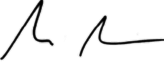


March 14, 2024

MEMO TO: ADEPT-1(16) File

F R O M: Gabe Johnson, Chair   
Agriculture, Diversification, Environment, and Public  
Transportation Committee

SUBJECT: **TRANSMITTAL OF INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENT RELATING TO  
COUNTY OF MAUI ARBORIST** (ADEPT-1(16))

The attached informational document pertains to Item 1(16) on the  
Committee's agenda.

adept:ltr:001(16)afile01:ppm/sgt

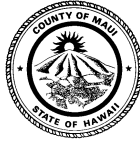
Attachment

Council Chair  
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair  
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Presiding Officer Pro Tempore  
Tasha Kama

Councilmembers  
Tom Cook  
Gabe Johnson  
Tamara Paltin  
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez  
Shane M. Sinenci  
Nohelani U'u-Hodgins



Director of Council Services  
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services  
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 S. HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
[www.MauiCounty.us](http://www.MauiCounty.us)

November 3, 2023

The Honorable Richard T. Bissen, Jr.  
Mayor, County of Maui  
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

Dear Mayor Bissen:

SUBJECT: **COUNTY ARBORIST** (PAF 23-323)

This Arbor Day, November 4, 2023, I respectfully request the County hire a certified arborist to serve as a central County arborist to advise all County departments and personnel on the proper care and management of trees on County-owned lands, facilitate the implementation and utilization of the Maui County Planting Plan, and support efforts within the County to increase tree canopy cover on both publicly and privately owned lands.

It is my understanding that the County currently has at least one arboriculturist in the Highways Division of the Department of Public Works and that holding an Arborist certification by the International Society of Arboriculture ("ISA") is a County job description requirement.

I would like to please request the addition of this personnel, via budget amendment or allocation of existing positions, to support increased care, management, and planting of trees Countywide for the following reasons:

1. In the aftermath of the August 2023 wildfires, there has been an interest in the reforestation of the impacted areas. Attention has been given to Malu 'Ulu O Lele, and the possibilities of replanting edible trees for food security. Burned trees are also in need of special care or propagation methods, and multiple public groups are initiating tree planting projects that need central coordination. The County arborist could be housed within the new Office of Recovery.
2. Trees provide many benefits and serve many functions which are important as we work to mitigate climate change and increase

resilience, including erosion control, carbon sequestration, groundwater recharge, shade for pedestrians, cooler and wetter microclimates, greenspace, and mental health support.

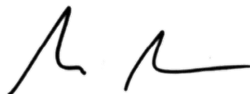
3. By Resolution 22-258, CD1, Council referred a proposed bill amending Chapter 19.36B, Maui County Code, to require the shading of parking lot hardscape to the Planning Commissions. The Planning Department is delinquent on the timeline to provide its report on the Commissions' recommendations, which, according to Director Aoki, was due on August 9, 2023. However, from reading the Maui Planning Commission's meeting minutes, I understand the Planning Department requests the addition of a certified arborist to support laws that would increase and regulate tree canopy cover over hardscape.
4. Other Departments can benefit from a County arborist to care for, manage, and plant trees on County land, including the Departments of Parks and Recreation, Agriculture, and Public Works.
5. Before he passed, the late Ernie Rezens, author of the Maui County Planting Plan ("MCP") and a world-recognized arborist, expressed the need to implement and enforce the language of the Maui County Planting Plan. A County arborist would coordinate achieving these goals. Some critical policies in the MCP, published in 2015, that are not implemented include:
  - a. **1.201**, Maui County should take a leadership role in planting trees along County roads where none exist, replacing missing ones, and to work with abutting property owners to provide appropriate care to landscapes fronting their property as required by Subsection 12.24A.070(E), Maui County Code.
  - b. **1.204**, The County Arborist should conduct and maintain an urban forest inventory of all trees on County lands using available technology and mapping. Such an inventory should reflect the maintenance trees received or need, whether the planting site is empty and therefore needs to be replanted, and whether tree conditions warrant a removal and replacement. The tree inventory can also be used for making budgetary requests. An additional benefit will be a realization of the net worth in environmental dollars our urban forest provides.

- c. **1.205**, Annually the Department of Parks and Recreation should assess the inventory of County owned parcels to formulate a plan for the year's landscaping and beautification.
6. The City and County of Honolulu has an entire Division of Urban Forestry within its Department of Parks and Recreation. The Division of Urban Forestry, according to its website, employs 27 ISA certified arborists and maintains nearly 250,000 street and park trees. The Division supports the City and County's goals to plant 100,000 trees by 2025 and increase urban tree canopy to 35%.
7. According to the Department of Land and Natural Resources Urban Tree Canopy Viewer, the Central Kahului Census Tract has 10% tree canopy cover. East Central Wailuku has 8% canopy cover. In contrast, the Wailea Census Tract has 38% canopy cover. This discrepancy is an equity issue, as Wailuku and Kahului are communities with significantly higher Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation and Native Hawaiian population than Wailea. A County Arborist could prioritize tree planting and maintenance as an equity issue to ensure that our community's economically vulnerable and Native Hawaiian populations are able to also receive the benefits of trees.

May I further request your written response by **November 10, 2023** providing a status of hiring a County Arborist to advise the County. To ensure efficient processing, please transmit your response to [county.council@mauicounty.us](mailto:county.council@mauicounty.us) and [ana.lillis@mauicounty.us](mailto:ana.lillis@mauicounty.us), and include the relevant PAF number in your response's subject line.

Should you have any questions, please contact me or Legislative Analyst Ana Lillis at ext. 7659.

Sincerely,



GABE JOHNSON  
Councilmember