for it, and we want to continue down that path in making it really friendly. Because we...I don't know if we...you applied for grants before, but it's really hard, especially when we're looking at the National and Federal stuff.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Mahalo.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you. All right let's move to Council Chair Alice Lee followed by Committee Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. Director, how long did it take you to fill your positions?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: The first six months was just the two of us and then...then we...well two and then added one. So, to date...I have it all down, but we started off with six this year, fiscal year, and now we're up to ten. So, July until now, we added four.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. So, you had funding for half a year, or you had how...

MS. ARCE: All of them were funded, the 12 EPs.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: For half a year? Or 100 percent? 12...12 months?

MS. ARCE: Let me look.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: No okay...

MS. ARCE: Yeah, I think.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: You don't have to answer that, you can...

MS. ARCE: I'm pretty sure was 100 percent because we had anticipated to fill all...all 12 by the end of the fiscal year.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. That's unusual but anyway. What I was going to ask you too is how long did it take you to...to describe the positions and then fill them?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: Uh for...from my experience, I think it's pretty fast compared to other people, other departments, but about four to six months.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah, that is fast.

MS. ARCE: Creating the position, pushing it through.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: You have a friend at DPS. . . .*(laughing)* . . .

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MS. ARCE: Our assigned staff is fantastic, and I make an effort to work one-on-one with them to learn so that...because I can't rely on other staff to do it. It all falls on me, so I make a point to learn the process, understand what has to be done and...and help and be on their case. . . .*(laughing)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well that...that's awesome.

MS. ARCE: And I have also our secretary and our...she's fantastic. She has helped me to learn the difference between a class spec and a job description.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Whoa.

MS. ARCE: That's the most confusing part; if you can't get over that stumbling block, you fail.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well hats off to you. That...that's a challenge for a lot of the departments. So, we'll keep that in mind then I...I guess if you one day need more people, we're going to have give you 100 percent funding instead of the...the normal six months. But thank you and good for you. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you. Let's move on to Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez followed by Councilmember Tom Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. I really don't have any additional questions. I just think Member Paltin's idea of getting the REPI grant is a great idea, and I'm happy to I...I think you guys have the contact information, but if you don't, I'm happy to send it to you. Kristin Thomasgard, get that...get that funding from her. You know what I will forward you her...her email right now. Okay. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you so much. Look at us working together. Okay, Councilmember Tom Cook followed by Councilmember Sinenci.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. It's really exciting what your department's been doing and I've...I'm curious how it's working with the high schools, MCC, and youth in general.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: Yeah. We have our ag parks maintenance specialist sitting on the board...advisory board for Maui High School. I am always in contact with Moloka'i High and somewhat with Lāna'i High or Lāna'i School if they need. We also have connections with UH Maui College through their AmeriCorps Vista Program, which we get free interns. We don't pay anything out of pocket; we're just basically providing a...a site to work and a project to work on. We would like to do more with younger youth if possible, but it always...the challenge is the transportation and the amount of time that they can spend.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Yeah, I've participated in a mentoring program for construction

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with high schools, and it is challenging to kind of like--it's almost a full-time job to finesse and focus on that.

MS. ARCE: Uh-huh.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Anyway, we need more farmers.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Uh-huh.

MR. HEWAHEWA: To mention all the ag resource fairs that...that went on this past couple year with our Department as well as with the Office of Economic Development, just really getting our youth interested in farming and...and normalized again. So, wanted to shout out to that effort.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: So, if I have another minute, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Our housing situation and becoming more self-reliant, food security, and enabling ag to become...grow roots, so to speak, is really our housing, and so I'm hopeful that our land use can shift gears a little bit and support us how they look at people and farms. Because farms basically low wages, and to be able to live on the land, not have transportation costs, not have all of the overhead and the burden. And hopefully for a lot of young people...not as many kids on Maui live country like they use too. So, anyway I think that...that's part of the solution for both housing and for ag, and if we can get our land use kind of in alignment with the Department of Agriculture could be beneficial to both sides.

MS. ARCE: Chair, can I?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah, feel free.

MS. ARCE: So, I think my mentality is to change the picture of what agriculture is to young people. We don't want them to think that agriculture is always in the hot sun, soil, and driving a tractor, but there's many jobs that are connected to agriculture. . . .(timer sounds). . . It can be lab, can be driving truck, can be slaughterhouse, you know; there's many different kinds of jobs connected to agriculture, which contribute to food production.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yep, Deputy Director.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Chair, I forgot to mention as well is our programs there's Grow Some Good, Hawai'i Farmers Union FAM program, and Maui Family Food Network of increasing the education awareness within our youth development, even our farmer development. So, wanted to make mention.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. HEWAHEWA: Mahalo.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you. Let's move on to Vice-Chair Sinenci.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair. Director Arce, you mentioned that you had already paid out the consultant for the five-year strategic plan. You...is...was the 171,000 the...the max or you still need to pay another installment?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: Not quite sure if we are going to get one more bill, but they are at their last end of their work. So, that I can't answer.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Yet. Okay and then I...I know at that last meeting, you know, some of the ag working group guys wanted to see more measurable goals and objectives and...and for us as legislators, I know in my committee last year, we did want to try and address--and I...and I...I do see that you have a policy section in your organizational chart. So, are there any efforts to maybe address Chapter 19? A lot of it is still based in monocropping, plantation-style farming. So, I was just wondering if those are some of the...you have any efforts to...to change Chapter 19?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: I can't give an answer to that right now; I'd have to review Chapter 19. But the Department is not opposed to any kind of agriculture. We would support any kind of agriculture. And every situation is unique. Any...every production system is unique. So, I think everyone we have to look at it with a, you know, particular focus on their production systems.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. And...and I only mentioned it because to you...you also trying to kind of change the branding for...for the younger generations, so maybe if we can and...and Chair, maybe we can start in your Committee looking at Chapter 19. So, again mahalo. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you. All right, I'm up next, so I...I guess right now I'm thinking, you know, budget...budget terms, and the Kula Ag Park I think is a great success, and I would love to have more ag parks throughout the county. Post-fire, you think about the importance not only of having a green belt around your urban area, you know, they...it's called that wildland-urban interface where the city meets the country. And if you have a greenbelt, you have...have farm...farmlands, could be county-owned farmlands, could be an ag park that surrounds South Maui for example, or just any area that is totally dry and...and farms don't burn down; right. So, that...that's kind of the question is...is the Department interested in maybe pursuing other ag parks, putting that kind of money in the budget or you still kind of...that's a big lift?

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MS. ARCE: Well if the community of agriculture stakeholders support it and want it, then we will advocate for it, but if it's just one person in a...in a group that is speaking on behalf of the group without consensus, then I will not support it.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. We need consensus, hear you loud and clear. Okay. Let's move on to Councilmember Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. I just have a...it might be silly, but I was looking at your organizational chart and just a little confused of the arrows and the placement of the stuff. Like is it the Deputy Director oversees grants division, food security division and ag field ops division? And then why is the grants division sandwiched between admin division, advocacy and policy division. And then what is the connection; is the Director and Deputy Director...just the intersection of all those arrows and the back and forth some arrows going, just wondering.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director.

MS. ARCE: Yeah. So, this is a...this is just a...a simple review of how it lays out. We do have the one that's signed by myself and...and the, you know, the official one. But basically, it's Deputy Director oversees administration, the grants division, the advocacy and policy division. And I oversee the secretary, food security, and the field operations, ag field operations. There's no special order on why it's pictured like that, but in typical organizations the Deputy oversees the downlines, but because we're quickly growing it...and Koa has multiple roles at Office of Recovery, I don't feel like it's...it's too much for him to oversee the whole down...downline of our subordinates. So, I'm, you know...we split it so I can take the load from him and...while I build the Department, and he can, you know, be able to grow in his role as well as be able to cover the Office of Recovery.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. So, I got it backwards then I...my...my inability to follow the lines and the arrows. Got it. Thank you. That's it.

MS. ARCE: Uh-huh.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. That was two rounds, Members. I want to thank the Departments for their presentation, and we really appreciate your time spending with us. You answered all our questions. So, very popular Department it seems. So, Members, without any objections, we'll defer this item.

**COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS.** (Excused: NUH)

**ACTION: DEFER PENDING FURTHER DISCUSSION.**

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you once again, Director, Deputy Director for joining us. Why don't we take a five-minute recess as we switch out...five-minute recess as we

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switch out Departments. So, the ADEPT Committee of 2/22/2024 is in recess until 2:43. . . .(gavel). . .

