

AGRICULTURE AND PUBLIC TRUST COMMITTEE

Council of the County of Maui

MINUTES

JANUARY 18, 2022

Online Only via BlueJeans

CONVENE: 1:30 p.m.

PRESENT: VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Chair
Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Vice-Chair
Councilmember Kelly Takaya King, Member
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member
Councilmember Michael J. Molina, Member
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member

STAFF:

Kasie Apo Takayama, Legislative Analyst
Alison Stewart, Legislative Analyst
Paige Greco, Legislative Analyst
James Forrest, Legislative Attorney
Keoni Shirota, Committee Secretary
Lei Dineen, Council Services Assistant Clerk

Gina Young, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci
Kate Griffiths, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Gabe Johnson
Ellen McKinley, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Kelly Takaya King
Ana Lillis, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Michael J. Molina
Lois Whitney, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Tasha Kama
Evan Dust, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Tasha Kama

Zhantell Lindo, Council Aide, Moloka`i Council Office (via telephone conference bridge)
Denise Fernandez, Council Aide, Lāna`i Council Office (via telephone conference bridge)
Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros, Council Aide, Hāna Council Office (via telephone conference bridge)
Michele Blair, Council Aide, West Maui Office (via telephone conference bridge)

ADMIN.:

Stephanie Chen, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Department of the Corporation Counsel
Josiah Nishita, Deputy Managing Director, Department of Management
Jared Burkett, Senior Planner, Department of Planning

OTHERS:

Jennifer Karaca
Robert Coffey
Alvin Pelayo

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PRESS: *Akakū: Maui Community Television, Inc.*

CHAIR SINENCI: . . . *(gavel)* . . . Shane Sinenci, the Chair of the Committee. Before we get started, this online meeting is being conducted in accordance with the Governor's most recent emergency proclamation on Sunshine Law in-person meetings, which has suspended the use of in-person testimony and viewing locations due to the recent COVID-19 surge. The Governor's most recent emergency proclamation suspended the requirement for in-person testimony through February 28, 2022. So Members, in accordance with that mandate, may I also ask if you are at a public workspace, when your name is called, please identify by name who is present with you in the room, vehicle, or workspace. As for myself, I'm here with my EAs Dawn Lono and Mavis Medeiros. Joining us today we have Committee Vice-Chair, Mr. Gabe Johnson. Aloha 'auinalā.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Good afternoon, Chair. Ayubowan to all of you and the Councilmembers and everybody out there. Looking forward to an excellent meeting. I tell y'all, this Agriculture Department is a long time coming, and I can't wait to hear...hear more about it and...and be...be a part of this. So real excited, topic of discussion today. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: All right. Great. Ayubowan to you as well. I don't see Councilmember Kelly King, so I'm sure she'll be joining us shortly. But...

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Chair, she's here.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, she's here. Excuse me. Ayubowan.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Muted. Muted.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: I'm sorry. Were you talking to me?

CHAIR SINENCI: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Okay. I don't see it in the chat box anymore. Can you repeat it for me?

CHAIR SINENCI: Ayubowan.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Ayubowan to everybody. Aloha. Sorry I'm a little late.

CHAIR SINENCI: No, thanks for joining us.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Multitasking right now.

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CHAIR SINENCI: Next we have...and 'ae. Next we have --

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Oh --

CHAIR SINENCI: -- Council...

COUNCILMEMBER KING: -- Chair, I guess I just...I just have to tell you that I'm still in my room alone...in my spare room in my house alone.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Great. Next we have Chair Alice Lee. Ayubowan.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Ayubowan, Mr. Chair. I'm here alone in my workspace at home with my little...my little dog. And by the way, Member King, well, you just missed us taking a vote. We changed the Department to the Department of Agriculture and Housing. Just kidding.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Can we add Human Concerns onto that too?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Oh, okay.

CHAIR SINENCI: We'll...we'll take that up at a later meeting. Next we have Councilmember Michael Molina. We had a GREAT meeting this morning. Ayubowan.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Ayubowan to you, Mr. Chair, and my colleagues, and everybody else tuning in to our APT meeting today. Looking forward to the discussion on the...what will be the newly formed Department of Agriculture. And for the record, I'm transmitting from my home in Makawao, and my wife is in the next room over 25 feet away. Aloha, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Molina. Next we have Council (*audio interference*). Aloha 'auinalā and ayubowan.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Was that for me, Chair?

CHAIR SINENCI: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay. Aloha 'auinalā and ayubowan kākou. Broadcasting live and direct from the Lāhainā District Office here in sunny Lāhainā at the Old Lāhainā Center with my EA Angela, who's more than six feet away. Looking for an apt discussion on the Department of Agriculture.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo. And welcome, Angela, as well. Next we have Council Vice-Chair Keani Rawlins-Fernandez. Ayubowan.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha 'auinalā, Chair, my Moloka'i nui a Hina. I am at the Moloka'i District Office alone on my side of the office. Ayubowan kākou.

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CHAIR SINENCI: I do see your chat, maybe I'll take off my video...my virtual background. Okay. Welcome to the museum. Okay. So Members, also welcome to join us today are our Non-Voting Committee Members, Pro Tem Tasha Kama and Council (*audio interference*). And they're always welcome (*audio interference*) should they choose to. Mai ka Administration, we have Mr. Josiah Nishita from the...the Deputy Managing Director. And Ms. Stephanie Chen, Deputy Corporation Counsel. Ayubowan.

MS. CHEN: Good afternoon, Members.

CHAIR SINENCI: Good afternoon, Ms. Chen. Thanks for joining us. From our Staff we have Ms. Kasie Apo Takayama. Ayubowan.

MS. APO TAKAYAMA: Ayubowan, Committee Chair and Members.

CHAIR SINENCI: Also joining us, Mr. Keoni Shirota. Ayubowan.

MR. SHIROTA: Ayubowan, Committee Chair and Members.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo for joining us. Mr. James Forrest, our Legislative Attorney. Ayubowan.

MR. FORREST: Aloha.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha. Next we have Ms. Alison Stewart, our Legislative Analyst. Ayubowan.

MS. STEWART: Ayubowan, Chair, Members.

CHAIR SINENCI: Next we have Ms. Paige Greco, our Legislative Analyst. Ayubowan, Ms. Greco.

MS. GRECO: Ayubowan, Committee Chair and Members.

CHAIR SINENCI: Lastly, we have Ms. Lei Dineen, Council Services Assistant. Ayubowan, Ms. Dineen. Okay. Members, with that, we have one item agendized today, APT-1(4)...

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Hey, Chair?

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: I beg your pardon. I...I didn't mean to interrupt you --

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh. Yes?

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: -- during introductions.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, Mister...Mr. Johnson.

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VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: You didn't...

CHAIR SINENCI: Our...oh, go ahead.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: I just forgot to mention that I'm home alone. I'm just trying to follow the --

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: -- the protocol, that's all. Beg your pardon.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for...for reminding us. Staff, are there any testifiers signed up today?

MS. GRECO: Chair, we have five testifiers so far.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Great. Let's begin with public testimony. Oral testimony via phone or teleconference will be accepted. Testifiers wanting to provide video testimony should have joined the online meeting via the BlueJeans meeting link, <https://bluejeans.com/411641115>, as noted on today's agenda. Testifiers wanting to provide audio testimony should have (*audio interference*) via phone conference by dialing 1-408-915-6290, entering meeting code 411 641 115, also noted on today's agenda. Written testimony is highly encouraged. Instructions on how to submit testimony can be found at mauicounty.us/ (*audio interference*). Moving on to oral testimony. Oral testimony is limited to three minutes. If you're still testifying beyond that time, I'll kindly ask you to complete your testimony. When testifying, please state your name. If you're testifying on behalf of an organization or if you're a paid lobbyist, please inform the Committee. Please be mindful of the use of chat during the meeting. Chat should not be used to provide testimony or chat with other testifiers. If you're here to provide testimony, please be courteous to others by turning off your video and muting your microphone while waiting for your turn to testify. Once you're done testifying, you'll be asked to disconnect from the call; however, you're welcome to continue to view the remainder of the meeting on *Akakū* Channel 53, Facebook Live, or on mauicounty.us. Participants who wish to view the meeting only without providing testimony, please also disconnect at this time. You can view the meeting on *Akakū* Channel 53, Facebook Live, or visit mauicounty.us/agendas. Only Councilmembers, Staff, and designated resource personnel be connected to the video conference meeting once testimony (*audio interference*). Reminder, Committee Members, Administration, public, to please be patient if we run into any technological issues. Staff has been monitoring people joining today's meeting by phone and by video, and we'll do our very best to take each person up in an orderly fashion. If you're connected to the meeting and have not indicated that you do not wish to testify, Staff has already added your name to our testifier list, calling you when it is your turn. Staff, could you please...Ms. Greco, please call the first testifier.

. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .

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MS. GRECO: Our first testifier is Jennifer Karaca, to be followed by Robert Coffey.

MS. KARACA: Aloha, Councilmembers. Thank you so much for allowing me to testify today and bringing up the Department of Agriculture on this Committee's agenda. I am not a paid lobbyist, but I have been working on the Department of Ag for the last two years as a volunteer. And I've also been facilitating the community impact working group for the Maui County Department of Ag, which is an all-volunteer resident group who has been working really hard to provide guidance on what's needed by the community and the ag sector to make this Department really successful and really encapsulated so that we can have a thriving, sustainable, reachable ag system and increase food security and economic opportunity. I also did attend one of the Mayor's meetings that was led by Karey Kapoi, so I have some insight on that as well. And I just...yeah, looking forward to hearing the presentation by the Mayor. *(Audio interference)*

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo. Mahalo, Ms. Karaca. Members, we did ask Ms. Karaca to stay on as a resource, and...and to provide some of her community findings after Deputy Director Nishita comes on. If there are no objections and bring her on as a resource?

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Members. Ms. Greco, can you call the next testifier?

MS. GRECO: Our next testifier is Robert Coffey, to be followed by the user by the name of Automatic.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Heard Automatic, but who was the other one?

MS. GRECO: So sorry, the first --

CHAIR SINENCI: Coffey? Coffey?

MS. GRECO: -- the next person is Mr. Coffey.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Mr. Coffey. Coffey? Are you there? Could use a cup of you right now. Okay. We'll come back to Mr. Coffey. It looks like Automatic...oh, go ahead, Ms. Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Mr. Coffey wrote in the chat that he's only observing and not intending to testify.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Oh, there...yeah. Thank you, Member Rawlins-Fernandez. Thank you for joining us today. Looks like Mr. Automatic, Mr. Ash *(phonetic)*, and Mr. Pelayo has disconnected at this time. Is that correct, Ms. Greco?

MS. GRECO: I believe so. That's what I'm seeing as well.

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CHAIR SINENCI: Is there anyone else out there wishing to testify? Please go ahead and unmute yourself and state your name. Members, seeing there are no more individuals wishing to testify, without objections, now close oral testimony and accept written (*audio interference*) record.

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS

. . . END PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Great. Thank you.

ITEM 1(4): COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Members, moving on to the County Department of Agriculture. In accordance with Rule 7(B) of the Rules of the Council, Committee intends to receive a presentation and discuss matters related to the County Department of Agriculture. Members, as you may recall, on July 24th of 2020, the Council voted to pass Resolution 20-102 proposing a Charter amendment to establish a County Department of Agriculture. Voters overwhelmingly agreed, and passed the Charter amendment that fall. While 2022 seemed a long way off when we first proposed the resolution, time has passed quickly. We're now approaching the date of implementation. The task of setting up the Department falls with the Administration. The first step in the process comes with the budget process where the Department position and duties are laid out. Once the budget is adopted by the Council, the next step is to appoint the Director and Deputy Director, begin the position description process for the civil service positions. A lot of work has been done by our community in the last two years, specifically on developing the areas of need and the proposed duties of the Department, also the necessary requirements for the Department's leadership. One of my priorities for placing this item on today's agenda was to receive community feedback on what the public would like to see happen with this new County Department, but also to provide our community with background on where we are in the process. Our Deputy Managing Director Nishita provided a presentation and updates on the County Department of Agriculture on December 22nd, 2021, and has kindly agreed to present in our Committee again today. Those Members and members of the public who were unable to attend may receive the information today or reference today's meeting recording in the future. Our APT Staff has also reached out to our community agriculture working groups, and we did hear back from Ms. Karaca, who we've invited to share some of her outreach efforts as well with us today. So with that, Members, we have with us the Deputy Managing Director Mr. Nishita, and also we've invited Ms. Karaca to stay...stay on to (*audio interference*). They prepared a presentation for us to answer any questions relating to the new County of..Agriculture. If there are no objections, I'd like to designated them as resource persons under Rule 18(A) of the Rules of the Council.

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS

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COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Chair?

CHAIR SINENCI: Great. Oh. Go ahead, Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. I just had a point of information, clarification. Page 63 of the Charter says the Director and the Deputy Director will be appointed in the same manner as the Director and Deputy Director of Water Supply. So I'm not sure that it's a civil service position.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, okay. Can we get that clarification from Ms. Chen?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: It...it looks like they'll be appointed instead of civil service.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, for the...for the...the Director and the Deputy, yeah?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that clarification. And the other positions are the civil service ones, yeah? Okay. I'm getting a lot of (*audio interference*). Okay. Thank you, Member Paltin. Deputy Director Nishita, you want to go ahead with your opening comments, and then you can go ahead and share screen.

MR. NISHITA: Okay. Yeah, thank you very much, Committee Chair Sinenci and Members, for having us on today. I really appreciate the opportunity. I have had a chance to meet with many of you individually already, and we're still in the process of meeting with a variety of, you know, other stakeholders, State Legislators, and others in the community as well to continue to gain feedback as we, you know, continue to go through this process. Just before we begin, I wanted to give a brief indication to any community watching that it's not related to the Department of Ag, but the mail-in tests provided by the Federal Government opened a day early today. So for anyone watching, if you go to covidtests.gov and it's tests plural, you can register your household to receive a few at-home tests sent to you by mail. They'll be sending those out at the ending of January. So I encourage everybody to go ahead and, you know, get on there and register as soon as possible, just knowing that they opened it a day early. Chair Sinenci, I'm going to share my screen, if that's okay?

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead, Josiah.

MR. NISHITA: Okay. Thank you very much. The...we did do a presentation for the community back in December 22nd or so, got a lot of great community feedback through that process. And we appreciate for everyone who contributed. A common theme that we're hearing throughout from all of our community partners, stakeholders, residents, is really that they want the Department of Ag to focus on all forms of agriculture...from, you know, the large conventional farmer to the organic farmer to the small backyard farmer providing for their family and friends. And for all forms of ag to be included, you know, from crops to livestock to even value-added products. In addition, all islands and the special characteristics of each geographic area to be considered as well, you know,

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when evaluating agriculture activities and what kind of assistance this Department can provide. For the most part, this presentation is similar to what was provided to the Committee on December 22nd. We're still in the process of incorporating feedback we've received from stakeholders and whatnot, but I...I did take some time over this weekend to try to input some of the additional recommendations and whatnot that we've been hearing over time. And I apologize, it's not in a very neat or nice format yet, but just to kind of give an update to the Committee of where we're at and what we've been hearing. So kind of a draft timeline of, you know, where we are today. So we're having the Committee meeting today, and then kind of where we're heading. So of course, continuing to gather public and stakeholder feedback, you know, budgetary recommendations from everyone for consideration to the Council for the FY'23 Budget. You know, additional community meetings to provide, you know, updated recommendations and feedback that we've been receiving. Of course the budget presentations, you know, possibly seeking a budget amendment this coming year. We'll have further discussions with Budget Chair depending on how far we get throughout this process. But if, you know, the desire or needs of the community is to kind of get the ball rolling a little earlier, a budget amendment may be needed in that case. And then of course the Department getting established in July of 2020. And going forward, of course, further, you know, refinement, adjustments, goals and objectives, you know, further budget preparations, and then, of course, the ongoing work of the Department itself. So a draft mission statement that was prepared from the agriculture working group that thus far we've either received no comments or positive comments on, so this is kind of where it stands right now. That the County of Maui's Department of Agriculture will support the development and continued management of a sustainable regional agricultural system for Maui County, to promote resident and ecosystem health and well-being, and create a thriving circular agro-economic system that can be a model for the rest of the world. There's a variety of areas identified in the Charter under the powers, duties, and functions for the Department of Ag. And the agriculture working group kind of looked at how this could be broken down into what the responsibilities of the Department would be. I'll just note, as we kind of go through this, some of the things that, you know, I've either crossed out or underlined are some changes that were recommended either through stakeholder meetings or through community meetings. So for the first area identified in the Charter, to develop a sustainable regional agriculture system for Maui County, you know, what this might look like for the Department. So collecting and collating data, which can include a variety of different areas. And as you can see on the bottom, one of the common threads that, you know, we've been hearing through feedback is really assessments about what our current needs are, what are we importing, what resources are needed on island for self-sufficiency, and things of that nature. So you know, that research and data collection would help with those areas. Identifying crop needs, useable land, and others that would help our farmers. Collaboration with State Department of Agriculture to improve data collection and database management for grants, research, studies, and other areas. Identifying needs, issues, and solutions for expansion of ag, including sustainability and improvement. This might include invasive species, pests, threats, waste management, stormwater retention, things of that nature. Collaborating with...well, one of the feedback we got is advocacy with the PUC to minimize barriers and costs to the sector. Regularly updating cost centers by crops. Ag land use review, and incentivizing and utilizing important

