



MAUI COUNCIL RESPONSE REGARDING PU'UHONUA 'O NENE UPDATES – JUNE 2024

Aloha Council Chair Lee,

Thank you for your message and for the chance to respond before the rescheduled hearing. We appreciate your words of acknowledgment as we are grateful for the opportunity to grow a space specifically for our unhoused community over time in a way that hasn't been done before on Maui. We recognize the need for an innovative solution to get our most vulnerable individuals off the streets. Despite the many challenges, we are proud to provide aloha, a warm bed, on-site health services daily, 3 meals a day, work opportunities, and a chance to participate in a resident-run community council to give a voice to about 1/3 of Maui's unsheltered population each night since October 2023. As the testifiers all indicated about Holomua Road, this is not an easy task but we are thankful to the state for being willing to take a risk to provide a much-needed space for skill-building and the creation of a community of tiny homes coming soon. Because of the urgency after the fire, we acted as quickly as we could to create a temporary solution so that people had a place to turn to now, not a year later when construction could begin. This way, the healing has already started.

To answer your specific questions:

1. What agencies or organizations provide the funding for the facility?

This program is funded by the Department of Human Services on Department of Transportation land. Other donors are Kaiser, Rotary Clubs, Red Cross, Home Depot, and others for in-kind goods or services to benefit our residents. Many community members also contribute their time as vetted volunteers or by donating clothing and household items. We mahalo the community who has shown up for our people in a real way because they "see the vision of this safe space for the most vulnerable who can't turn anywhere else." I quote this from one of our volunteers who was moved to donate funds as well.

2. Presumably, government agencies regulate or oversee the facility's housing standards, infrastructure, operations and services; can you please state which agency(s) oversees or regulates which aspects of the facility?

- Governor's Office – Homeless Coordinator
- Department of Human Services
- HUD guidance

Maui fire and police, as well as DOH and disability consultants, have also done tours and provided guidance.

3. What agencies partner with Project Vision in running or managing the facility and in providing support and services to its clients or residents? Specifically, do you work with Mental Health Kokua or the Maui Homeless Alliance?

We contract out for food, security, mental health support, and case managers. We have partners from MHK, Aloha House, Office of Wellness and Resilience, MEO, MIKO, and all the payers serve our residents. We have MOUs and BAAs with multiple partners who offer different support



services on and off site with us. We attend the MHA meetings and coordinate with Maui Memorial and KHAKO. We also work with MHA through reporting shelter entries and exits into HMIS. We have multiple consultants that play a guidance role in health, finance, safety, and/or compliance. We have made several successful referrals to Malama Family Recovery and other organizations. We also host on-site AA, NA, and harm reduction meetings.

4. How many full-time and part-time staff work at the facility each day? What kind of expertise or training do they have or are provided? How many individuals reside at Pu`uhonua o Nene?

120-130 people reside on-site each night. Following national regulations, we have a staffing matrix of 3 shifts per day and about 30 staff on rotation. At any given time for this site, there are at least 4 people working each shift plus oversight by a shelter manager, housing director, social services director, and facilities manager. We have 24/7 medical oversight coverage. We also have workforce development participants that play a crucial role in the self-governance piece. There are at least 2 residents working at a time, with a total of 30 residents that participate in this workforce development program. We also have a community council of self-appointed Alaka'i who take their leadership roles very seriously.

Our staff are trained utilizing nationally-recognized homeless and harm reduction courses that stress the core issues and evidence-based practices that support our population who experience trauma. All staff take our required OSHA, CPR, first aid, and Narcan trainings. De-escalation trainings are a requirement. Other annual training topics include trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, motivational interviewing, domestic violence and sex trafficking, mental health first aid, etc.

We hold weekly staff meetings to go through case conferencing for training purposes. This allows us to learn and make adjustments in real time. Staff are also required to participate in mentor shifts and to be shadowed by a director at least once a month. With any sentinel event, incident reports and root case analysis are done, in addition to cooperating with legal requirements. We take each event seriously and ensure the team and residents learn from them.

5. Is Pu`uhonua o Nene currently compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and is it operated in a safe and sanitary manner, or are there immediate plans to make it compliant?

The site was erected in less than 2 weeks as a response to the Lahaina fires under the emergency proclamation. The shelter grounds are still gravel, so it is not completely ADA-compliant, as this is a temporary solution until construction of the permanent site can be completed by the state. However, we have made temporary accommodations that include:

- Wooden walkways to bathrooms, showers, and the clinic
- Meal deliveries
- ADA bathrooms, with backup portapotties
- Shower chairs and call buttons
- A wheelchair-accessible golf cart for individuals to get around with more ease

For now, we are constructing a medical respite for those in need of ADA spaces. We currently have 2 patient rooms in this building and are actively building 6 more patient rooms. Construction for the entire site with permanent tiny homes and community spaces will begin soon. All



permanent common spaces will be ADA-compliant, with at least 10 percent of all the living quarters also being ADA-compliant.