**RECESS:** 2:37 p.m.

**RECONVENE:** 2:44 p.m.

CHAIR JOHNSON: . . .(gavel). . . Aloha and welcome back. Will the ADEPT Committee of 2/22/2024 come back from our short recess. It's 2 time and now 2:44. We deferred the last item, and we're moving on to the next item.

**ADEPT-1(5): OPERATIONAL AND BUDGETARY REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT (Rule 7(B))**

CHAIR JOHNSON: ADEPT-1(5) Operational and Budgetary Review of the Environmental Protection and Sustainability Division of the Department of Environmental Management. In accordance with Rule 7(B) of the Rules of the Council, the Committee will receive a presentation and discuss matters relating to the Operational and Budgetary Review of the Environmental Protection and Sustainability Division of the Department of Environmental Management. No legislation action will be taken. This is a relatively small division, but it has an important task of guiding the County's efforts in environmental initiatives, natural resource protection, sustainability, conservation, and restoration. Deputy Director Schmidt, Ms. McLean...Ms. McLinden Nuijen, Ms. Powell and Ms. Herman, thank you so much for being here today, and you can correct me if I pronounced any of your names wrong. The floor is your folks.

MR. SCHMIDT: Thank you, Chair. Aloha, Councilmembers. I think so, yeah, I just got to get closer. So, we're here today to review the FY 2024 budget and take a look ahead for the Environmental Protection and Sustainability Division. I purposely wanted to invite the leads of the different sections of this division to give them a little exposure and show them a little bit of gratitude because they each in their own way do good things for our County. And so wanted to actually let them speak and hear a little bit from them along the way. So, if we could go ahead and start the presentation. Go ahead to the next slide please. So, four sections in Environmental Protection and Sustainability Administration, currently we...we don't have anyone lead there; we're reallocating that position, going to call it the Program Manager and get that out for advertisement shortly. Abandoned Vehicles and Metals, Tess Herman is lead for that. Environmental Programming, Michelle Nuijen is lead there, and Recycling would be Cecile Powell. And in case you guys have budget questions in the weeds, have Julie Powers, Account Clerk, in the audience. Next slide, please. So, it's just a snapshot of where we are currently in the budget as of seven months in. Nothing really to highlight there, just if you have questions, we'll...we'll get those answers when it comes to the question and answer. Next slide. This is the revolving funds, and again I have nothing to really highlight or



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point out there. Next slide, please. So, the disaster response, the vehicle assistance program was very much engaged and continues to be engaged. A whole lot of vehicles, burned vehicles are being adjudicated there and...and towed out. It's been a huge effort and...and been well done. And then also there's been spoiled fridge, refrigerator removals in the...in the burn area. There was also waste hygiene and assistance that went on early on and green waste and debris hauling. Next slide, please. So, this slide is labeled look ahead, but I want to give each of the section leads a chance to kind of give you a kind of a year in review and then...and then allow them to speak of what they're hoping for as...as into the next fiscal year. So, let's start with Abandoned Vehicles and Metals, Tess.

MS. HERMAN: Hi, my name is Tess Herman. I manage the Abandoned Vehicles and Metals Section. And so, looking back, as Bob said, we, you know...we manage the disaster vehicles, which was a very challenging and somber task. We were proud to have done it without our existing (*audio interference*) by the wayside with our little staff of four ladies. We launched our towing program for the island of Maui successfully this year, which raised participatory vehicle recycling 40 percent. We expanded our Hāna Metals events. We did some bulky item collection events on Moloka'i. And we launched a container program and partnered with two community organizations, one in Olowalu and one in Ke'anae. And so, those were some of our highlights over the...the last year. Looking forward, we would like to expand our junk vehicle towing program to Moloka'i, fill some of our staff vacancies, expand our efforts with abandoned vehicles to more rural and off-road areas, the nooks and crannies basically. Start expanding our offerings of e-waste collection, built--some of e-waste laws are changing, and so we would like to start collecting new and emerging waste items like solar panels and then develop a plan for large lithium-ion battery management and recycling. Post fires it became really obvious to us that we need something to do with lithium-ion batteries right away. And so now I'll turn it over to Michelle, Environmental Programing.

MS. MCLINDEN: Aloha, Chair Johnson, Vice-Chair Sinenci, and Committee Members. Thank you for having us here today. My name's Michelle McLinden. You can drop the hard part off of that last name. I am the manager of the new environmental programming section at EP&S. My role is to expand EP&S beyond recycling and abandoned vehicles to help tackle broader spectrum of sustainability issues that are rapidly emerging in Maui County. I'd like to first point out one highlight in terms of disaster response; I coordinated the spoiled fridge and freezer removal program, where we partnered with Malama Maui Nui to remove 150 spoiled units, fridges and freezers only. There was a lot of really rotten food in those. We helped...in some cases the kūpuna cleaned them out, and we had 2,000 pounds of waste and trash go...go to the landfill, really helping people impacted by the fires. Some other highlights for Fiscal Year '24 include the section I'm...I'm tasked with developing this new section, so I'm happy to report that there is a new index code to further establish the section, and you'll notice it on the next slide. I successfully launched the green grants program in Fiscal Year '24. I also continued with a successful speaker series, Sustainability Together, and this is a series led by the community for the community. The last event was on community-led energy resilience on Moloka'i because they have a lot of excellent leaders over there

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showing...can help show other communities the way. I'm happy to report high compliance with the mineral sunscreen law, which I'm responsible for. And lastly, we are working in partnership with Pacific Whale Foundation and Public Works. We had a successful LOI, and we've been invited to submit a full proposal to NOAA under the bipartisan infrastructure law, and we are going to focus on marine debris interception technologies and coastal resilience, and especially marine. Our reefs are super important for climate change resilience. Moving ahead to Fiscal Year '25, it would be super helpful to get support in the following positions, the following items. First of all, an expansion position. I'm the only person in my...in my section, so it'd be really helpful to have support in terms of just daily admin supporting me with email communications. I also manage the EP&S line email inbox. I could use some help with enforcement and developing the admin rules for the mineral sunscreen law. I would like to focus on developing the section more with more programs and expanding those programs to remote rural areas, particularly Hāna...including Hāna, Lānaʻi, and Molokaʻi. I would really appreciate the support on expanding the green grants program from 100,000 to 200,000 to fund more community-led projects. And then continue to build on the successes of the speaker series. Mahalo. I'm going to pass it on to Cecile Powell to talk about recycling.

MS. POWELL: Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Michelle. My name is Cecile Powell and I manage the recycling section. We had a lot happening in FY'24. I'm just going to touch briefly on it. We've been doing the ongoing legislative enforcement of the single-use plastic ordinances and the...and the polystyrene ordinance as well as the plastic bag reduction ordinance. Making great headway in reinstating the compost operations at the Central Maui Landfill. We've had a successful recycling grants program; we're looking at 14 new partnerships with the grantees this year. I'm launching a zero waste keiki program for Earth Day for K through 6th graders. This year every elementary school is going to have a Earth Day program this year that's represented for the County. And then we're...we have expanded household hazardous waste collection events for Molokaʻi and Lānaʻi as well as the once a year annual one that we have for Maui. And then I think that's all I have in my notes. And for our ask for next fiscal year, I am asking for support for an expansion position. I have been running the recycling section virtually solo for five years. We recently do have one assistant, but I really would appreciate one more expansion position, and you'll see that in the budget ask for FY'25. Also the Greasezilla is a FOG processing system. The on-island, we're focusing on on-island remanufacturing our processes this fiscal year through the recycling grants program. And we're also launching a biochar...actually this fiscal year and FY'24 next month, we're launching a new biochar soil remediation for Lānaʻi farmers. So, that's going to be helping with diversion, and we may ask, you know, maybe in FY'26 monies for that, so you won't see that as a line item in FY'25, I'm sorry. And then expanding the HHW program, the household hazardous waste, to have more events for Maui. Thank you very much for your time. I'm going to pass it back over to Bob for the next slide.

