



Climate Change Commission

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

650 S. King Street, 11th Floor • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

COMMISSIONERS

Victoria Keener, Ph.D., Chair
Rosanna Alegado, Ph.D., Vice Chair
Bettina Mehnert, FAIA, LEED AP
Makena Coffman, Ph.D.
Charles Fletcher, Ph.D.

Climate Change Commission Monday, March 1, 2021 12:00 PM Zoom Virtual Meeting Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chair Victoria Keener, Vice Chair Rosie Alegado, Makena Coffman, and Charles Fletcher

Members Absent: Bettina Mehnert

Public: Matt Gonser, Hayley Cook, and Dexter Kishida (Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency); Courtney Sue-Ako (Corporation Counsel), Amy Asselbayer (Office of Economic Revitalization), Rachael Han, Ernest Lau (Board of Water Supply), Nancy McPherson (Department of Hawaiian Home Lands), Melissa May (SSFM International), Ryan Kobayashi (Local 368 Hawai'i), Pane Meatoga III (Hawai'i Operating Engineers Industry Stabilization Fund), Kevin Richards (Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency), Katie Rooney (Ulupono Initiative), Rafael Lee, Roger Babcock, Tenaya Jackman, Audrey Lee, Darren Lerner, Dane Sjoblom, Dave Martin, Wendy Miles, Hannah Thompson, Dean Nakano

Call to Order: Chair Keener called the meeting to order at 12:03 PM.

Roll Call: Four out of five Commissioners were present. Quorum was established.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes of January 25, 2021: The January 25, 2021 meeting minutes were adopted as amended (**AYE:** Keener, Alegado, Coffman, Fletcher; **NAY:** None; **ABSTAIN:** None).

- Commissioner Fletcher clarified that the results and methodology used in the Hawai'i SLR Vulnerability and Adaptation Report have been peer-reviewed, rather than "validated".
- Commissioner Fletcher clarified the State's climate action target of net negative emissions no later than 2045.
- Other grammatical, non-substantive amendments were made.

Report on the Activities of the Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency (CCSR):

Executive Director Matthew Gonser presented the following:

- CCSR's recent personnel changes include the departure of Uyen Vong as Office Manager, Rocky Mould as Energy Program Manager, and Jacob Taddy as Grants and Budget Specialist. Additionally, Nicola Hedge has stepped into the position as Deputy Chief Resilience Officer and Deputy Director. A new Coastal and Water Program Manager will onboard soon. There are also two AmeriCorps VISTA positions open for recruitment, which will be onboarding in May.
- The comment period for the City's draft Climate Action Plan was extended to February 12 and has now closed. CCSR is currently reviewing comments for consideration and are writing responses to each comment, which will be posted online at the project website.
- CCSR recently hosted three virtual community engagement sessions as part of round three of public engagement for the Climate Ready O'ahu project, which addresses climate change adaptation. Additionally, CCSR held two workshops with departments to dive into potential

- adaptation strategies within their specific areas of responsibility.
- Hawai'i's federal congressional delegation hosted training webinars in January and February on the federal appropriations process, which is a priority for the City moving forward. CCSR provided about 12 different ideas for appropriations requests relating to a range of departments and topics.
- CCSR submitted a grant proposal to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Climate Program Office's Extreme Heat Risk Initiative and expects to hear back about a potential funding award in late May. During the Climate Ready O'ahu project, heat was identified in the climate risk assessment as the second top hazard of concern behind sea level rise because of its high likelihood and resulting consequences.
- CCSR and City agencies are working with state and federal partners to address disaster risk. This year, they will be working on almost \$2 million worth of innovative planning, design, and risk analysis projects through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants. Additionally, the Building Resilient Infrastructure for Communities (BRIC) program (formally the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program) is a larger, more competitive pool of money and is direct recognition from the federal government that proactive measures are needed to address increasing and growing climate hazards and risks. Applications go through states, so the counties are categorized as sub applicants. The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency's (HI-EMA) state-wide hazard mitigation program supported the prioritization of over \$200 million in pre-disaster funding applications.
- CCSR is the focus of four virtual seminars on each Thursday in March for Hanauma Bay's education program through the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program. Additionally, CCSR Climate Resilience and Equity Program Manager Lala Nuss will be presenting at the University of Hawai'i Water Resources Research Center.