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agricultural lands. Second area identified in the Charter is build the economic resiliency of the County's communities by increasing opportunities in the agricultural sector. So what this might look like, workforce development, increasing occupational skills training and educational opportunities, exploring dormitory models and apprenticeship programs, and of course, focus on transportation services. Resource development and deployment. Providing access to programs to address theft, liability, vandalism, farm...farm trends, other sorts of similar market research and other areas. Local management of pigs, goats, deer via increasing processing capabilities. And policy and regulation assistance. And of course, assessments on resource availability, such as assistance, education opportunities, grants, other things of that nature. Third area identified in the Charter is boost health and food security through ensuring access to locally-grown agricultural products. This could look like increasing marketing and distribution channels such as storing [sic], processing, developing institutional purchasing channels. Ensuring customer service support to navigate County processes and departments, which it includes supply chain capabilities, distribution, infrastructure, and possibly shipping subsidies. And then on the advocacy front, really serving as the front-facing voice of the County of Maui's agricultural industry. Work with existing entities to develop and advocate for shared priorities as a unified voice. Water has been a very common theme throughout our, you know, community feedback process, with focus on concerns of prioritization, rates, storage, meters, watershed protection, and management related to that area. And then support infrastructure and policy needs. The fourth area identified in the Charter is promote healthy ecosystems through natural resource regeneration and protection, including through advising other agencies and the Council on all programs and projects that affect the agricultural section. So what this might look like is partnering with UH Maui to develop and train on new technologies that support a stronger model for agriculture, including soil health practices, cover crops, composting. You know, we did receive recommendations on pursuing additional opportunities with organizations like the NRCS, which could assist with, you know, regenerative practices and promotion of cover crops. Balancing mineral saturation, biological controls of invasive species, funding for applied research to boost productivity, and then, of course, collaboration with State, Federal, and local organizations. Fifth area identified, develop and implement programs to diversify and expand sustainable forms of agriculture. This could look like in one way is business support to increase access to available and affordable support infrastructure, which could be water, labor, housing, equipment, commercial kitchens, processing, and distribution channels. And of course, this is included in the assessment portion. Ensuring access to new technology and equipment. Hubs for meeting and...meetings and collaboration. Helping to leverage resources at different levels of funding. Providing resources to secure access to more funding streams to support our agriculture industry, contract and procurement assistance, and grant programs and acquisition assistance. The remaining two areas identified in the Charter are pretty self-explanatory. Reporting to the Mayor and the Council annually on the County's overall performance in meeting agricultural objectives and any barriers that could be addressed by ordinance. And there is a lot of great information being collected in terms of, you know, what types of objectives to be met, as well as how do we measure, you know, the performance of the Department and in meeting those objectives. And then of course, performing other duties as assigned by the Mayor or (*audio interference*). Additional comments and

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considerations by community members and stakeholders, I...I tried to kind of lump some of these into common themes. I apologize, it's not kind of neatly packaged right now, but you know, some common themes are the desire to develop a plan or roadmap for ag, such as like where we are going, how much will it cost, what will we need. You know, working with our nonprofit partners to apply for grants on behalf of farmers and ranchers to assist with paperwork or compliance reporting. Work with employment agencies or other groups to assist entities with employment issues, benefits, or medical coverage for farmers or ranchers or additional personnel. Obtaining farm land for other ag parks and helping to provide infrastructure or funding or the access to that infrastructure to help reduce barriers to entry. Of course we talked about, you know, the water concerns throughout the ag industry, and providing liaisons on each island to be really the connection point for others in different geographic areas. Some additional areas, you know, looking at long-term leases. Helping to ensure all of our agencies and partners can, you know, work together. Valued-added crops was a...another area that individuals wanted the Department to really look into, and promotion of cover crops. A common theme in the community meeting that we held on December 22nd was a focus on regenerative agriculture and what that can...and...and the importance of that to climate change. You know, economic diversification, impacts by our invasive species, and mitigation efforts that can be done. And of course, geographic issues that are specific to different regions. Some of the draft initial organizational recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year. You know, one...one key measure that we've heard from nearly everyone is that really, a focus on advocacy from this Department. There isn't much desire at all for another regulatory agency, so really being an advocate for our local farmers. You know initially, I think the ag working group was looking at for the upcoming...the first year being established to have a Director, Deputy Director, Secretary, and then grant writers. To be contracting out, you know, at least initially in the first year, some of the additional plans, and we'll talk about some of this stuff later, like game management plans, you know, grant workshops, things like that. And then building on the Department in future fiscal years. I know we've gotten some comments from, you know, some stakeholders about the desire to really beef up the Department a lot more initially. And so all of that, you know, of course, is under consideration and still receiving input from a variety of individuals and stakeholders. I'll...I'll credit Councilmember Johnson and...and his office, when I met with them, just for kind of how to visualize this. So I...I...I tried to take, you know, some of the comments when I met with them about kind of focusing on like divisions of responsibility if you...if you think of it in a...like an organizational structure. So we tried to take kind of a lot of the community feedback from our residents and from stakeholders to try to kind of put them into different divisions of what that might look like, you know, going forward. So kind of broken down into a variety of areas. There seems to be about five common themes, some more than others, you know, the...the community and our ag industry are focused on. You know, the first one being the wai or, you know, focusing on our freshwater resources. Of course concern for advocacy, for water availability for ag, watershed protection measures in coordination with our agricultural partners. You know, really advocacy on water fees and rates from an ag perspective. This might include, you know, aquaculture, hydroponics, you know, some individuals have thrown out, you know, focusing on loi kalo, 'opae, 'o'opu. A variety of, you know, indigenous species to, you know, Hawai'i and what that might mean. You know, not just from a