MR. SCHMIDT: So, this is a snapshot of the FY'25 budget as...as you folks look at the budget ask, as Michelle pointed out, they've separated environmental program to another...a

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new index code, and a lot of those funds came out of the Administration budget. She had been sharing that with Administration before so...so just as you see that that's the explanation. And that concludes our presentation.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. SCHMIDT: Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: First off, thank you so much for that presentation, and I don't see any...well can we clear...and thank you. I don't see any hands up for clarifying questions, so I'd like to move into public testimony. At this time if there's anyone wishing to testify on this item, please use the raise hand function and you will be called on to testify. Staff, is there anyone wishing to testify on this item?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, there is no one currently signed up to testify on this item. If you would like to testify, please raise your hand in Teams or approach the podium, please.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. I don't see anybody coming. So, Members seeing there's no more individuals wishing to testify, are there any objections to closing oral testimony for ADEPT-1(5)?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

**. . . END OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON ADEPT-1(5) . . .**

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay, I'll now close public testimony for this item, and we can just into deliberations. ADEPT-1(5) Operational Budgetary Review of the Environmental Protection and Sustainability Division of the Department of Environmental Management. I propose three...three minutes per Councilmember for each round of discussion, and we'll start with Vice-Chair Sinenci followed by Council...Committee Member Tom Cook.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair. And mahalo EP&S for your presentation and...and for all your hard work that you're doing. I'm happy to hear that the metals collection in East Maui is expanding, and I am definitely sure that without it we'd probably see more dumping along...along the Hāna Highway, so again mahalo for that. My question is will...will you be continuing the abandoned vehicles program? I know that was a successful program for...for East Maui, and I know Member Paltin was asking for that in some of her areas in Olowalu.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: We have the abandoned vehicles program, which is continuing. We also have our tow and scrap program, which is the program where community members can have their vehicles removed from their properties, as long as they own them. And so, yeah both programs are continuing.

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VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Right, you bring up a...a good point. We...it...it was successful for us, but we still have a lot of the vehicles that either don't have registrations or their ownership papers. And so, it's been hard for my staff trying to track down some of those so that we can get these vehicles that have been there over five, ten years and are still on the side of the road. And then there was also a limit to them, like we could...we could only take five per month from each of the different areas in East Maui. Was that from you guys or was that from the...the towing company?

MS. HERMAN: It was from us, and we had...had set forth those limits to make sure the program could continue running within our budget. However, at least for East Maui we never hit the limits and the first month --

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Oh.

MS. HERMAN: -- there was a lot of demand, and then we changed; we actually made the program flexible, and we added more, and then since then we've actually never hit the limit for any of the sections of East Maui. So, there's...there's appointments available.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, okay. Thank you for that. And then you mentioned that you've expanded a couple areas in Ke'anae and Olowalu for containers. I was wondering if this could be a program suitable for the Ha'ikū-Kailua area as I noticed driving into work there's a lot of dumping along the highway in the Ha'ikū-Kailua area.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, that particular container program anybody can request containers from us. It's on our website, perhaps it's a little too hidden. People are welcome to...to reach out. We're still also running Hamakualoa, and then Malama Maui Nui, our partner, has also shown us their data on litter...litter control and has also alerted us to Ha'ikū and that area being a hotspot. And so, we're all ears to --

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah.

MS. HERMAN: -- creating something to service that area better. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . We're ready.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Great.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: All right. Great. Thank you for your work. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. You're welcome. Let's move on to Committee Member Tom Cook followed by Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. My question's regarding the...the burned vehicles in Lāhainā. Did...how...how was that handled? Just basically Army Corps of

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Engineers, I think they hauled a lot of them out. Anyway, could you walk me through that? And did they end up going to Hammerhead and being processed or were...because that's the most like...getting them shredded makes them smaller.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: Yeah. So, when the disaster happened, the first task we had to go do is just identify the cars, and so we went out in partnership with a forensics vehicle team as well as MPD, and we went car by car with right-of-way vehicles first anywhere on public areas, and identified the vehicles, and then we logged them, and then we launched a public communications campaign to communicate with community members about anything related to their cars, whether it was having them be able to retrieve their intact vehicles or having us just adjudicate and recycle the vehicles. And then so, that was all on our staff, and then it was up to...unless we were towing vehicles around within the burn zone to assist with infrastructure development. The towing was actually by Army Corps and ECC, the actual towing of the cars. A lot of the cars were also removed by the insurance companies themselves. We allowed two towing partners access to the burn site, and they were responsible for towing out their own insurance cars, but we did tell them how they had to do it to reduce the debris that could have been falling off the cars. You would have seen they...they were wrapped. And then, yeah basically everything went to Hammerhead Metals, where it's crushed and then sent to Honolulu for steel processing like normal.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: As far as the financing, did Army Corps pay for the County for that for services, and the insurance, did the insurance companies pay anything to the County for it.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: Mostly, so if you look at one of our slides it talks...it breaks down what our internal costs were. We did have some towing that we put in for reimbursement to FEMA. And then all of our work hours, and some of the electric vehicle reconnaissance hours, so we did put a reimbursement in to FEMA; it's just under \$200,000 of costs that we incurred ourselves. And then the rest were taken on by the insurance companies. We were very careful, like if they had a cost, they kept their cost, and then with our...with our Federal contractors, they absorbed costs as well. And so, what the County down to the down to the penny here incurred is...is on one of the previous slides, and we did put in our reimbursement for FEMA for that.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Well thank you so much for those efforts. So this...I mean it went from just cleaning up cars on the side of the road and getting them out of the bushes to something of that order of magnitude is amazing and so . . .(timer sounds). . . congratulations on that accomplishment.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Let's move on to Rawlins-Fernandez, Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez followed by Council Chair Alice Lee.

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COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Okay. Okay. Mahalo for all your work on Moloka'i. Working on the abandoned vehicles issue is...is a big deal. We don't have anywhere like Hammerhead on Moloka'i to take junked vehicles, and so a lot of them get abandoned all over the place. You talked about partnering up with I think Malama Maui [sic] or shoots, Hui Malama Maui [sic]? I'm probably making that up--on like a appliance exchange program. Did I get that right?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: Yes, Maui Malama Nui did one bulky items collection event on Moloka'i this past fiscal year, which included things like refrigerators and things like that.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh so it was an...it was not an exchange; it was just a collection?

MS. HERMAN: It was collection and recycling.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh okay. Because we have our Hui Up! program under Sust'ainable Moloka'i; you're aware of that one? Okay. Go ahead.

MS. HERMAN: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh, okay. So, that program is an exchange program. So they bring in their old, inefficient appliances for a more efficient one. Okay. Have you spoken with Sust'ainable Moloka'i folks about partnering with...I...I don't know what the partnership with the other organizations look like, but have you spoken with Sust'ainable Moloka'i about partnership...something similar with them?

MS. HERMAN: We have not, but we have partnered with Sust'ainable Moloka'i on some other initiatives, so I should just get in contact with them and see if we can bring forth this collaboration if it's, you know, seems there already.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: What...what did that partnership with you folks look like for Hui Malama Maui [sic]? I...I think I'm still getting it wrong but.

MS. HERMAN: Malama Maui Nui runs a lot of our bulky item recycling and collection events, and so it's a part of our grants. And so they went out and set up an area and they partnered with Moloka'i Metals to collect a variety of bulky items. Some...some just traditional trash, but also tires and refrigerators and other appliances like that.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. You spoke about looking into doing more recycling of PV panels, and since you've worked with some of our folks, you know, spearheading the effort with our energy independence for our island, you likely know that there's a group, you know, Todd Yamashita folks who are...who have received some...some PV panels to be repurposed and they're...they're building off-grid systems

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for those that are fully relying on fossil fuel generators to replace those. And that's also being used to train our renewable energy workforce on Moloka'i. I guess one, I'm assuming you know about it, but I should probably ask if you know about it. Okay I see you nodding your head. And then two, I guess like...which my initial concern is if you jump, if EP&S jumps into that, I'm wondering if that would affect, you know, the...the donations that...that group is receiving right now.

MS HERMAN: In our vision of this, we would never edge those partners out; we would be building them into a program we'd be developing.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay, great. That's what I wanted to hear.

MS. POWELL: Just to speak on that, they're actually...that program has been funded through a recycling grant, so I know Todd well. They are recipients of two separate grants with similar programming for PV panel reuse for this fiscal year as well as last fiscal year, they had the one grant. Thanks.

MS. MCLINDEN: Okay. If I could --

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Thanks. Oh did my timer go?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah, but you can finish; go ahead.

MS. MCLINDEN: Oh I just wanted to plug in that --

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh okay.

MS. MCLINDEN: -- we have partnered also in EP section with Lilly and Todd at the last speaker series on the models that are emerging out of Moloka'i on really community-led energy resilience. So, we...we like those partnerships. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Yes, our Moloka'i community energy resilience action plan and we're moving on to CERAP 2.0 and putting those projects into action. Okay. Mahalo. Mahalo for the plug.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Great.

MS. MCLINDEN: CERAP is a model for the County for sure; it's excellent work.

CHAIR JOHNSON: All right great...great. Good stuff. Okay, Chair Lee, are you...you ready for a round of questions? Floor is yours. Oh, I think you...

