

Mike J. Molina

From: Kate (Koch) Blystone <kateblystone@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 5:00 PM
To: Kelly King; Mike J. Molina; Keani N. Rawlins; Pauline Martins
Subject: Appointment of Planning Director, GET-1

Aloha Council Members,

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit comments on the appointment of Michele McLean as Director of the Department of Planning. I am a Planner V in the Long-Range Division of the department. I've been in this position for six months, but I've been a planner for 18 years. I've worked with several planning directors in jurisdictions across the country and have witnessed a variety of approaches to the position for which Michele is being considered. Here's what I like about Michele's take on the job.

Michele is a strong leader without micromanaging every aspect of the department. She's smart and works as well with people inside the department as she does with people outside the department. But what I appreciate most is the way she values departmental morale and camaraderie, and implements meaningful measures to ensure it remains strong.

In our department, we have the Above and Beyond award, which is passed from staff person to staff person each month. The winners from the month before pass it to someone else who has helped them out (or that they've seen helping others) during that month. I've never worked in a department that does this and it's truly lovely. This was Michele's idea.

At our monthly staff meeting, Michele also makes a special effort to acknowledge employees who have anniversaries, regardless of what year it is. Whether someone's been with the department 1 year or 25 years, these little acknowledgements mean a lot to people on our staff.

Why should the council care about Department morale? Because people who enjoy coming to their job do a better job for the people of Maui County.

Planning is difficult work. We interact with the public in myriad ways, often getting yelled at and praised in the same meeting! We constantly balance clearly conflicting priorities, and have to keep an eye on both the big picture and long term ramifications of our decisions and proposals. All the while we are tracking the details and constantly course correcting for changing conditions. It requires intense training, the ability to listen carefully and infinite patience.

It can be easy to get down or stressed by this job, but Michele doesn't let us dwell on the difficult parts of our work, she helps us through them and backs us up when we need it. She provides us steady leadership when so much of our work is constantly in flux.

It's because of all this that I urge you to support Michele for this position. She's qualified, she knows this community, and she's a great leader.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Kate Blystone