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farming perspective like what people would traditionally think of like farming, you know, 'opae or something like that, but more so from, you know, really coming to it as a balance of the ecosystem and how that can play into, you know, further solidifying our ag industry here in Maui County, and what kind of benefits that can provide going forward for our community. For kind of the kai division, you know, focusing on the ocean resources. And you know, what that might look like is, you know, the...the calls from the community for cover crops or, you know, regenerative ag, how that plays into the impacts to our oceans and reefs. You know, land use advocacy or education, stormwater retention, fishponds, you know, things of that nature and how...how that will play into it. So...and I forgot to mention this at the beginning of this section that this is really without factoring scope, availability of funds like jurisdictional issues, things like that. This is really kind of breaking down community input into kind of different areas, and of course, all of us together will have to kind of really, you know, help narrow the scope of the Department. And then, you know, what are kind of the must-haves, what will be, you know, built on for future years. Kind of under malama 'āina, focusing on taking care of our land and our finite resources that are available, so this could be, you know, assistance with regenerative ag practices, you know, focus on invasive species, how that may play into, you know, watershed protection, and then just the viability of farming in general. You know, climate change impacts, mitigation, and other areas. Kind of the kokua division, this would be focusing on providing assistance to the ag sector. Grant and procurement assistance, workforce development, advocacy, infrastructure needs, and similar areas. The...kind of the...the last area, e mahi'ai ma ka mahina kupono, translates to farm on the right moon. So you know, historically observations of the moon helped to inform kupuna farmers when to plant or not plant certain crops. And so what this, you know, kind of division of responsibility or area of need that the community is addressing is really focusing on helping our ranchers and farmers get the knowledge needed. This could be from, you know, research, data collection, variety of assessments, you know, resource needs, and things of that nature. Some minimum qualification recommendations from the group, this is in addition to Charter requirements. You know, a bachelor's or master's degree in operations management, project management, public administration, agriculture sustainability, or related field. I...we have heard from at least a few individuals for consideration of experience in place of the degree requirement. And so, you know, just to give a heads up, that is some recommendation that we have received prior. Minimum of five years experience in agricultural-based fieldwork. Minimum of three years experience in the following areas, and those are listed below as well. So as we continue to go through the community feedback process, you know, these will likely get modified slightly and then, you know, we'll seek those minimum qualification requirements via Council action and Code if that's the desire of the community. Some budget considerations that we've received from the community, you know, grant workshops, strategic planning, grants issued by the...by the Department itself or as a passthrough entity for Federal programs. You know, research, data collection, lobbying at the State and Federal level for our local agricultural partners here in Maui County, and then a game management plan. So that's just kind of a sample of some things that have been identified. Of course if...if anyone in the community has any questions or additional input, we'd love to receive that at mayors.office@mauicounty.gov where we can compile that. One thing, Chair, if you don't mind, I'm going to try to pull up...I haven't been able to really go into it and

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review this yet, but one of the things that we got asked for from the community meeting, and this isn't live yet, but is to, you know, establish a Department of Agriculture website, and then to provide some of the information on there such as access to the presentations, the ag working group membership, the...you know, any videos or documentation that might be relevant. And so, you know, we're in the process of trying to establish this right now. But just to, you know, let the Committee know that we are working on this at this time. It's just not live yet for the community until we can kind of make sure, you know, we add some more items to it. And Chair, I think that...that would kind of conclude a brief presentation. I'd be happy to, you know, take any questions or provide further information if needed.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Deputy Director Nishita. Members, did you want to hear from Ms. Karaca, and then wait for questions for both of them? Is that okay? Okay, thumbs up. Thanks, Josiah, and mahalo for hanging on with us. Members, we did...as previously stated, we did reach out to some of the community agriculture working groups, and we did hear back from Ms. Karaca. And I think we wanted to bring them on because there has been a...I guess, a general excitement about the Department from our farmers. And Ms. Karaca has...has...I guess she kind of mastered how the...to...the outreach efforts to...to these farmers, and she's definitely had some community meetings that our office Staff and myself have tried to jump on to. So we kind of wanted to hear from some of their outcomes as well, strategic planning as...as we are still yet in the conceptual stages of the Department. With that, Ms. Karaca, did you want to go ahead and share screen?

MS. KARACA: Yeah, thank you. I don't know if it will let me.

CHAIR SINENCI: Staff, is she able to? Or I know we...we did receive your presentation.

MS. KARACA: Can you see it? Can you see the screen?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yes.

MS. KARACA: Okay. So thank you all so much for allowing me to present. I just want to say, you know, Josiah, that was wonderful presentation. I'm really happy to see that you guys stuck with a lot of the things that we saw come out of the draft group. I had worked with Karey on that, so I'm super, super happy to see that you guys are incorporating those recommendations and that you guys are doing further outreach. It really makes me so happy, and I know it will make our group happy too. You know, the whole point of our group was to come forward and kind of be resources for this establish...you know, this Department as it's established to go out and help get the community feedback and get the information needed to make the Department really successful. And so, you know, we're happy to share this information and collaborate and, you know, do this outreach. So this is kind of what I'm going to share with you guys. So we had quite a bit of different backgrounds of stakeholders. We had farmers, ranchers, small ag-related businesses, markets, distributors, a lot of people from the nonprofit sector, or like emergency food sector. We had a representation from ag working group, from Hawai'i Farmers Union, and from Maui and Moloka'i Farm Bureau, as well as representation

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from Lānaʻi, and even some generational representation from Kahoʻolawe as well. So we tried really hard to get as much stakeholders as possible with very diverse backgrounds. We had 47 people in total of ten meetings, and I...every meeting I sent out the email list with everything that we worked on to inform everybody. And the people that couldn't make the meetings because a lot of these folks are working boots on the ground folks, they would collaborate via email. I would include their suggestions and things, and there was over 100 people on that list. In total we had 19...so far 19 2-1/2 hour-long meetings this year. And this was kind of the...the timeline of what we were going through. So we originally reached out to about 40 people and then, you know, kind of brought them in and said hey, we want you guys to help identify other people that should be in this meeting, other community partners, and that's when we did a second round of invitations. After that, we started identifying the areas of need, and we went out with a community survey for that. So I have the...the survey results in a resource that was submitted to Granicus, but I'll go over those in the presentation. And then we also did a second survey for Director qualifications, Deputy Director qualifications as well, and reporting requirements that went out to the public. And I'll be kind of filling you guys in on that as well. And then we submitted that information to Shane, and we've kind of been going back and forth with him. And then this third survey that's currently taking place right now is to get priority actions that we can actually compile into like a year one through five that will make the most impact for the Department to work on so that we can present that to the County as well, and then from that you can do a proposed like first-year budget. But these are the things that the community all supports and things like that. We wanted to make sure that we were helping because I know one of the concerns was that it's really hard to establish a department, especially during, you know, a pandemic, and to expect the Administration to do that all on their own is just a lot. So all of this was done just wanting to help and contribute and make sure that we can make this Department the best as possible. So we did have ground rules. So these are, you know, things that we had to make sure that the group was being really open and that it was a place for collaboration and not just shutting down ideas. So it's...it's been really amazing. Honestly, I think I was really nervous at first because as you all know, there's so many little landmines in the ag sector that, you know, it can create big explosive arguments really quickly without even knowing, but we haven't had that at all. I can say it's been amazingly pleasant and so informative and educational, and just it, I think, gives us all so much hope for what's possible if we all just work together. So we identified various areas of need in the first survey that we got really amazing feedback from the community on, super large, high agreement rate. So I'll kind of go over these slowly and kind of tell you what the results were for, but you guys can kind of read on your own. So infrastructure was a really, really large area. These are things that the community feels they need in order to be successful as an ag sector on the whole. So these are things that everybody needs to...to make it successful. And on the survey, we got a 94.2 percent agreement with infrastructure being an area of need. Markets and distribution was another one. You know, a lot of the time you have smaller farmers that, you know, are doing the work, and then they just don't have the support to...to make it to market and have the distribution channels really laid out and things like that. So they're all just kind of struggling separately. And for markets and distribution, we have a 91.9 percent agreement rate that that was an area of need. So these are really high agreement rates. As far as funding, we all know funding is a