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: I plan to...okay. *(audio interference)*

CHAIR JOHNSON: No, you're on the...I think your computer yeah, there you go.

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COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Now you (*audio interference*) computer.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: My sound is on. Okay. Okay. Testing.

CHAIR JOHNSON: There we go.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Sorry. All right now on one of the slides, I saw something about Category A \$193,000 was submitted. What does that mean? Submitted to whom? To FEMA?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. MCLINDEN: If we could call Julie Powers as a resource, she's the one that worked with FEMA on...on these reimbursements.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Any objection to bringing Julie Powers as a resource?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Come on, if you don't mind. If you want to stand at the podium or you can sit down here, Ms. Powers, whatever's...whatever's you're comfortable with. Okay. At the podium then. Staff will you give her hand over there?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi, did you hear the question?

MS. POWERS: Yes, I did. Yeah, the Category A was a different type of thing, but I worked with Kirk Garner from FEMA, and we submitted all the labor costs, contractors, everything that we used to help with support of services for the wildfires. Types of categories, Category A is actually debris removal, and Category B was more the supportive services. So, Category A was like dumpster stuff to green waste.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

MS. POWERS: Different things.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: That wasn't so much the question.

MS. POWERS: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: But I'm glad you described it. Did you have \$193,000?

MS. POWERS: Yes.



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COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Because nobody expected a fire. So where did that come...what account that come from?

MS. POWERS: The majority of it was labor costs. They reimbursed us for straight labor, fringe benefits, overtime.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: No, what account in...in your Department did it come from?

MS. POWERS: It was...

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: A, B, C?

MS. POWERS: It was mostly from ABM and the recycling. They were the major ones that...

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: So, program money?

MS. POWERS: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: It was probably B.

MS. POWERS: Yeah. B operations and A for labor.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. So, you submitted that, and then how much do you get reimbursed?

MS. POWERS: We they just recently submitted, so we didn't hear back yet. It was just submitted by Kirk Garner; he just finished up that particular one. It was for a period of August 8th through November 4th where the majority of what we did fell in that area.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. All right.

MS. POWERS: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you.

MS. POWERS: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. And then the other thing is on abandoned vehicles, do you just respond according to complaints?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: Not necessarily. We respond to complaints, and then we have a little bit of reconnaissance ourselves, but the vast majority of our response comes from Maui Police reports. What the Police submits to us.

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COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

MS. HERMAN: And then there's also large hotspots. . . .*(inaudible)*. . .we'll use those hills that go --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Here's one more coming. Here's one more coming, on Kahekili; yeah. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . There's always abandoned vehicles on the side of the street.

MS. HERMAN: Okay. We'll take a look.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Let's move on to Councilmember Sugimura.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, one of the things I do on the weekends is go around and look for abandoned vehicles. And I...I do, and I report it to...on SeeClickFix. I was just going to ask you if it's working?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: SeeClickFix does work; we're responding to it every day actually. And then we also submitted to--gosh I can't remember her name--how to improve SeeClickFix for us because a lot of the reports we get aren't inclusive of everything we need to actually find the vehicle. And so we do respond to everything, although it's not a 100 percent successful, and we actually worked with MPD. Both their organization and ours have some issues with SeeClickFix, and we submitted our suggestions for improvement so that the interface would get redesigned so we'd actually get all the information we need...we need to make it really effective for us.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, maybe you can...you can send me an email of what exactly you need to make sure we're accurate then when we report because it asks all the questions that we respond to, but thank you.

MS. HERMAN: Yeah. Thank you. I will send you an email.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah. And, you know, looking at your Fiscal Year '25 proposed budget. Julie went back to your seat, but it's stating...the way that you have it broken down, because it's not consistent with the budget. It doesn't say exactly EP&S Admin A, Admin B, Admin C, Admin OH. So, I just wondered if you could describe that. Because they all kind of ABC and then.

MS. POWERS: Is this for Fiscal Year '25?

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah.

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MS. POWERS: Or '24?

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: You gave us '25.

MS. POWERS: Okay. The...the way we broke it down is the EP Admin is the one section that normally was what we had for '24 and then we transferred a lot of the money to Michelle's new program. So, we...we have the different...A is like for the labor, B is the operations and C is like for equipment.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh okay. So, just like how the budget is broken down.

MS. POWERS: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. And then you talk about your employees and EUTF and FICA, and the same thing with the recycling then?

MS. POWERS: Uh-huh. A, B, C. Yeah. We just...we just did it like that how it's written in the budget so --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh okay.

MS. POWERS: -- easier to...the flow of it...you can follow it.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. And...and thank you for your work that you did in terms of getting the FEMA reimbursements.

MS POWERS: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, do you have any idea as to how long it would take to get the reimbursement, or?

MS. POWERS: I would have to check with Kirk, but he...he stated probably a couple months. But it has to...if FEMA approves it, then it goes to HEMA. and then HEMA's the State version, and then if they go over and we are okay with them, then it will come back to the County. So, it's...it's not a fast process. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. POWERS: Okay.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Councilmember. All right. Oh it's my turn. So, I have a question in regard...like a...of...a big picture kind of question. So, you know during COVID, and it was budget season, I was always asking the Departments how has COVID affected your budget priorities, and a lot of Departments had to pivot. So, here we are, another, you know, tragedy, another terrible events. How has the fire pivoted your budget priorities? And anyone could take a stab at that, but that's my big question.

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MS. POWELL: Thank you, Chair. I would say that our priorities are pretty much the same other than fire prevention and try to just making sure that we have a...a set of procedures in place in the future for...for natural disasters. I know that our previous disaster debris plan was last updated in 2010. So, it just shows that we do need to update our County plan and procedures that we have a clear path to follow if, you know, we're faced with any more tragedy.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. HERMAN: In terms of vehicles, we thought this even before the fires too. Like abandoned vehicle collection is fire prevention every day because they get lit on fire.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Uh-huh.

MS. HERMAN: And so, that's part of the reason we want to do more reconnaissance into the vehicles that are in the nooks and crannies and in fields, and who knows how they end up...up there and start doing some of those extractions to prevent...prevent any unwanted fires in other places related to vehicles.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Please.

MS. MCLINDEN: Thank you for the question. For the environmental programming section, it's super important because climate change is...is happening; it's impacting us already. The environmental programming section already works with partners and on programs to raise awareness about climate change as well as building regenerative resilience. I was involved in the...in the CARP process for with the last administration, so that's going to be foundational for EP&S to access funding to develop programs, and to streamline climate change throughout, not just the different sections in EP&S but between County, the different divisions and different departments. It's...so, it's a huge focus; it should be a huge focus for everyone --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. MCLINDEN: -- but yeah, super important in terms of building resilience in of County of Maui.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. My next question I'm going to pivot, and maybe, Ms. McLinden, maybe you can address it. But basically, we heard from the Department of Ag--and you...you were here for that--invasive species, you know, the...the cost attributed to those and the effects on our environment, and our economy, just everything. Is there...is there wiggle room for you folks to get in on this action, if you know what I mean? . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . Is there a way for you guys to also help with any type of invasive species control?

MS. MCLINDEN: I think absolutely, it's a cross cutting issue. We know it affects more than

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agriculture; it's a...it's a huge economic issue. We know it has massive cultural effects, impacts, many of them negative. So, definitely there's no clear-cut lines with sustainability issues. There's a lot of overlapping areas, and I think working together is critical. It's very expensive to get rid of something once it's been identified somewhere. And enforcement of...we need more enforcement mechanisms at the State level, we need to support our Department of Ag at the State level, we need to support our local Department of Ag. But we really need public awareness because those are the eyes and the ears because it's just a massive issue.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. MCLINDEN: And I think Cecile wants to say something.

