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Council to hear Hawai'i 2050 plan

by Rachel Gehrlein - THE GARDEN ISLAND

Kaua'i members of the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Task Force will present elements of a sustainability plan to the County Council tomorrow morning.

According to Beth Tokioka, Kaua'i Task Force member and director of the Office of Economic Development, the presentation will focus on the process that took place to develop the plan and its definition of sustainability.

Tokioka said the Task Force won't be able to get into specifics about the plan, but hopes to provide a broad overview to the council.

“(The presentation) will also focus on the five main goals of the plan and the structure of strategies, actions and indicators that support the goals,” Tokioka said.

The Task Force will identify the nine priority actions that are considered the “next steps” to Hawai'i's preferred future.

The nine actions include: increasing affordable housing; strengthening public education; reducing reliance on fossil fuels; increasing recycling; reuse and waste reduction strategies; developing a more diverse and resilient economy; developing a sustainability ethic; increasing production of local food and products; providing access to long-term care and elderly housing; and preserving island cultural values.

The Task Force will also propose the implementation of the Sustainability Council. According to the plan, the council will be a central entity charged with steering Hawai'i toward a sustainable future.

Tokioka said the main effort of the Task Force on Kaua'i was to allow the public different opportunities to participate in shaping the actual content of the plan.

“It was especially gratifying to see the great turnout and participation of Kaua'i residents at meetings, summits, responding to surveys and submitting comments online,” she said.

“There was nearly two years of interaction and the plan was amended and drafted based on the massive volume of input that was received from all walks of life.”

Over those two years, more than 10,000 Hawai'i residents had their say by participating in community meetings and a public opinion survey. For example, in the poll, more than 80 percent of residents said they feel the state should have a mandatory recycling program and would be willing to pay higher taxes in order to protect the environment.

According to Sen. Russell Kokubun, D-Waiakea Uka-Kalapana-Volcano-Kahuku, chair of the sustainability task force, the plan represents the good work of thousands of people in Hawai'i, making the plan a true grassroots effort.

"The plan is open to some criticism," Kokubun said. "The fact that it (the plan) generated so much interest indicates it will be a work in progress."

Kokubun added that the plan received significant input from Kaua'i residents.

One of Tokioka's biggest concerns about the plan was that "it needed to be specific enough to have real meaning and inspire action, yet broad enough to allow each of the counties to approach the goals in the way that best suits that county."

Tokioka felt the plan had to provide the framework for achieving the goals that everyone in the state could work within.

"I think the plan is a great start and with its adoption and the creation of the Sustainability Council, we as a state can be united in moving forward," Tokioka said.

The Task Force will present the plan to the County Council tomorrow at 9 a.m. in Room 201 of the Historic County Building. Anyone can attend.

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