6. How long is the facility intended to operate – is it temporary until certain other facilities are made available, or is it intended to be permanent?

Mahalo to DOT for the land access since September 2023. Homeaid Hawai'i announced in their recent newsletter that ADA-compliant tiny homes and community spaces will be built on this site for permanent use. Thus, the tents are temporary until construction is complete.

7. We heard testimony about hospitalizations and deaths; can you please state how many individuals have been hospitalized or died since the facility began operating? Have the deaths been reported to the Maui Police Department (MPD) and your regulatory agencies?

Yes, everything is being reported properly per law. We are unable to share specific information due to the Privacy Act of 1975, HMIS, HIPAA and HUD standards covering vulnerable populations. Parties on a need-to-know basis are included when necessary and with a data sharing agreement in place, no others are given any information to respect privacy and in accordance with the law. However, we mourn the losses and honor the three residents who passed on site. We have appropriately reported to MPD, medical, HMIS, and state agencies as required. We also conduct an internal incident report and root cause analysis to grow through heartbreak. Our residents and staff are also offered grief support in multiple different forms.

We aim to provide a safe space, wherever people are in their life cycle. No matter what their circumstances are, our goal is to provide a community of compassion and acceptance. We are the only shelter in the state that has APRNs, RNs, Psychologists, licensed therapists, and acupuncturists on a full time daily rotation for residents only. Our medical director has a team on-call 24/7 as well. A psychiatrist also comes once a month. We are working to provide a better quality of life through greater access to health and social services right on site. Over time, as relationships build and trust forms, more and more of our residents are willing to engage in our health and support services provided by us and our partner organizations.

8. Does the staffing include security, and/or does MPD maintain a presence at Pu`uhonua o Nene if there are fights, violence or drug use?

We contract out for security that is on site 24/7, we also have security cameras throughout the site, as well as our own staff with guard cards, and workforce development residential security aids per shift. It is a team effort to work through conflicts. Our residents have experienced many traumas and have behavioral health and chronic health conditions, so we adopt a culture of harm reduction, which does not discriminate. We believe everyone deserves a bed, food, and compassion. We focus on skill building to encourage behavior changes, but this takes time to unlearn bad habits and relearn good habits. We do not allow violence or substance use on site and we do have a three-strike system. We talk through every issue before giving out strikes because what is at stake is being back on the streets and that is not our goal to deprive someone of their basic needs. Those who are discharged can come back after a probation period but our goal is not to punitively discharge because we are cognizant of our neighbors and believe that behaviors can be learned over time when surrounded by encouragement and training support.



MPD and EMS are called any time a person on site requests it or there is a need. We often remind those living in the shelter that they have the right to call emergency services whenever they feel it is needed. We allow MPD and EMS onsite anytime they respond to a 911 call. Like at most other shelters or programs that serve the protected class of vulnerable populations, Project Vision staff does not confirm or deny residence without a formal written request by the agency or government unit and/or a release of information signed by the resident. In emergency situations, exceptions to this law exist.

Project Vision policies require staff to protect our residents' personal identification information in compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974, HMIS regulations, HIPAA laws, and HUD guidelines. As such, we follow the law of warrants for sweeps or searches. Without documentation, we discuss both our trauma-informed policies and the needs of the officers to problem-solve together on how we can comply without triggering bystander residents. We have met with MPD to talk through this process together as we both have the same goal to keep the community safe.

9. What do you think is working well, and what needs improvement?

The community is really taking ownership of their space. They are coming together and creating a special bond of residents caring for each other. We have successfully reunified many former residents with their families, and many have moved on to treatment programs and even their own homes. Many have graduated from our workforce development program and now work off site. We have a waitlist of other residents who want to participate and have a job to contribute to the community and learn new skills.

Challenges include hiring because this is hard work and there are many similar service organizations that are also filling positions. We feel the effects of workforce shortages, especially since the fires. Another hardship is in finding independent housing for our residents to graduate to due to the affordable housing shortage on Maui. More program and housing resources are needed across Maui to support next steps for our residents.

Currently, the Pu'uhonua consists of congregate living spaces and we are completely off-grid until construction begins. We eagerly await the state's work to build out the permanent site.

While we have community support and many providers and outreach workers are glad to have the Pu'uhonua as a safe option where we accept people as they are, we hope to communicate with those who have questions and suggestions about how things can be even better. We look forward to growing together, fueled by the same mission to support our people in need.

If you have any inquires or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at (808)306-4406 or darrah@projectvisionhawaii.org. Mahalo for the opportunity to address these concerns and share our vision.

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