MS. POWELL: I did want to mention that I am seeing how I manage the organics processing programs here. I'm a part of the CRB Working Group, and a part of that for EP&S is the main priority is getting compost up and going, and another thing that we're doing is an integration plan of our existing systems and how we're going to and we're...we're working with a wide variety of experts on this to devise this plan is how we're integrating new systems to account for CRB infestations with our existing programming around organics handling.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you for that. My times up. I'll have a follow-up question, but let's move on to Councilmember Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Composting, music to my ears. I really wanted to thank you guys for your response to the rubbish removal immediately after the fire. It was 100 percent better than it was in 2018 where rubbish was left in the streets for long periods of time. And I wanted to preface my next comments being that I'm...I'm very angry, but I'm not very angry at you folks. But in terms of fire prevention and things like that, we know Olowalu is also a dry area and has also been hit by fire many times. And we also know that there's thousands of abandoned vehicles in the wetlands on Government-owned property. And I know that it's not your abandoned vehicles, and I know that it predates you folks being in your positions. But that being said, if that area were to catch on fire, from what we learned from this last fire, the volatile organic compounds, the super...super toxic stuff that happens when fires burn, you know, battery acid, brake fluid, gasoline, diesel, all the things it would...I wouldn't even send our firefighters in to fight that because it would surely kill them in the long run if not the short term. And...and I believe that there are people possibly living in there as well. And, you know, in 2019 we put 500,000 towards this problem, and then COVID hit, and then three years later it's times ten. So, I just was wondering, these are wetlands...10,000 people signed a petition that they were concerned about the mother reef off of Olowalu, and I haven't seen a plan from the Administration. So, just laying it out like that; I don't know if you have any comments, or concerns, or suggestions.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department. Deputy Director.

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MR. SCHMIDT: Yeah. I'm...I'm recently been added to the task force. I don't know the title, but to deal with the homeless encampments and the...and the cleanups and...and certainly that could be a focus, just a cleanup of that area.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And to clarify, I don't have a problem with the homeless. I have a problem with the abandoned vehicles.

MR. SCHMIDT: No...no, I understand.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: If you want to leave the homeless there, that's...that's not my concern; it's the abandoned vehicles.

MR. SCHMIDT: Understood, and...and you mentioned it, it's not County property, and so that therein is...is some of the issue, so we need to--I'm assuming it's State land?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: It's a combination of State and County land, and to me it's...it's also an integrity issue. Like in my first term, we cited a Lāna'i citizen . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . for running a junkyard on not zoned junkyard property to the point where their family lost their property.

MR. SCHMIDT: Right.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And here's us, this is State and County land; if somebody called the DOH tomorrow how much would we be fined on top of having to clean it up?

MR. SCHMIDT: Right. That's certainly something we can focus on, and it's going to have to be a collaboration in with, of course, the State, but yeah, we could take that up. Yeah.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. And you have anything?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

MS. HERMAN: Yeah, and I'll...I'll just back up Bob too. It's tip of the iceberg, but we have started pulling a lot of cars out of that area; we pulled out over a hundred just this fall. And then...but a lot more just keep showing up. Maybe people know it's a dump site now, and so we're...we're like really trying to keep up with them, but more are showing up. But we're on it in terms of the cars, and the State's helping too.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. And the 2019 also included perimeter security measures, so I think that's also something that needs to be done. I think we should also investigate any Olowalu residents with heavy machinery that can move the barriers that have been erected in the past and maybe satellite surveillance or something because there is local participation in that.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah. Okay. We're going to go reverse round; how about that. So, we'll start with Councilmember...Council Vice-Chair Yuki Sugimura followed by Council

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Chair Alice Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you. Endless, yeah. And I...I just wonder...I know a lot of the problem is that you can't touch a vehicle that's not...doesn't have a registration, a legal owner, and is there something that we need to do and advocate? I guess it would be State legislation, more than just County, but do you have a comment?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. HERMAN: I might just ask for a clarification. We...Abandoned Vehicles can take any vehicle basically; it's our towing program that has limitations. You just have to own your car to get rid of it. And that's why you can't throw away someone else's car. And so, when you're talking about without a registration, could you let me know what you mean exactly and --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Ownership, right so I...I thought that you couldn't tow a car or...or take it to Hammerhead unless if you had authorization from the owner. So, whatever that it means to you, is there something that we can, you know, pass that will help you?

MS. HERMAN: Yeah, we can discuss it. We would just have to think about fraud prevention, and so...and making sure people can't throw away cars they're not supposed to be throwing away. But that's definitely a gap that is on our minds, and yeah, let's talk about it and see if we can figure out something to...to...to address that.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah, because a lot of the, you know, cars that are left wherever because we hear about S-turns, we hear about Olowalu, it must have been there for a long time, and in...in my District also, right, you have places that people know you should...you can leave your car and nobody cares I guess. Comments?

MS. HERMAN: She was recommending that I clarify. Yeah, for abandoned vehicles we can tow and even recycle if they don't collect anybody's car regardless of registration. But to have people participate in their own recycling, then they do need to own it.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, in other words if you get a report that there's a car, you can...you can't take it anywhere then?

MS. HERMAN: We can take it; the Abandoned Vehicle Section can take it.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: And where would you take it?

MS. HERMAN: We would take it to our holding yard, and then following laws and procedures, we would allow the owner to come and retrieve it, and if they don't, it's typically recycled.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: How long?

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MS. HERMAN: We hold it for 30 days.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh okay. So, there's an answer then. Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you, Chair. Okay. Two things. I need to specify when I said Kahekili Highway, it's from Happy Valley going toward Waihe'e, right before the park before you turn off to the golf course. And when you turn to the golf course, there's like two abandoned vehicles on the hill right next to some guy who's been camping there for couple of years now. But anyway what I was going to suggest is--I...I forgot your name, the person on the left.

MS. POWELL: Cecile.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Cecile. With this abandoned vehicles, you know, it's...it's really frustrating when people expect us to take care of somebody else's problem. Some derelict person, and so in the past there have been promotions against smoking, and children convinced their parents not to smoke. So, since you deal with all the schools and the--what grades?

MS. POWELL: The program is...I'd have ongoing education and outreach to all the schools, but this specific program is for K through sixth graders.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Maybe you want to think about that. I know you...you're not in the abandoned vehicle section, but you have a captured audience, and they know that's wrong, and they can convince their parents, their cousins, their aunts, uncles, whomever is doing this. Children can have an impact, and I suggest that you may...that you try this, you know, as a demonstration project.

MS. POWELL: Thank you. I appreciate that, and as a whole we, when we push education and outreach, we do it as an EP&S team. So, if there is some messaging from the environmental programming section or the abandoned vehicle section that I can include, we usually team up and collaborate prior to launching.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Good. These kids can be very persuasive.

CHAIR JOHNSON: . . .*(laughing)*. . . You telling me; right. Okay. Let's move on to Committee Member Keani Rawlins-Fernandez followed by Committee Member Tom Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Okay. My last question was regarding the sunscreen law. You said that you were happy to report high compliance. Would you please provide a little more detail to what that entailed?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.



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MS. MCLINDEN: Sure, thank you for the question, Committee Councilmember. So, when I was onboarded, I was tasked with educating and raising awareness among Maui County on the ordinance that was coming up. I started six months in advance making sure that businesses were aware, general public. I first started with the businesses, so I was on the phone, I was visiting businesses, I was talking to buyers, I was talking to store managers, everywhere that I found sunscreen being sold. I...I created a database, I got all the contact numbers for all of the...whether it was an owner, a manager, a buyer, or a distributor. So, I started ahead of the law to make sure that at least the...in Maui County we could get ahead on enforcement. So, when the law became effective, I did follow-up enforcement activities where I went over the major areas and visited all of the stores. I could have missed some mom and pop's, but I did a very good I think comprehensive job of visiting and talking to the store staff, the managers, et cetera and found that there was only a couple of smaller mom and pop's that had a few bottles of non-compliant or chemical sunscreen on the shelves. So, I was very pleased to learn that the education campaign--which in general we do a lot in EP&S because a lot of the legislation we're responsible for and a lot of the issues we're responsible for require people to change their minds and their behavior. So, that's something that all of us are...are well versed in and have experience in. However, saying that, there...there needs to be some admin rules developed, so I'd really appreciate the support of that expansion position because their needs to be better definition between cosmetic and sunscreen.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for that. Is there like a...like a report, like some kind of documentation for like annual findings or like a--what is it called--like some kind of a matrix that you are keeping record of all these things for enforcement?  
.. *(timer sounds)* ..

MS. MCLINDEN: I definitely have a lot of documents, and I can put together a report. I know with the...with the legislation that we are responsible for, we are mandated for enforcing. Oftentimes the reports are part of that legislation, and to be honest we've been very short-staffed at EP&S, so even though we know very much that those reports are important we hope that we can get support in the future to actually better track our impact, the impact of legislation. I have been working with some...an expert in the cosmetics industry who has been tracking on the impact of...of how different ingredients in sunscreen products have changed after the passing of legislation. So, that's definitely something that as a whole, as an administration...on the administration side you'll notice it...I...it has been put in the presentation that we...we need to up our game in terms of systematizing these processes and tracking, coming up with good metrics and tracking our impact. But yes, we definite...we are definitely aware that that needs to happen.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Wonderful. Mahalo. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: All right. Let's move on to Council...Committee Member Tom Cook followed

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by Vice-Chair Shane Sinenci.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. I don't have any further questions.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you Councilmember Cook. Let's move on to Vice-Chair Shane Sinenci.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Chair. Just following up on Member Rawlins-Fernandez, you mentioned there's a staff shortage. How...how many vacancies do you have?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

MS. MCLINDEN: We just had to get this together. We have about five vacancies.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Five vacancies.

