

AH Committee

From: Jen Mather <jen.mather@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 14, 2020 7:37 AM
To: AH Committee
Subject: Fwd: TESTIMONY: Proposed Olowalu Affordable Housing Project 201H

Aloha Committee Chair Kama & Committee Members,

My name is Jen Mather and up until 2 months ago I was a resident of West Maui. I strongly oppose the Olowalu development being approved as a 201H project. Furthermore, I urge you, as a committee, to deny the proposal and require the developers to cease attempts to circumvent state land use laws, zoning ordinances, the Land Use Commission, and the West Maui community plan while they blatantly ignore the safety of their future homeowners and the West Maui community.

With the current situation in the state (and the world) being one of uncertainty and dwindling economies, I think it is prudent for the committee to ask questions about the actual affordability of the proposed project (and all subsequent affordable projects). The lowest priced home, of which there are only two proposed to be built, is \$506,400 which according to the DHHC's affordability guidelines, looks to be barely within the below to moderate (81% - 100%) income median if the prevailing interest rate is 5.25%. According to the guidelines, individuals need to make between \$87,750 to \$97,500 to qualify for these two homes but they will need to be able to afford a mortgage payment of nearly half of their monthly income (approximately \$3,381 when taking into account taxes, insurance, and other fees).

At the moment, with our single driver economy at a complete standstill and our state having a 13.1% unemployment rate, and without end in sight, it behooves us to be more cautious about what we allow to be built under the 201H process. Right now we do not need to rush into a project such as this, allowing rules, laws, and permitting requirements to be circumvented under the guise of needing more housing because no one who actually NEEDS these homes can afford them. We saw dozens of people fall out of the Na Hale o Maui Kahoma Residential project because they simply could not qualify for those homes any longer due to job loss or decreased income and those homes were greatly more affordable than those proposed for Olowalu.

Also, having attended a meeting regarding this project held at the Olowalu Plantation Estates, no real information was imparted. Rather, we were shown a map of the area and allowed to ask questions, but there were only a few people and without a presentation it was difficult to see the bigger picture. The majority of the people at the meeting were associated with the project and were there to obviously sell it rather than explain it. When asked if another "open house" would be held in Lahaina I was told they hadn't thought they needed to go into Lahaina to offer any information. Later in the month a representative had stationed a table at the West Maui Taxpayers Association Annual meeting, but again, no presentation, just a paper and map. The community engagement piece was sorely lacking on this front, however, the lobbying at the Community Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) meetings by the developer and his associates was highly contentious and brought crowds of people out for our February (I say "our" because I attended all but 2 of the meetings) normally subdued meetings (save the other meeting where the developer's wife threw things on the floor and started shouting at a testifier). If you have time, I would ask you to watch the meeting dated February 20, 2020 to see what statements were made for and against the project and preview what may occur in your Affordable Housing meeting.

In closing, I would like to mahalo all of you for always considering each project on their own merits. I trust you can see the good and the bad in everything, but also know what is right for our community and Maui as a whole. We, those of us who voted for you and trust you, know that you will do your due diligence and do what is best for us all.

Mahalo for your time and continuous hard work.

Me ka ha'aha'a,
Jen Mather