Questions and Comments that followed:

1. Chair Keener asked if Nicola Hedges' position is new. Director Gonser responded that the Deputy Director position is not new and used to be filled by Justin Gruenstein.
2. Chair Keener inquired about which City agencies participated in the Climate Ready O'ahu workshops. Director Gonser responded that there was representation from nearly all of the departments. Additionally, CCSR conducted interviews with all agencies last year.
3. Chair Keener asked about the status of the One Water policy adopted last year via Ordinance 20-47. Director Gonser and replied that the first meeting regarding implementation of the policy will occur this month. Chair Keener asked if it is possible to have Commission representation on the One Water panel. Director Gonser responded that Commission participation may be possible, but the panel was written into the policy as comprised of directors of City agencies.
4. Chair Keener asked if it would be helpful to have someone from the FEMA BRIC program present at the next Commission meeting. Director Gonser responded that Chris Cunningham, CCSR's Hazard Mitigation and Long-Term Disaster Recovery Program Manager is in direct contact with FEMA and BRIC representatives.
5. Commissioner Coffman asked to what extent BRIC has to be included in the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan in order to qualify for the monies and what kinds of hazards are covered. Director Gonser responded that CCSR would be happy to support a discussion of BRIC on the agenda for the next Commission meeting and have Chris Cunningham participate as needed.
6. Chair Keener asked if there are other federal agencies that should be invited to present at the next Commission meeting. Director Gonser responded the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may be a good federal agency to have participate.

Comments and Public Testimony that Followed:

1. Nancy McPherson asked how the Department of Hawaiian Homelands (DHHL) can work with the City and HI-EMA on projects for the next round of BRIC funding. Director Gonser recommended that DHHL reach out to HI-EMA, as DHHL may be able to be a direct recipient of funding, but is open to coordination between DHHL and CCSR.
2. Darren Lerner stated that National Fish and Wildlife Foundation National Coastal Resilience Fund may be of interest with respect to agency briefings, but is unsure when the next opportunity will be announced.

Communication and Correspondence from the Public: No communication or correspondence from the

public was received.

Comments and Public Testimony that Followed: No public comments or testimony were received.

Update from Amy Asselbaye, Executive Director of the City and County of Honolulu Office of Economic Revitalization - 30 Minutes

- Director Asselbaye introduced herself and the Office of Economic Revitalization (OER). OER has been investigating how to enhance economic development through partnerships with agencies in the Managing Director's Office to build out economic development components of their work. OER has learned during the COVID-19 pandemic how the City can play a larger role in economic revitalization.
- Director Asselbaye noted that the National Association of Counties did an interview with CCSR and OER on the intersection between economic recovery and climate change. The article can be read here: <https://www.naco.org/articles/honolulu-county-reimagines-resilient-sustainable-economy>.
- OER staff have been working with about 250 businesses to offer support, information, and help with the Paycheck Protection Program. Additionally, OER's business and constituent education team sends out a weekly newsletter to a list of about 9,000 businesses built from the those that participated in the Small Business Relief and Recovery Fund last year.
- OER's focus is to help people and businesses that are struggling get back on their feet. OER quickly expanded to 31 staff, including positions working on food sustainability and agriculture; small business and finance; and innovation and technology. Additionally, OER has a Pacific Islander Liaison, businesses and constituent educators, a communications team, and four AmeriCorps VISTAs that conduct research and engagement.
- Last year OER's strategy was to create a COVID-safe economy. Currently OER's guiding strategies include helping struggling businesses get back on their feet; supporting the community and entrepreneurs with resources to build a diverse and resilient economy; and investing in equitable recovery.
- Director Asselbaye shared the most important insight on applying lessons to climate change readiness is that our primary resources are here on island: our people, our ideas, our work, and our culture. Priority lessons include caring for our people and place, addressing inequities that are vital links between recovery and climate change; and strategic workforce development.
- OER is beginning to engage the Hawai'i Tourism Authority in conversations on the Destination Management Action Plan and working towards rebuilding tourism in collaboration with other partners with a regenerative model where visitors play an active role in stewarding place alongside residents.
- Strategic workforce development can address the values of place and the practical realities of climate change impacts. An example is the O'ahu Back to Work Program, which was job re-training at the University of Hawai'i. Over 1,400 individuals finished the program and courses ranged from sustainable farming to wastewater management to cybersecurity. If more federal resources become available, OER hopes to continue these partnerships and provide more opportunities to diversify our workforce and do more 'āina-based workforce development.
- CCSR received private funding for a Food Sustainability and Security Program Manager, which is currently filled by Dexter Kishida and operating out of OER. His focus is supporting local food production and land stewardship. Director Asselbaye provided an overview of OER food programs run last year, including Farm to Car, Farm to Food, and Fish to Dish, and the success and impact they had on farmers and residents.
- OER worked with Hawai'i Investment Ready to stand up the Hawai'i Innovation Fund, which provided grants to 26 for-profit and non-profit community innovators. For example, through the Innovation Fund, Ma'ō Farms purchased an automated post-harvest processing equipment line, which helped support social distancing and create more jobs. Additionally, OER contributed to the growth of Pop-up Mākeke, which was stood up by the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement and helped local artists sell their products.
- OER Pacific Islander Liaison, Shanty Sigrah Asher, has been leading webinars for 2021 that cover a wide range of content, such as information about vaccinations and scheduling appointments. Asher has been working on building trusted channels of communication and interacting with folks in languages other than English, as well as receiving feedback on how OER can be more equitable.
- Director Asselbaye stated that the City is anticipating a possible infrastructure package from the

federal government. OER has been working on a broadband proposal with the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development Funds and is focusing specifically on getting the emergency broadband benefit to households as a basic utility.