MS. MCLINDEN: We have --

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCLINDEN: -- we have 40; we have a vacancy rate of 40 percent. We are missing 40 percent of our staff.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that.

MS. MCLINDEN: Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. And then just curious, has enforcing the single-use plastic ware ban been effective; have you seen vendors...are vendors able to switch over from chemical plastics to bioplastics easy?

MS. POWELL: Yes and no. When it went into effect, there was an extension or a delay...I'm sorry, a delay in...in the effective date. It went from January to March. And we've done a lot of temporary exemptions for folks to work because there's been a raw materials shortage. So, most of those have expired, so as to date we may have a half a dozen or so businesses that still have those temporary exemptions, but they do have notices posted that they are temporarily exempted and that their intention was to become compliant within x amount of days. But ongoing enforcement we have maybe between one and five reports per month of businesses that are not compliant. So, some folks, you know, were compliant and then we catch them, and they're no longer--like Whole Foods, for example, didn't understand that they were not compliant, so there's a lot of education and reeducation as staff sort of like revolve around different businesses. And when new businesses open, they usually reach out and ask to ensure that they're within compliance, and we work with a lot of distributors as well so we know that everything that they're distributing, and they're sort of an arm educating and outreach for the...sort of as an extension of EP&S in that way.

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VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: So, it's not necessarily a shortage of new material but maybe vendors that are still using the inventory that they still have?

MS. POWELL: Exactly, we didn't want (*audio interference*) on in give them a chance to deplete their stock as well as find a source for a replacement that's compliant.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Powell. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Excellent line of questions. I'm going to follow up on...on what I asked before about how...how do you folks...how can you get in to helping with the invasive species issues. You know, if you had the budgets, I'm...I'm just trying to find out like...like what do you guys think you could do? You know, it seems to be that you guys do a little bit of enforcement; you drive around, you look for abandoned cars. Could you drive around and look for coconut rhino beetles? Could you...you know, there in...you can tell by the trees that they're eating. Are there things that you could do? Could you be like an inspector at the...at the harbor and say, hey, you know, that's...let me test your...your compost for little fire ants or any--I'm just trying or...and I know you also do outreach too. Maybe there's a role for you there. If...if, you know, budget-wise...is it what you would imagine your role, and then what kind of funds would you need for that?

MS. POWELL: I think the...thank you, Chair, for the question. It depends on what species you're talking about and how it affects our...our existing programming. In this case the coconut rhinoceros beetle does directly affect our programming for organics processing. So, I have been very actively planning this integration of amending our current practices to account for them. And as far as a line item on a budget, it hasn't been identified for EP&S per se because we're already doing education, we're already doing outreach, so it doesn't really have a line item number, yet. Not to say that there won't be one, but we're implementing this plan and...and it's being drafted right now, but it's a dual partnership with the Department of Ag on the State and County level as well as the UHMC and also a few other organizations MISC included, but we're getting all the experts to weigh in to see what the best practices would be, and then we'll identify how I'm going to implement them and move forward with our...so, I won't know until that point on what the number would be.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. POWELL: Michelle, do you want to weigh in?

CHAIR JOHNSON: You have any...

MS. MCLINDEN: Excellent question. As I said previously, these invasive species overlap many different areas; they have many different impacts. Before the coconut rhinoceros beetle was found on...on Maui in Kihei, I was part of a group of experts that was working on a State level communications plan, and that doesn't mean that this was going to be good

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for the State, very high level. This was representatives from each island, and we had County representatives as well developing. Because it's really important to have streamlined, and the same messaging going out. In terms of the Environmental Programming Section, I...I developed...I designed and...and launched a...a CRB website. Part of our website, a page on our website...because it's super important that the community they're...in terms of enforcement, we are only a few people.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. MCLINDEN: We...and other agencies are also short-staffed. We need people to understand that how to identify, how to report it, and the invasive species experts have done an excellent job with that. But I definitely could help . . .(timer sounds). . . from...from my section to get the word out and to collaborate around in terms of maybe grants or workshops, you know, programming, you name it.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah. Great.

MS. HERMAN: And on the abandoned vehicle side, 75 percent of our staff have worked in invasive species management for coqui and miconia and some other plant work. And so, if we just had more people, I mean we're already out there in the field and some of us already have training on the attacks of threat here on the County...in the County. And so, if we just had some more people, we could spend a little bit more time in the field like listening and looking and reporting --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. HERMAN: -- because we already have some training.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Great. Well yeah, I...I know you have five empty positions, but we got to sort out how we get, you know, recruit these folks and fill those positions. But thank you so much; my times up. That was two rounds for...for this Department, and I want to thank them so much for joining us. We do have a final question from Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: I...I guess I missed the first round.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Oh, I beg your pardon. Go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: But anyway. Just wanted to ask you, the shortages that you have in your Department, what SR ranges are they?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: These are civil service positions; right?

MS. HERMAN: Yeah, they range from 15 to 24. And we've been working with DPS for a while, and we look forward to working with them more.

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COUNCILMEMBER LEE: SR-15 to 20 what? To 24?

MS. POWELL: Twenty-four.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Twenty-four. So, you think salary is...compensation is...is the problem?

MS. HERMAN: Compensation is a major problem, especially when it comes to retention. Even if you can get someone in the door, when they get their first paycheck, they can't stay.

MS. POWELL: I just wanted to be clear that the recycling section, we don't have any vacant positions. We're actually we're asking for an expansion position; this does not exist. There are currently only two positions under recycling, and they're both full.

MS. MCLINDEN: The work that we do takes education and experience. And so, if you have low salaries and you have high expectations on the...on what someone should...how someone should perform, you know. We do a lot, we do research, we do...we analyze data, we collect data, we design programs, we...we run enforcement, we deal in legislation, and we track legislation. So, that is...we're asking people to have competency in those areas, and sustainability, it's cross-cutting. That could be one of the issues that we're getting competent people...is maybe one of the issues.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Maybe you have to redescribe some of those positions higher; you know, from instead of a SR-15 maybe it's you start at a SR-22 --

MS. MCLINDEN: Right.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: -- or something like that.

MS. HERMAN: Yeah, and I couldn't agree more, and we're in the process of redescribing some, but it's just taking a really...really long time.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Those...those positions you're mentioning, they...some of them making less than 50 grand a year? See, that's the problem, you know; that's not a livable wage. But okay. Thank you so much, Department, I really appreciate you guys joining us today on...on this, you know...you're right before budget. We want to know what your needs are and what, you know, what your priorities are. So, Members, without any objections, I'll defer this item.

**COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS.** Excused: (NUH)

**ACTION: DEFER PENDING FURTHER DISCUSSION.**

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you once again, Department, for joining us. How about we take a five-minute recess and bring in our last...our last Department. Okay. The time is 3:44; we'll be back at 3:50 . . .(gavel). . .

**RECESS:** 3:44 p.m.

**RECONVENE:** 3:51 p.m.

CHAIR JOHNSON: . . . (gavel) . . . Will the ADEPT Committee of 2/22/2024 come back to order. The time is now 3:51 p.m. Okay, Members, we're rocking and rolling today. We're on our last item on the agenda; three Departments in one day. ADEPT-1(6) Operational Budgetary Review of the Department of Transportation. In accordance with Rule 7(B) of the Rules of the Council, the Committee will receive our final presentation of the day from Deputy Director Batangan and discuss matters relating to the Operational and Budgetary Review of the Department of Transportation. No legislative action will be taken. We're grateful to have Deputy Director Batangan with us today to present how the Department's FY 2024 budget was spent and any priorities he would like to be a...be a...would like us to be aware of for FY'25. Not only does the Department of Transportation plan and implement all modes of transportation in Maui County, including those in the air, or on water, and land, this Department is also tasked with mitigating the escalating traffic problem within Maui County. Deputy Director Batangan, thank you for being here. We're ready to hear about your many great things that you and your Department are doing for the people of Maui.

