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January 31, 2020

OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY COUNCIL

Councilmember Shane Sinenci
County of Maui
200 South High Street, 8th Floor
Wailuku, Hawai'i 96793

Subject: 100 Percent Renewable Energy (EACP-17(4))

Dear Councilmember Sinenci:

Thank you for your letter dated January 16, 2020 requesting additional information on items discussed as part of our presentation to the Environmental, Agricultural, and Cultural Preservation Committee on January 7, 2020. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before your committee to share information on our efforts toward reaching a 100% renewable energy future for our County.

We offer the following in response to questions contained in the January 16, 2020 correspondence we received:

1. New Technology or initiatives to make photovoltaic more inexpensive for affordable homes.

Currently, while there is no new money saving technology *per se*, the price of photovoltaic systems continues to decrease. Homeowners may also take advantage of financing programs offered by many of the solar companies that provide rooftop photovoltaic services. We are not aware of solar companies providing special initiatives, special pricing or benefits to homes that are deemed to be in the affordable housing category. While photovoltaic systems help with energy costs, residents are encouraged to also utilize conservation methods and install energy saving appliances.

Additionally, the Hawai'i Green Infrastructure Authority (HGIA) Green Energy Money Saver (GEM\$) On-Bill Program helps eligible customers reduce their electricity costs by installing approved energy improvements such as private rooftop solar systems, solar hot water systems and/or commercial energy efficiency retrofits, which are repaid through the customer's electric bill. More information on this program is available on our website at www.mauielectric.com/billing-and-payment/energy-assist-programs/gems-on-bill-money-saver-program.

2. The potential cost savings from installing a solar farm along Kuihelani Highway.

Once the solar and battery project along Kuihelani Highway is online, Hawaiian Electric will purchase power from the project at 8 cents a kilowatt hour. Currently, this is the lowest cost for renewable energy on the island and lower in cost than fossil-fuel generated power. This project is anticipated to save customers in the range of \$7-13 per bill.

3. How individual homes can buy into large solar projects.

Please see response to question 5 below.

4. The responsibility to trim the trees that obstruct power lines in residential neighborhoods.

Trees causing hazardous conditions to utility lines are addressed in HRS 269.32 which identifies the landowner as responsible for any damages to our infrastructure. However, because of safety concerns and a potential impact to providing reliable power, Hawaiian Electric spends approximately \$3 million annually in vegetation management - including tree trimming, for Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i. Hawaiian Electric hires a contractor with a certified arborist and personnel trained to work in close proximity to high voltage power lines to address areas of concern.

5. Hawaiian Electric's community-based renewable-energy programs in Maui County.

Hawaiian Electric's Community-Based Renewable Energy (CBRE) program began in 2018 for applications by qualified organizations that wish to build and operate a community solar facility. The program will provide the benefits of solar energy to residential and commercial customers without access to privately-owned rooftop solar, including many renters and apartment dwellers. The program is undergoing a review by the Public Utilities Commission for a possible second phase.

Once projects are built by subscriber organizations, electric customers will be able to enroll in the community solar program on their islands. Subscribers will receive a credit on their electric bills, based on the output of the project and their level of participation. Any qualified company, organization, developer, or group wishing to become a subscriber organization to propose a solar project can apply at www.hawaiianelectric.com/communitysolar.

While projects are proceeding on Maui and Moloka'i, there have been multiple applications by different subscriber organizations that were unable to proceed for various reasons.

Separately, opportunities exist for community benefits through large-scale renewable energy projects that are currently being proposed on the island. Such projects will benefit all customers without having to subscribe into a specific large-scale solar project.

6. The E-Gear pilot program on Moloka'i of installing batteries for solar panels installed in residential areas, and if there are any plans on expanding the program.

In this pilot program, ten customers were provided the opportunity to participate and receive battery systems that allowed for photovoltaic energy to be stored during the solar peak hours and discharged at night. The battery systems installed at no cost to the participating customers. Of the ten systems installed, one customer opted to not proceed with a rooftop photovoltaic system and the battery unit will be removed and utilized in different project currently under development. Currently, there are no plans to expand the E-Gear program.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. Should you need further information please feel free to contact me at mahina.martin@hawaiianelectric.com or by phone at 446-1826.

Sincerely,



Mahina Martin

Director, Government and Community Affairs

c: Sharon Suzuki, President, Maui County and Hawai'i Island Utilities