Questions and Comments that followed:

1. Chair Keener agreed with Director Asselbaye about institutionalizing a more robust system to support sustainable tourism and recognize it in both the recovery and future of O'ahu. Chair Keener would like to discuss sustainable tourism and agency partnerships with the Commission in the future, and asked how the Commission can be helpful in these efforts. Director Asselbaye referred to a Honolulu Civil Beat article about Kaua'i's destination management action plan (<https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/02/hawaii-plans-for-post-pandemic-tourism-starting-with-kauai/>) and discussed how in the past, the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) had been focused on marketing for tourism. She noted there is now a more balanced array of expertise coming to table to restart the counties' relationships with HTA and focus on caring for the 'āina while supporting tourism.
2. Vice Chair Alegado stated she is disturbed by the state's use of ten million visitors per year as a goal to get back to. Vice Chair Alegado would like to see a study on the islands' carrying capacity of tourists.
3. Vice Chair Alegado noted the similarities between the current turning point with tourism and COVID-19 and what happened in the 1980s when the plantations were shutting down, and there had to be a massive retraining effort. Vice Chair Alegado questioned if there a way to create a workforce that is aimed at the oncoming and constant threat of climate change and direct economic revitalization to create an environmental workforce. Director Asselbaye responded that these questions were the main drivers for the 'āina-based workforce training.
4. Commissioner Fletcher noted that tourism was able to replace the plantation economy because it is a massive source of revenue, and unless there is another massive source of revenue to replace big tourism, we would be looking at thousands of families being forced to leave Hawai'i. Vice Chair Alegado noted the fallacy of needing to replace one big thing with another big thing, rather than a diversified range of alternatives, which can create a more resilient economy.
5. Commissioner Coffman noted a report from The Economic Research Organization at the University of Hawai'i (https://uhero.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/New_Perspective_Hawaii.pdf) presents an understanding of Hawai'i's economy from a cluster perspective. In response to comments about diversification, Commissioner Coffman noted that Hawai'i's economy has actually diversified a lot in the last 30 years, with most of it not necessarily from policy intervention. Commissioner Coffman highlighted that there are policies that can be implemented to help economic development, especially on the agricultural side, but there are areas where policy levers don't exist yet.

Comments and Public Testimony that Followed:

1. Nancy McPherson stated her hopes for federal funding to build back better, because Hawai'i needs to transition off tourism and fossil fuels.
2. Katie Rooney seconded McPherson's comment and noted that a need to be more critical of inequitable infrastructure.

Update on Climate Change and Construction Industry Guidance Document

- Commissioner Coffman stated that Commissioner's comments were compiled and discussed for consideration and will be addressed while moving forward on the document.
- Commissioners Mehnert and Coffman will bring an updated draft to the next Commission meeting where the Commission can then transfer authorship of the document to Chair Keener to start the stakeholder engagement process.

Questions and Comments that followed: No questions or comments followed.

Comments and Public Testimony that Followed: No public comments or testimony were received.

Public Input for Matters Not on the Agenda:

- Kevin Richards, HI-EMA Natural Hazards Planning Officer, stated that citizens cannot rely on ideas starting from a top-down approach and trickling down, but likes the idea of community pushing ideas up.

Tentative Next Meeting Date: The next meeting date is scheduled for April 12, 2021 at 11:00 AM via Zoom.

Announcements:

1. Chair Keener noted that Zena Grecni, the Sustained Climate Assessment Specialist for the Pacific Islands Regional Climate Assessment, has been invited to provide expert witness testimony regarding the Insular Area Climate Change Act at an upcoming hearing for the United States House Committee on Natural Resources on Thursday, March 4 at 12 PM EST. This act is a new, comprehensive act that establishes an interagency federal task force to work on climate change issues in insular areas, which includes territories and commonwealths. The hearing is available here: <https://naturalresources.house.gov/hearings/discussion-on-the-insular-area-climate-change-act>.
2. Director Gonser announced that the Hanauma Talks Seminar series on CCSR can be found at: <https://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/hanauma-talks-seminar-and-hbep-event-calendar/>.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:32 PM.