**ADEPT-1(6): OPERATIONAL AND BUDGETARY REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (Rule 7(B))**

MR. BATANGAN: Aloha 'auinalā, Committee Chair Johnson and Committee Members. Thank you for having me here today. I'm Kauanoe Batangan, Deputy Director for Department of Transportation, and this afternoon I'll be reviewing the Department's operations and FY'24 budget. Next slide, please. So, the Department of Transportation responsibilities are listed here, and they're set forth in the Charter and date back to the Department's creation in 2002. There are three main responsibilities. The first is planning and implementation of all modes of transportation in the County, including those in the air, those on water, and on land. Planning and development an efficient program to facilitate the rapid, safe and economic whole movement of people and goods in Maui County. And coordinating Maui County's transportation programs with other County Departments and with agencies of the State and Federal Government. Next slide, please. This is our organizational chart. We're a small department, currently only seven employees, but we have 11 EPs allocated. One person will start at the beginning of March, and three are in active recruitment with some interviews scheduled. We oversee the Maui Bus fixed route, Maui Bus ADA Paratransit, Maui Bus Commuter, Air Ambulance, Human Services Transportation, and Park Maui Programs. Additionally, we are administratively tied to the Maui Metropolitan Planning Organization, which is responsible for Maui's

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transportation planning. The fixed route program provides service in and between various Central, South, West, and Upcountry Maui communities. The ADA Paratransit program provides advanced reservation curb-to-curb services for persons with disabilities, who are unable to use a regular fixed-route public transit service. The commuter program provides morning and late afternoon rush hour services from various residential communities in the Upcountry and Central Maui areas out to West and South Maui with afternoon returns. The Human Services program provides services that eliminate mobility barriers for low-income and disadvantaged individuals, persons with disabilities living outside the paratransit service area, seniors and youths. The Air Ambulance program is a partnership between the State of...the State Department of Health and County of Maui that provides critical care, aerial medical transport to appropriate medical care facilities. And the Park Maui program is a new parking management program that strives to implement data-driven solutions for parking throughout our island's most heavily utilized areas. Next slide, please. Our Department's budget is broken down into three funding sources: the General Fund, the Highway Fund, and the Grant Revenue Funds. The General Fund covers our administration program, the human service transportation program, the air ambulance program, and the Park Maui program. The Highway Fund covers the Maui Bus fixed-route, ADA paratransit and commuter services, as well as the matching funds necessary for the County to secure outside grants. The Grant Revenue Fund covers operations, capital equipment, and capital improvement projects for which we were able to secure grants. Next slide, please. With regards to the General Funds, our administration program funds our salaries and office admin operations. As mentioned previously we're allocated 11 EP's but currently have seven employees in the department with one more starting in the beginning of March. There are three open positions in active recruitment. Also included in this program are FY'24 funds for the MEO bus replacement program, which is \$550,000, and the ferry feasibility study, which was \$300,000. Next slide, please. The General Fund also provides for the human services transportation program, which includes services for senior services transportation, senior nutrition, Maui Adult Day Care, youth transportation, rural shuttles and dialysis. The General Fund also funds Maui County's portion of the air ambulance services and the Park Maui program. Next slide, please. The Highway Fund supports the Maui Bus fixed route, ADA paratransit and commuter services, as well as the matching funds necessary for the County to secure outside grants. These grants include bus and bus-related equipment, and matching funds...and Maui MPO matching funds. Also included in the public transit program are our bus stop and maintenance funds, which includes a contract for shelter pressure washing on a monthly basis and trash removal three times weekly from each sheltered stop. In the past several fiscal years, we received COVID relief funds to supplement public transit program where less funds were needed from the County's Highway Funds. Now that those COVID funds...now that those COVID relief funds are no longer available, the Department's request for FY'24 rerouted to pre-pandemic levels. Also, please note that the FY'24 funds reflect the annual costs for the new five-year service contracts. Next slide, please. Funded by Grant Revenue are funds allocated for the different types of Federal funds expected from the Federal Transit Administration and the MPO. Grant Revenue includes FTA discretionary competitive grants, congressional discretionary funds, and other transportation grants. There are two grant

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revenue-funded EP positions that fall under transportation, and they are the Maui MPO executive director and staff member. They are administratively tied to our Department. There are no position vacancies in the MPO. Next slide, please. For Capital Improvement Projects in FY'23, the Department submitted and received approval for a budget amendment for the transit hub project of \$500,000. The Department also received approval for FY'23 budget amendment for a transportation base yard land purchase. The Department executed the purchase sales agreement this past November. And next slide. Which is our mahalo slide.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you so much for that presentation, Deputy Director. Clarifying questions--I'd like to move on to public testimony before we get into our deliberations. At this time, if there's anyone wishing to testify on this item, please unmute and identify yourself. Staff, is there anyone wishing to testify on this item?

MS. MCKINLEY: No, Chair, no one is signed up to testify on this item. If anybody would like to testify on this item, please raise your hand on Teams or approach the podium.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay, Members, seeing there's no more individuals wishing to testify, are there any objections to closing oral testimony for ADEPT-1(6)?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

**. . . END OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON ADEPT-1(6) . . .**

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. I'll now close public testimony for this item. Let's enter discussion in this item, and I propose three-minutes per Councilmember for each round of discussion. We'll start off with Vice-Chair Shane Sinenci followed by Committee Member Tom Cook.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair and mahalo, Deputy Batangan, for that report, and also mahalo for your continued support of the air ambulance as rural communities like Hāna, Moloka'i, and Lāna'i greatly benefit from this service. You...you mentioned the Federal transit program; are you guys still funding a DC lobbyist for some of these Federal transit program funds?

MR. BATANGAN: Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

MR. BATANGAN: Thank you, Councilmember, for the question. Yes, so the Department of Transportation utilizes a different advocate from the rest of the County. This is a remnant from Senator Inouye's time as chair appropriations. So, when the Department was first created, Senator Inouye asked that we utilize Denis Dwyer; he's the same advocate that every other County Department of Transportation uses and the State Department of Transportation. So, when the Administration was looking to get a single lobbyist for the County, we requested to remain with the person who we had already



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built up a relationship with and who kind of coordinates our requests with the other counties and the State DOT.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Oh okay. So, that lobbyist is for all the four counties in Hawai'i?

MR. BATANGAN: Yes.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that. And then the Federal transit programs pays for his or...or each of us pro rata share his salary?

MR. BATANGAN: So, each...each individual county and the State Department of Transportation have their own contracts with the same individual.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Oh...oh. Okay. Thank you. And then you...you mentioned the...the ferry system study. Did we get to see that yet?

MR. BATANGAN: Not yet. So, the RFP has been issued; the time period for...for people to submit bids closes on March 4th, and then the selection and award will take place in April. The recommendations and a presentation to this Council would be around February in 2025. We're shooting for...for them to give their presentation before...not this coming budget cycle but the next one after that.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, okay. And then Member Paltin did mention to Senator Hirono about the Lāhainā pier harbor, so she did ask for additional help for...for that as well. So, I just wanted to share that, but again mahalo for the presentation. Thank you, Chair.

MR. BATANGAN: Thank you, Councilmember.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Let's move on to Councilmember Tom Cook followed by Committee Member Keani Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Deputy Director. Five-year service contract, is that amortized over five years or is that the price per year?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

MR. BATANGAN: Chair. Thank you, Councilmember, for the question. So, when we come out with a five-year service contract, it's as a whole. I think each year they're able to request, but we are not obligated to grant a small percentage increase in the cost per contract per year.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: So, do they get paid in installments over the five years? Or is it like an upfront cost?

MR. BATANGAN: Oh, yeah. No, it's per month.

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COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Per month? Okay. I'm curious how much is the cost of one of the large buses that you use?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: And ballpark...I mean, estimated because there's going to be variables.

MR. BATANGAN: Yeah. So, one of the things I learned joining the Department is that public transit buses are not like going and shopping for a car. It's not like there's a standard model; everything is custom-designed. So, we have to spec it out, and it depends on what we're looking for, but as a ballpark, they're a little over a million. And I know this because one of our buses just burned in the fire, and so we had to go out and get a comparable bid in our submission to FEMA for reimbursement.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: What's the kind of life expectancy for...I imagine that you get super pretty high mileage on them?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: It's not real important.

MR. BATANGAN: I would have to ask for you to put that in writing and get back to you. I know it's over ten years, but I don't know exactly what it is. So, that's something I'd ask Committee Staff to put –

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah.