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huge thing. We just need more money into the ag sector to help people really be beneficial ag. As it stands right now, because we've had...it's been neglected for so long, it just needs support to get it to where it can thrive more on its own. For funding we had a 92 percent agreement rate that that was an area of need. Research and development was a huge one as well. We want the Department not just to do its own research and development, we also want it to collaborate with different agencies and government agencies, research institution, community members, and groups and things to...to really find the best pathways forward that make the most sense, how to implement technology and things like that. So research and development were kind of the two...you would have research and development for overall County issues, and then also like finding things that other, you know, agencies and institutions can work on for research and development, so it would collaboration. And we had a 84.8 percent agreement rate with that. And the next largest chunk was unsure, and that was 10.6 percent. The next was education outreach and advocacy. So this is like developing programs to ensure, you know, agricultural literacy support, you know, coordinating educational programs, doing like...being a liaison for farmers and things to address concerns within the ag sector, especially like with the Department of Health and the State and the PUC, so that kind of thing. And that got a 91 percent agreement rate with the survey. Oh, and then I don't know if I mentioned it, we had 350 responses on the survey, so it was a significant amount of community input from people, you know, through various sectors. Policy, regulation, and assistance was another one. A lot of the policies that are coming down, especially from the Department of Health, are creating really large barriers for our smaller farmers, especially in our markets and things, and they want help, you know, navigating these. And then also, if it's really detrimental, that the Department could be an advocate to kind of maybe make change or get exemptions or things like that, so we can help them thrive and make sure that we're not kind of making it impossible to farm. For policy and regulation, there was an 82.2 percent agreement rate that it was an area of need for the County. And then workforce development, I think that's kind of, you know, self-explanatory. Creating ways to get more people into agriculture, whether that be through education or through hands-on or...you know, there's just so many ways to get people involved. And that had a 90.1 percent agreement rate. Invasive species, pests and threats, that's a huge one. You know, we are seeing the County spend millions of dollars on trying to combat invasive species once they get in, but there is very little, you know, urgency on...on...on preventing it from coming in from the first place. So we want the Department really to collaborate with Federal and State agencies that right now are responsible for that, to make sure that we can prevent the introduction before it happens so that we're not stuck as taxpayers and as the Council spending million (*audio interference*) The community agreed that it was...88.4 percent of the...the feedback said that this was a priority area. And then resource regeneration and protection. This is kind of, you know, just making sure that we're looking at our agricultural sector, our resources, our natural resources as like our savings. This is what we thrive off of, so we need to protect those so that we ensure that future generations can thrive as well, and that we set ourselves up, you know, to be successful long-term, not just short-term with extraction agriculture. So 90.2 percent of the survey respondents agreed that this was an area of need. The next was contracts, procurement. So this is kind of just helping especially with larger contracts. Like for example, there's companies that are like national

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companies that do hotel procurement, and a lot the times they're importing stuff. So having the Department go and start negotiations, kind of have these larger entities that are bringing in imports, you know, do contract and procurement negotiations with them so that they start sourcing locally and help supporting our...our community. Because you know, they're...they're making a profit. We're not saying you have to leave or anything, but you need to help and...and...and contribute if you are going to be operating here, especially trying to minimize the, you know, carbon output from transportation as well. That's a huge thing. So we got a 77.5 percent agreement rate for this area of need, and then a 16.5 percent of unsure. The next one was transportation. So this is kind of collaborating with the Hawai'i PUC as, you know, the Administration explained, to minimize barriers and things like that. And we had a 76.2 percent agreement with that, and then a 14.2 percent were unsure, with 9.6 saying no. So these were kind of on the...probably the...the lesser areas of need or lesser priorities, but still priorities. And then the third one was agricultural theft and...agricultural theft, vandalism, and liability. So we're just seeing a lot of this happening on ag, you know, properties, theft or vandalism, and it's just not being taken as seriously as it needs to be. So if somebody comes in and starts a mango tree, you know, it might be 500 pounds of mangos and, you know, MPD might say okay, well, you know, we're not...obviously not going to be able to find them and...and things like that, so they kind of just like brush it under the rug. But for a small business, 500 pounds of mangos is a huge loss in profits, so that could make or break their year. So you know, just making sure that this is being taken seriously. And we had a 70.1 percent agreement rate on...for agricultural theft, vandalism, and liability, with 16.8 percent being unsure, and 13 percent saying it wasn't a priority area need that the Department needs to focus on. The next survey that we did was for reporting requirements for the Department, as well as Director qualifications. This was just kind of to make sure...one of the large concerns throughout this whole process that I've heard is we want to make sure that this Department, once it's running, is actually doing what its meant to do, and that we're collecting the data to ensure that it can thrive long-term and that it's not just, you know...you know, soaking up funds and really not addressing the issues. So we went through and found different areas of need for the Department to collaborate with existing efforts and then collate that data, and then areas for the Department to collect on its own that were...you know, that might be a larger, more broader base...database that they need to establish. So this first one is what we want them to collaborate with existing efforts on, and then collate, and then have that information available to the community and (*audio interference*). So these are those. And pretty much across the board...I...I submitted this to you guys, but I don't know if you can see, the blue is agreement rate, the red is no, and the orange is unsure. So we can see that that is a pretty high agreement rates that all of these things the community supports reporting on. The next one is the areas that the...the Department itself should establish databases for and start collecting that information. So from what we saw, we didn't...we didn't see any other agencies really collecting this information, so this would be more just the Department on its own collecting it, but if they're able to collaborate, that would be, I think, just as...as good. And you can see the agreement rates for all of those were all really...really large blue, these are all yes in agreement. And then the third one was more to track the overall performance of the Department. One of the concerns that we kind of heard throughout was that, you know, when we look at the State Department of

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Agriculture, unless you're a larger entity, you don't really have a pathway to voice your opinion on how it's being ran or get access to a lot of the programs. And this, you know, this Maui County one, we want it to be the...the smaller scale, we want it to make sure that we're hitting all of the stakeholders that really need assistance. So one of the things we wanted to track was resident satisfaction of the Department, and then also like are they putting out information for legislative tracking and calls for testimony to get that input? And then also, you know, like how are regulations, like food safety, market, or other agricultural-related regulations impacting the community once they are passed. So not just okay, this is passed and now we're through with it, where is the feedback? We want the feedback to ensure that we're not creating any like, unintended consequences or negative consequences. And then sustainability this is a huge thing. You have to . . . *(inaudible)*. . . for the feedback. And then also the political action the Department is taking on behalf of the community. So is the Department actually advocating at the different levels for the community? And so these are the things that the community wanted to see. And let's see, so that question as well for all the different areas, bulleted points, the blue is the agreement rate. So it's very high agreement rates on all of those as well. So we were really thrilled. I mean, these surveys went out once, and the amount of agreement, like the percentage of agreement rates were really high, so we were happy that we were listening to the community, able to word that in a way that they agreed with and...and really supported. The next was the Director and Deputy Director requirements. I think a lot of people from the beginning were kind of concerned with this Department. They didn't want to see it just be kind of like revolving door politics in leadership. They wanted to make sure that these...these folks that were in charge really had a handle of how to run a department and how to run it well, and really, how to communicate and plan and involve, you know, the needed agencies, groups, and stakeholders to make sure that it's really hitting its targets. So these were --

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Excuse me, Chair?

MS. KARACA: -- kind of on...

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Just point of information.

MS. KARACA: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: I'm not seeing...I'm not seeing any kind of blue agreement or non-agreement. Is everyone else seeing something that I'm not seeing?

MS. KARACA: So I...I submitted these papers. These...everything that's on this presentation is like proposed Code, like highlights, and I put all of those surveys in those. So it's in Legistar for you guys.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Okay. But not...not something...because I'm not seeing anything that we're looking at now that has any colors of agreement or disagreement.

MS. KARACA: No, that's why I was holding them up, because I didn't have time to import them into the presentation. I just found out I was going to presenting *(audio interference)*.

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COUNCILMEMBER KING: Oh, okay.

MS. KARACA: Have like so much steps to do. So I...I did put it though in Legistar so everybody can read these at their own pace too. So I'm just kind of going over the verbiage. But thank you for bringing that up. So...

COUNCILMEMBER KING: (*Audio interference*) in disagreement.