MR. BATANGAN: -- in writing so the Department can get you an accurate answer.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Councilmember Cook, does that sound good to you? We'll have the Staff write that question.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: It...it does, and I just want to...like as a parallel, I mean it's like commercial big dump trucks can go 5 or 600,000 miles, and it's pretty amazing how industrial equipment...it's expensive but it...it last a long time, so.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Ms. Tanck, did you get the question? I got a thumbs up; we'll be following up in the written form. Okay. Let's see where are we. Okay Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez. Is she, oh she...she will be back shortly. Let's move on to Chair Lee followed by Councilmember Sugimura.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Kauanoë, how's the ridership now?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

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MR. BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Councilmember, for the question. It tanked after the fire, and it's been slowly building back up. We are just about to break even to where we were pre-fire.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: But you don't make as many trips to Westside, huh?

MR. BATANGAN: We do not. So, when...pre-fire there were four routes going out West. Post-fire we've had to combine several into one because we lost the...the transit hub out at the Wharf Cinema Center. So, they're now...there are now two routes in West Maui. One really long one that goes from Queen Ka'ahumanu Center all the way to, sorry, Kapalua, and then one that operates within West Maui.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: That stays within West Maui?

MR. BATANGAN: Correct.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: So, with the smaller ridership on the Westside, did you increase service on let's say Central or Upcountry?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Or South Maui?

MR. BATANGAN: We have not increased any route frequencies in any other part of the island. The only changes to our operation were those out West.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Ballpark figure, how many people do we move every day?

MR. BATANGAN: That I'd have to get back to you in writing as well.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Chair Lee, do you want that in writing?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Please...please.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Ms. Tanck. Okay.

MR. BATANGAN: Chair, can I --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yes, certainly.

MR. BATANGAN: Can I clarify? So, when we respond to that question, it would be in total or as a breakdown by route?

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COUNCILMEMBER LEE: A breakdown by route would be good.

MR. BATANGAN: Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah. Okay. Councilmember Sugimura.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you. One of the questions that we've asked everybody is how did this wildfire impact the Department of Transportation. And I think you're on the recovery team. So, I wonder if you could educate us.

MR. BATANGAN: Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

MR. BATANGAN: Thank you, Councilmember, for the question. In terms of our budget, we were one of the luckier departments in that all of our...or most of our services are contracted out. So, we were able to get accurate data on expenditures and were easily able to submit for reimbursement. The biggest strain to the Department was in terms of employee time. There were times in the immediate aftermath of the fire where three-fourths of our entire department was out either in the field or in the emergency operation center, which left two people to run the Department's normal operations on their own. You know, we're...we're really small, and so having people wear multiple hats was very impactful for us. I, myself, am one of the RSF leads in the Office of Recovery; I co-lead Health and Social Services with Chis Kish, who's in the Department of Housing and Human Concerns. So, that means I'm splitting my time between Office of Recovery and the Department of Transportation, and Director Takamori is largely leading our daily operations on his own.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, during...during the fire, what kind of losses did you...equipment, material...I mean equipment losses?

MR. BATANGAN: Equipment losses, one fixed-route bus and several bus shelters. Not under the Department's ownership, we also lost the Wharf Cinema Center, which acted as our West Maui transit hub. And so, the Department's operations are kind of a spoke and wheel system where everything radiates out of a central node. Losing that West Maui transfer hub kind of impacted our ability to service the Westside. So, we had to combine several routes into one big one because there was no opportunity for vehicles to kind of come together and act as a transfer station anymore.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: And one last question. What about the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center bus hub and how we doing on...on that?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

MR. BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Councilmember, for the question. So, we have a right of entry at Queen Ka'ahumanu Center that goes through the end of March.

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The current completion target date that we got from our contractor is March 25th.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh, you're going to make it.

MR. BATANGAN: Provided everything stays on time; yes.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: . . .*(laughing)*. . . And the equipment arrives.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Knock on wood.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . I guess we don't expect a budget change on that then; you're on track.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Deputy Director.

MR. BATANGAN: So far, yes.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay.

MR. BATANGAN: The...the contractor has been much more, I don't know, active at the...at the construction site lately.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. We look forward to that. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. I'm up next. So, you know, we...as you...I'm sure you're aware as Secretary of Transportation people, Pete Buttigieg came to Maui, and it's a...it's an overall theme that I'm finding out with these Federal funds. Like they will...they will purchase vehicles, and boats, and all of these things, but they won't pay for the operations in any kind of Federal funding. So, like if you were to...have you...first off have you...are you considering applying Federal funds for any of the types of vehicles, the busses or, you know, obviously the ferry after the feasibility study, but the air ambulance, you know. I'm...I'm not sure who...who...do we own the air ambulance? And then that -- how's that work, you know, because it's...it just says operations on there, and it was...I know Federal funds there is a way to finagle some kind of funds out of there. Have you guys looked into that?

MR. BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair, for the question. I'll break it down into three different parts depending...and by that I'll take each type of vehicle separately. So, we do get a lot of Federal funds for our ground transportation fleet. Primarily we go on for low- or no-emission grants that make it much more affordable for the County to purchase public transit vehicles.

CHAIR JOHNSON: So, the buses that we get are electric and those types, they're Federally funded? Subsidized?

MR. BATANGAN: We have primarily diesel buses now, which we also got Federal funding for. There's more Federal funding available for low- or no-emission vehicles, which is why

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we need to build our base yard and have the ability to install charging equipment so that we can more aggressively pursue low- and no-emission vehicles. Not only is it cheaper for the County, but it does help us meet our target of going zero emissions. Regarding the ferries, we have an upcoming meeting scheduled with FTA to discuss three potential grants that we could apply for should the County decide to pursue a public ferry system. I don't know what those numbers look like as we have yet to have that meeting. On the air ambulance side, that is a grant that we have with the State Department of Health. We don't own the airplane, and the vehicle and the service are actually contracted through the State Department of Health. So, we provide a grant to them as our share costs for the program, and they then contract out, the air ambulance service.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thanks for clarifying it; there's a lot of spinning plates in that. Okay this is a kind of a thing that I always have \$600,000 for bus stops. Now at first, I was like what, but then I find out some of these bus stops cost about a 100 grand; they're very expensive. So, then it comes down to the idea of, do we only need six new bus stops?

MR. BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair, for the question. So, bus stops . . .*(timer sounds)* . . .

CHAIR JOHNSON: Please continue.

MR. BATANGAN: Okay. So, the bus stop shelter itself cost about \$100,000 just for the frame. That's in part because they have to be sturdy enough to be robust, and then in part because they have to be anticorrosive. A big cost for the structures is actually the underground utility work. Whenever we put a bus shelter up, we are using County right of ways. Under County right of ways, you tend to have utility lines like water, wastewater, et cetera. So, a big part of the cost for structures is actually rerouting the utility lines under them so that they're still accessible should we put a shelter...or when we put a shelter there. And then I guess to your question as to, you know, whether or not we should...be more aggressively putting up shelters, whether or not 600,000 is sufficient at this time. The Department really struggles to get the requisite permitting to put up the shelters; most of the time it's not the County holding it up. It generally lies with SHPD.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Oh.

MR. BATANGAN: But I wanted to make this point because last time I was up here and talked about shelters, I misspoke and told Councilmember Cook that we were exempt from SMAs. That was incorrect; we're exempt from EAs and can do and...and for our shelters, we generally have to do an SMA minor or SMA exemption application.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you for that. Thanks for those responses. I see Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez is here. Councilmember Rawlins you're at a perfect time if you would like to ask the Deputy Director any...any questions.

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COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. I think you folks asked my question...the questions that I had regarding an update on the ferry, and that was the primary one. I think I got the answers to my other questions that I had earlier too. Mahalo, Chair. Mahalo, Deputy.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Members, do we need a second round of questions? I don't see any hands. Well, okay I just want to thank you for your hard work. Every Department has their unique struggles, but they also have very shared struggles, and the fact that you seem like you have a lot of your positions filled, that's pretty envious for some departments we hear that. So, thank you for your time, Deputy Director Batangan, and Members, without any objections I'll now defer this item.

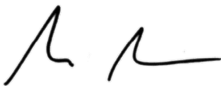
**COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS.** (Excused: NUH)

**ACTION: DEFER PENDING FURTHER DISCUSSION.**

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. This item is deferred. Staff, is there anything before the...we...before the Committee? We're good to go, so we're going to adjourn this meeting. The ADEPT Committee of 2/22/2024 is now adjourned. . . .(gavel). . .

**ADJOURN: 4:17 p.m.**

APPROVED:



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GABE JOHNSON, Chair  
Agriculture, Diversification, Environment,  
and Public Transportation Committee

adept:min:240222min:mll:cvk

Transcribed by: Cheryl von Kugler

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CERTIFICATION

I, Cheryl von Kugler, hereby certify that pages 1 through 55 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 4th day of March 2024, in Wailuku, Hawai'i.



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Cheryl von Kugler