MS. KARACA: So the...one of the things is that they...they wanted the...the Director and Deputy Director to have a minimum of five years of experience in agricultural production and food distribution systems in Hawai'i. Hawai'i has a very, very unique situation and unique food system. So for that, we got an 82 point...81.2 percent agreement rate with that requirement for Director and Deputy Director qualifications. And I did...I did check with the EEOC, and requiring people to have experience in Hawai'i would not be a geographic discrimination (*audio interference*) is a concern. They also wanted, you know, directors that were willing to research issues and attend continuing education, and collaborate with people in the community in order to lead. They think that that is a really significant, like, characteristic that a director or deputy director should have. The next was, you know, the Director and Deputy Director should have a minimum of three years' experience in the following. So managerial...managerial and budget experience, developing, supervising, coordinating ag programs in Hawai'i, and working with various cultural backgrounds. We did provide that to Karey's...or the Mayor's group that was led by Karey, and she included that, so that was in Josiah's presentation as well. And just so...so you guys can see on that, the blue is...is the agreement rate with that, so it's super significant. And then the next one is...so we realized as a group that putting all of this in the Code might be a little hard, but these are additional qualifications that the group would like to have the Council or whoever is the hiring committee really look at. These are things that we feel like would be really beneficial, but maybe wouldn't have to be required in the Code. But these are things that, you know, maybe you guys could give a point...like a point system for hiring. So we included that. And then we got survey feedback on that as well, and that...I mean, you guys can see it in your Legistar, but the blue as well. So high agreement rates for that. And then the last kind of thing that we touched on was departmental resource assistant like targets. So one of the things that we saw was that a lot of the smaller farmers did not feel like they had access to the State programs, the Federal programs, because they were working so hard that they just didn't have the resources to access those programs. That's something that we see a lot with not just in the ag sector, but in many sectors across the board. When you're trying to provide assistance, you should have a target demographic that is the most in need that you focus on. So we went through a couple of different categories, you know, through the USDA, and we kind of settled on this for defining ag operation sizes for low, moderate, midsize, large, and very large. And we want the...you know, the Department to focus on low to moderate ag operations with special considerations for minority-owned agricultural operations. And also providing, you know, cultural and language-sensitive materials to make sure that we're helping those that are doing the most work that have the least amount of resources to get help. You know, it's kind of like the squeaky wheel gets the oil; well, if the larger the company

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is the more they can make the noise because the more resources they have, and the more time they have. So we don't want to see our smaller farmers get left behind. Now, this wouldn't exclude the Department from working with larger entities, but it would make them focus on the smaller entities that actually need the most help and don't have the resources to navigate the channels to get it. So that was kind of the last thing that we have as a proposal. The third survey that's currently out right now is taking these areas of need, breaking them down into actions that would make the most impact in the first five years. And I think we're at like 170 responses, and we've got like a week left on that. All of the information that I shared with you, along with all of the surveys and through the whole process, all of our meetings has been posted online at mauifoodsecuritynow.com. It was a website I set up at my own cost. It's been transparent to the public throughout the full time so that people can take these surveys, people can provide feedback, people can follow along and be updated on the process too. So we worked really, really hard to make sure that this is a really inclusive process. I want to thank everybody at the community and . . .(inaudible). . . working group for volunteering their time, energy, and manao. And then all of the community members that took time out of their day to complete the survey. Some of them are really long, so you know, we are really thankful for that. And then also to the Councilmembers and also the Administration for allowing our collective voices to be heard, we're really appreciative of that.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. In case you guys haven't noticed, Councilmember Shane Sinenci has been struggling with his connectivity issue, so one sec. So I guess I can take it from here. And we're just going to do question and answers for our...our...our presenters. Three minutes per Councilmember. So if he comes on--I see him bouncing in and out--if he comes on he will be your Chair, but until then...and there he is. Well, let's see. How you doing, Councilmember Shane, Chair Shane?

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Committee Vice-Chair Johnson. Yeah, it looks like we've got some Internet problems, but we just wanted to opening it...open it up for questions of the Members for our resources today, for Mr. Nishita or Ms. Karaca. Thank you, Vice-Chair Johnson. Do you have any questions for our resource now?

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Actually I do.

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: All right. Thank you so much. So this question is for Mr. Nishita in regards to the...the presentation he did on...on the...on your presentation. I noticed you followed appendix...the last appendix on...in the...in the Charter, and it really kind of...your presentation really kind of followed along what was required of...of us as...as a County. The one thing that kind of stuck out to me is how small the staffing is of a big...of a big department with, you know, hopefully sections within the Department. So in Section 8.18.1 [sic], the organization, in the Charter it says that the Staff includes advocates, ombudspersons, inspectors, and grant writers. And the...and your presentation had Director, Deputy Director, Secretary, and two grant writers. So that's kind of the mismatch that I'm seeing right off the bat, and maybe, Mr. Nishita, if you

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could speak to that, how...obviously I don't want to...hopefully we learn our lessons. From some of our department heads tell us all the time we're too understaffed, we can't do what you're asking. So when this...when this came up, that's immediately what my mind went to. Let's not...let's learn from the past and make this more of a...a robust department. So Mr. Nishita, can you speak on that?

MR. NISHITA: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Councilmember Johnson, for the question and comments. Yeah, it is something...and...and I guess I'll paraphrase everything and maybe I should have stated it at the beginning of the presentation, but nothing has been decided yet. So everything is still being...you know, receiving input on. We can, you know, continue to collaborate on and, you know, ensure our community's needs are being met. So I...I just kind of preface it by saying that we're still in the process of that, and so all the feedback that we receive and everything will go into, you know, kind of further refining those final recommendations. But however, I think...just going back to what you were referring to, I think the...the initial thought process, at least in the...off the outset, is that, you know, the Department would kind of grow organically throughout. You know, not just immediately in the first fiscal year, but really kind of establish itself and then grow organically in future fiscal years to include a lot of these areas. The...the other thing too is, you know, procedurally you can get a lot of things done quicker at the outset of the establishment of a new department if we contract out certain items, such as like a game management plan or, you know, different educational workshops or opportunities for, you know, all of our ag partners. And so, you know, there's a...there's a lot of things that go on . . .(timer sounds). . . behind the scenes that the general community doesn't see, just like setting up policies and procedures, and getting furniture in place, and doing procurement, and writing job descriptions and all that kind of stuff; that does take time. And so just in the interest of taxpayer resources and whatnot, and to ensure that we kind of get the ball rolling as quickly as possible.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. NISHITA: I think that was the initial recommendations. But we are still, you know, receiving feedback on that.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Deputy Director. I...I...I'm out of time, so I just want to do...end with a statement. You know, a good friend of mine, Candice Baleta (*phonetic*), he passed away, he was a farmer on Lānaʻi for many years, and the biggest thing he struggled with was the digital divide. And there's so many farmers out there that need more training on those types of things. If you're...you know, like they really need that kind of thing. So I'm out of time, but digital divide, among many other things I want discuss more on, but that's...that's...that's what I wanted to say for now. Okay. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair, I'm out of...I'm out of time.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Vice-Chair Johnson. I believe I did see Member King, and then Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Thank you, Chair. I wanted to ask Jennifer. First of all, thank you for all that information. Oh, my gosh, that was just an amazing presentation. I'm sorry

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I couldn't see the colors. I was...I was...I just had to interject because I...I thought it was just me, but I guess it was everybody. But I...I...all I wanted to ask you was so did you do that? You didn't get paid, you're not on staff, or no one's paying you to do all that? That's amazing, thank you so much for putting all that energy into that. I really...we all, I'm sure, really appreciate it. That's all I wanted to say to you.

MS. KARACA: And I have to say it wasn't alone, like everybody that attended the meetings and they spent long hours at night putting that information in. It's because we really care about our community. We all have kids here, we want to see them thrive. We want to see, you know, our community members thrive. So this is really we just want to help. Like there's no, you know, reason or rhyme behind it, we just want to help.

COUNCILMEMBER KING: Yeah. No, I just wanted to say that we really appreciate, you know, everything you and the group that you're working with is doing. Because a lot of people want to help, but that's...that's over and above, you know, gathering that information. So thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member King. Go ahead, Chair Lee. Muted.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you, Jennifer, for your very thorough presentation. It's very...it's clear that we have this incredible need for...for...you know, for the food security and farming, et cetera. But do we have enough people to provide that? Do we have...I know people are interested, but do we have enough people who are willing to commit to farming?

MS. KARACA: Yeah, there are so many people that want to farm, aspiring farmers, landless farmers, agricultural workers that want to contribute. And we have...honestly, we have four islands worth of resources to grow different ag products, whether that be forestry, fishery, horticulture, you know, arable . . .*(inaudible)*. . . farming. There's so many opportunities. I think we actually have opportunities to grow more of an abundance than we actually even can imagine. There's so many opportunities and there's so many people that want to get involved. There's just been such a lack of support for so long.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Jennifer, you know that our time is limited, so I have to get to the next question.

MS. KARACA: Okay. Sorry.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Now, what was the next question? The next question had to do with is this profitable?

MS. KARACA: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: I mean can you actually make money and...because we...we don't want people to try and then quit, right? We want them to make careers out of it, right? Is it profitable?

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MS. KARACA: Yeah, so it is profitable. Yes, agriculture can be very profitable. Once you start losing profitability is when you start scaling up really large to commercial agricultural where you've got like tens of thousands of acres and you're paying all of these employees. Actually all of the research has shown that small agricultural is the more sustainable route. It produces more, it takes up less resources, and it's the most profitable.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. So the other...

MS. KARACA: And the other example...

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: The...the third question is, so we need the people, and I understand that some of these farm groups have started intern programs. Have they been successful?

MS. KARACA: There's quite a few internship programs, but as you know, if you're not getting paid, you can only intern for so long, and the cost of living on Maui is really, really high. So we need to create paid...like paid internships, paid programs that...that can actually supplement incomes to get people into these fields. And not just like manual labor, research, education, added-value products, business development, all of those things in the ag sector can create jobs, and they can create amazing jobs that are like PhD career pathways for our student (*audio interference*)

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: You know, and finally, I agree with Member Johnson that it sure seems that a skeleton crew of four or five people is hardly enough...enough to meet all the challenges ahead, especially a brand-new department. Don't you agree?

MS. KARACA: I...I definitely agree. I want to thank the Administration though for at least putting that forward. I'm hoping that with our third survey we'll reach out. . . .(*timer sounds*). . . They might be open to hearing those actual positions with actions behind them, so it can kind of help them with their budget proposal as well.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. KARACA: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair Lee. Next is Member Molina. I don't see Member Paltin. Go ahead, Mr. Molina.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And mahalo to Ms. Karaca and Mr. Nishita for their respective presentations. My question is for Mr. Nishita. First of all, thank you for your outreach efforts. And my understanding that you did have a community meeting, and I think you might have mentioned it; if not, roughly how many people participated in this meeting? And also, can you give me a timeline of when this Department is expected to be established? If I'm correct, I think the deadline is the end of this year. Only because it's something that will likely come to my Committee when we're considering the...the Director. So if you could take a shot at those --

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MR. NISHITA: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: -- two questions that I had asked.

MR. NISHITA: Yeah, if...if my memory is correct, I think about 50 to 60 people attended the December meeting. And when you say participate, offhand I...I believe maybe no more than two dozen maybe said something during the meeting, maybe less. Just going to your first question. And then the second question, the Department technically is established by the Charter July of this year, so you know, if that gives you kind of an identification as to the timelines involved. Thank you, Chair.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Okay. And...and you'll have a nominee for Director at some point, yeah? Hopefully before the end of the...yeah, before the end of the year, you believe?

MR. NISHITA: Well, I mean the hope definitely would be that we'll find qualified individuals that the Council can support in time for the July establishment of the Department.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Okay.

MR. NISHITA: But obviously it, you know, is impacted by a variety of factors, including people willing to serve.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Oh, okay. Yeah, just so I can kind of gauge when...when I can have that discussion in Committee. And my last question...and you may recall, and Members may recall, when the proposed amendment passed out of the Council, the Mayor took a very strong public stand against the formation of the Department of Agriculture. If I'm correct, he used the terms reckless and irresponsible. You know, so I got to admit it was kind of raised a few eyebrows. But you know, the public spoke in the election, and the...the Charter amendment passed with flying colors. So my simple question to you as a member of this Administration, is the Mayor onboard? Are you guys all fully committed to do outreach with all segments of the farming community?

MR. NISHITA: Yes, definitely. You know, the people voted to establish the Department, and we're going to work as hard as we can to...to get it established by the July 2022 deadline.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Okay. Thank you very much for your responses, Mr. Director. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Molina. Next we have Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Mahalo, Deputy Managing Director Nishita and Ms. Karaca, for both of your presentations, excellent. My question is for Deputy Managing Director. Has the Administration identified a location for the future office?

MR. NISHITA: Yeah. Thank you for the question. There have been some ideas floated about

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where that might be or where that might be located. Of course it depends on ultimately the staffing level, how many bodies are going to be there initially and, you know, what the view is of how large that Department will be in the future. We don't want them bouncing around all over the place. So no, nothing's been set yet, but if...if anyone has recommendations or ideas, I'd be glad to take them.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for that response. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Rawlins-Fernandez. Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. My question is for either resource. I was wondering, and I know Mr. Nishita did speak a little bit about dormitories and whatnot, but did any of the feedback that you got from anybody, was anybody concerned about like say, a definition of farming for land classification, tax breaks, or water rates or, you know, fake farms invading as agricultural subdivision, anything like that? Because it would kind of help my cause if people were concerned with that, but I understand not everyone wants to help me out all the time.

MR. NISHITA: Yeah, and I'll defer to Jen if she's heard anything else. But from, you know, what we've heard, yes, to you know, varying extents kind of depending on, you know, who we're talking to. But that...that include...that could include, you know, some of the responsibilities of policy and regulation assistance to our local farmers. I think at the last meeting, I don't remember if it was Bobbie Patnode or Bobbie Pahia, but one of them had mentioned about inspectors, I think kind of getting along the lines of what you're talking about for RPT purposes to help. You know, I think one of the things we've heard from the community is that, you know, individuals in other departments that have to set ag types of classifications aren't necessarily ag experts. So you know, help...the Department would be able to, you know, help facilitate that, you know, depending on the scope and...and breadth of the...the duties.

MS. KARACA: Can I contribute too? Yeah, so workforce housing was a huge one, and then also the fact that currently they have to navigate all these different departments to get permits. But one of the big feedbacks was creating a streamline (*audio interference*) where the Department can compile all of the needs from the different departments, create one cohesive permitting process with knowledgeable ag inspectors to be able to go out and then collect that information. And they take the responsibility of disseminating it to other departments so that the burden doesn't fall on the farmer, the ag workers, it falls on the people that are getting paid to do that. And then it minimizes the confusion of requirements from different departments too, but workforce housing is a huge, huge need.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And quick follow-up question. I had heard some feedback, like it may be beneficial to make different categories of ag. Like for example ranching, orchards, aquaponics or whatever, and then set the criteria for legit actions in those. Like I mean, if you get 20 goats and put them out on fallow land, does that count as whatever agriculture, or does there need to be . . .(*timer sounds*). . . more than that? If you guys...I guess my time's up. Thanks.

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CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, go ahead. You can go ahead and answer.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: If anybody has given that feedback to you guys.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: You're muted.

MS. KARACA: Yeah, that's one of the things that we talked about with the streamlining permitting process with the knowledgeable ag inspectors. We want them to have a training course where they're taught about what they should be looking for so it's cohesive, it doesn't...you know, one person isn't saying one thing, another person is saying another thing. And then also, when they go out, that they should be able to provide best agricultural practices. A lot of people are putting like feral ungulates in their gulches, which further creates watershed problems, but is being counted as ag right now. So things like that that I don't think it's malicious, it's just like a lack of knowledge has allowed it to, like, accumulate, to be really causing serious damage. So yeah, that's...that's something that our...our group and the community has voiced as a need so far on the feedback for the third survey.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Exciting. Thanks.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Paltin. I just have a couple quick questions for Deputy Director Nishita. So you mentioned that the Director and the Deputy Director, five to three years experience is required. How much emphasis are you putting upon the...the County administrative part of the job? Actually creating...creating the Department?

MR. NISHITA: Well, the...the Charter requirements is that the Director and Deputy Director of Agriculture must have had five years of experience in the field of agriculture and in an administrative capacity, either in public service, private business, or both. So just specific to, I guess, what kind of weight of the administrative capacity. It's...you know, it's specified in the Charter that they have to have it, so you know, we need to make sure that that's in place. I think one thing that, you know, we've heard a lot from the community is that they want individuals in these positions who actually know what farming is about, especially in Maui County, and the challenges faced and the different regulatory hurdles and, you know, economic considerations and, you know, other outside external forces at play. And so, you know, that...that...that will play an important role that...in the selection of the Deputy and Director in terms of that, you know, knowledge of what happens here in...in Maui County. But you know, of course we...you're also limited by who is eligible and who is willing to serve in these capacities...you know, leave their current, you know, farm or ag, you know, industry or, you know, if they do valued-added products or whatever the case is for the last, you know, essentially six months of Mayor's current term. So there's other, you know, employment considerations that many individuals, I'm sure, will give into their willingness to, you know, participate in this short and abbreviated time period when the Department gets established.

CHAIR SINENCI: Right. That would be my...my follow-up question, Deputy Director. Will we

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have problems finding an administrator or a deputy who is willing to...I understand this is also an election year. So are...are candidates willing to leave their current occupations to kind of develop the program in the next six months (*audio interference*). So is that something that --

MR. NISHITA: Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- you guys are looking at?

MR. NISHITA: Yeah. I think on the positive side of that argument, you know, one is that...and Jen kind of, you know, referenced this earlier, is that there's a lot of excitement, right, and it's a new challenge, a new opportunity. So I think on the positive side of it, you know, you could have people wanting to take on that challenge and really kind of shape where this is going. You know, another way to kind of positively try to look at it is, you know, if...if an individual has...able to have, you know, Council support for the position, that hopefully they would feel fairly confident that that support, you know, would continue on through the next term as well. The...the negative side of it is it...you know, really the guarantee or...you know, or you want to call it that is the...the six-month period through the end of the year. So individuals, you know, would have to, you know, leave their current employment or workplace to be able to, you know, take on this role. And then we still have the Council appointment process for the Director, so there's still, of course, you know, not necessarily an assurance that...you know, that they would get final confirmation approval as well. So just the abbreviated timelines, just kind of how it played out, you know, hopefully will get balanced and maybe superseded by just kind of the excitement to kind of take on new challenges.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Deputy Director. Members, is there a need for a second round of questioning?

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Just one question.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, go ahead, Member Molina.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Yeah, thank...thank you, Mr. Chair. Staying on that topic of the directors, maybe for both Mr. Nishita and Ms. Karaca to answer. Without naming names, has there been a lot of inquiries or people expressing interest in being considered for the directorship? And if...if so, can you just give us some numbers...like four people, five people, et cetera? Just curious.

MR. NISHITA: So at least from my side, what I'm, you know, aware of or knowledgeable of, it's...it's mainly been like...if I think of a number, like less...less than ten. But specifically to that, it's...it's other groups throwing out names of people that they think would be good. So to be honest with you, I haven't heard from those individuals that they're even interested in or would leave their current employment to, you know, possibly serve in this capacity. But definitely there's a lot of individuals and groups out there that have someone in mind that they think would be good. And then not...and then it would just come down to, of course, you know, do they have...do they...are they

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qualified, do they have a willingness to serve, would they be good in the position, and then of course, you know, do we have Mayor and Council support for that.

COUNCILMEMBER MOLINA: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Nishita. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Member Molina. Member Johnson, go ahead.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. Second and final. This is for Deputy Managing Director Mr. Nishita. Okay. Again, in the Charter number six is talking...no, number...yeah, number six is talking about a yearly requirement that the Ag...Department of Ag would give the Council like a yearly report. So I know that's dictated by the Charter that it has to be minimum yearly. Are you...are you malleable, or is it an idea that we could go more in the beginning? Because I really would be curious to see how the...the Department would be working. Because it says like, we're going to give you...a report to the Council and to the Mayor, but we're also going to ask about like legislation issues that we might need help with. I would hope that the...that the program or the Department would come well in advance before a year to the Council to say hey, we need help with this one bill, or this one law is jamming us up. So I...I know it's required by the Charter, but would you be willing to do it even more and do more when...especially when it's first coming out as a...as a Department?

MR. NISHITA: Yeah, definitely. I think on a practical level, you know, if you...if you kind of look at it like all the other department directors right now, you know, when committees, you know, want to call different departments for...in relation to specific items or considerations or whatnot, of course, you know, that resource is...is always going to be available there. I don't remember if it was in the materials I saw from what Jen and like Bill Greenleaf and them had provided, or if it was in something else that another community group had provided, but I know that there were some recommendations on a variety of metrics to be like reported on quarterly, you know, especially as it impacts kind of legislative decisions and different policy needs. So all that is...is being considered. But yeah, don't worry, I'm sure you're going to see these individuals more than you want. So --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. NISHITA: -- don't worry about that.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: That's wonderful. If you...Chair, if you don't mind, I'd like to hear from Ms. Karaca as well on that same question.

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead, Ms. Karaca.

MS. KARACA: So one of the things that the community has really asked for, the community, there's a lot of organizations that want to help with this Department and help see it succeed and take on collaborations to work with the County. So we're asking like one of the actions is to create transparent databases that can be accessible by the community so that they can also help. And if you guys want policy issues, we have a

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huge list from our working group that I can happily hand you to work on. So yeah, I think that there's a lot of excitement. And I think that the...the more open the databases is where people can see the metrics, it would help the Councilmembers throughout the year, and also the other community stakeholders that want to collaborate. . . .(timer sounds) . . .

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you. Perfect timing. Thank you, Chair. I have no further questions.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Johnson. And I apologize, Members, we've passed our mid-meeting mark; however, this is the only item we have agendized. So if you want to finish up our last line of questioning, we could finish early. Okay. Any other...I did have a clarifying question. So Mr. Nishita, are those two civil service and union positions for the Department, that would likely go through the Department of Personnel Services?

MR. NISHITA: Yeah. So I'm...I'm not aware of any exception...there are some exceptions to the civil service and collective bargaining agreements in HRS. I'm not aware of anything that would apply to the Department of Agriculture. So you know, traditionally the Director, Deputy, and private Secretary would be appointed. And then any Staff, you know, essentially under them would, you know, belong to the civil service. So you know, whether it's a few positions or many positions, you know, the...that would be subject to that process. One thing to kind of keep in mind is some of the things asked by the community and, you know, from stakeholders about what certain positions might look like in the Department would be entirely new class specifications that the State currently doesn't have set up. So I'm not sure how much experience all of you have in that, but when you're establishing a new class specification, the State...I mean generally, the normal timeline we're looking at is probably about a year to establish that when they have to go through, you know, union consultation, jurisdictional consultations, things like that for something that's not already established. So that's why departments tend to try to look at a position that's already established throughout the State so that the process is a lot quicker. And you know, hence one of the recommendations to, you know, contract out a lot of the work in the beginning while the Department creates those class specifications and job descriptions so that those additional positions could be funded in future fiscal years. You know, it...the Council could consider establishing a...a wide variety of positions in the Department, but just to be completely honest, practically it...it will take a lot of time to just go through the processes that is required to establish completely new types of positions in the Department. And so just want to make sure that...that the expectations are there. And if additional positions are being sought out, you know, in addition to whatever Mayor's ultimate recommendation is, then you know, we've...we've asked for consideration on looking for positions that are already established in the State so that the Department can more quickly and easily get that going.

CHAIR SINENCI: With that said, will the...those two civil service positions still be posted in the new Department budget?

MR. NISHITA: Yeah. So whatever Mayor's ultimate would recommendation be for the budget

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considerations of it will come before, you know, Committee Chair Keani Rawlins-Fernandez and her Committee in the, you know, FY'23 Budget proposal. And those, you know, personnel recommendations will be included in that. And then that will allow the Committee also the time to, you know, make any recommendations or changes to that...that request.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Josiah. Okay. Members, any other questions? I don't see everybody. If not, I think that was a good first stab at it. Some great information. And mahalo to all the work that has been done to our community agriculture working groups for the last two years. And mahalo, Josiah, for coming and sharing the Administration's vision. Members, this item was posted for no legislative action. So we wanted to thank Ms. Karaca and Deputy Director Nishita for coming and joining us. And again, this is just the beginning. It looks like we've gathered a lot of information to take it to the next step and to prepare us come...come budget time. So with that, Staff, is there anything else before we adjourn today?

MS. APO TAKAYAMA: Chair, there's no further business before the Committee. Thank you.

ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Members, so it is early, 3:11, and this Tuesday, January 18th Agriculture and Public Trust Committee meeting is now adjourned. . . . *(gavel)* . . .

ADJOURN: 3:11 p.m.

APPROVED:



SHANE M. SINENCI, Chair
Agriculture and Public Trust Committee

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Transcribed by: Daniel Schoenbeck

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CERTIFICATION

I, Daniel Schoenbeck, hereby certify that pages 1 through 30 of the foregoing represents, to the best of my ability, a true and correct transcript of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not in any way concerned with the cause.

DATED the 23rd day of February 2022, in Kula, Hawai'i



Daniel Schoenbeck