

County of Hawai'i

**COST OF GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION**

*Recommendation Responses*

# PERMITTING/CONSTRUCTION

1. Review interpretation/modification of building codes to potentially **allow provisional permitting** for pre-approved, licensed A/E, electrical, and plumbing firms and contractors.

→ **Lack of support from DPW and the design community**

2. **Continue permit reviews** without pause or delay while waiting for discrepancies to be corrected by applicants.

→ **In progress – working on workflow modifications**



# PERMITTING/CONSTRUCTION

3. Consider **separating out permits** into different scopes to expedite approvals.

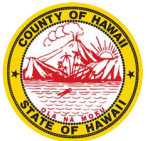
→ **Implemented**

4. Update **non-residential checklist** to reflect the requirements for intake.

→ **Checklist updated**

5. Develop **permitting fees** appropriate to the scale of building or permitting requested.

→ **Need Council approval – for permit fee changes, fees do take into account value and size of structure**



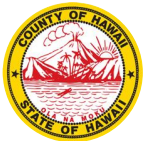
# PERMITTING/CONSTRUCTION

6. Consider **developing a fee structure** for low-income applicants.  
→ **Need Council approval – for permit fee changes**
  
7. **Minimize unpermitted structures** by reviewing/modifying current policies.  
→ **No action – recommendation unclear**
  
8. Develop measures for **evaluation of the status of the permitting process** that are reviewed weekly to ensure compliance with timelines.  
→ **In progress**



# PERMITTING/CONSTRUCTION

9. Consider implementing the following alterations to the County's **Electronic Processing and Information (EPIC)** system:
  - a. Install **EPIC kiosks** that are more accessible to the public → **No action**
  - b. Develop a **queue for submissions** → **In effect**
  - c. Consider the ability for **contractors to have oversight** of the permit process  
→ **In effect -- Contractors can track permits if added as a contact.**
  - d. Develop **immediate notification** to submitters when an error has been found  
→ **In effect**
  - e. Develop a **submission system for complaints** → **In effect**

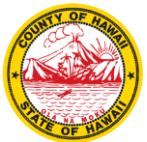


# PERMITTING/CONSTRUCTION

10. Review **county code of recurring deficiencies** to see alterations to the code that should be made or if better training and review resources should be provided to the public.

→ **In progress – Revised County Code**

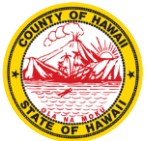
(6-year permits, eliminated the need for PE approval on PV permits under 10kW)



# ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT/ SOLID WASTE/ WASTEWATER

1. County Council, the Office of the Mayor, and the Corporation Counsel should thoroughly evaluate the **County's contract with Hawai'i Earth Recycling** which is clearly wasting taxpayer dollars, is not producing the compost the contract describes, and isn't efficiently processing the Big Island's green waste matter. The parties involved with this contract should **re-negotiate a deal** that is more fiscally responsible use of taxpayers' funds while also being beneficial for the environment.

→ **In Progress**



# ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT/ SOLID WASTE/ WASTEWATER

2. The answer to address some of our **wastewater treatment plant issues** lies in following the wisdom, success, and example of Public/Private Partnerships (PPP) as O‘ahu has implemented; as such, County resources should study those PPP’s done elsewhere in the state to mirror their success here. Careful consideration of how to work within the confines of the *Konno* Decision should be pursued with the County, Corporation Council, Union labor partners, and private entities.

→ **Partially in Progress** – The County is exploring Public/Private partnerships to address some of its wastewater treatment needs and believes there are opportunities introduce sustainable energy and water reuses. We have explored programs that O‘ahu has implemented but foresee challenges due to population size. Further, the administration sees *Konno* as a roadmap which directs the county to where it must grow.





# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/ AUTOMATION/ ELECTRONIC RECORDS/ DIGITAL PAYMENTS

1. Increase the overall Department of Information Technology (DIT) budget from 0.77% to 4% of County budget.

→ **Supported** – statistics report mid-sized organizational averages between 3-5% of expenditures and security budgets of 10-15% of the total IT budget. The IT budget has increased by 250% over the last three years.

2. Open up more **full-time employee (FTE) positions** to increase the help desk capacity.

→ **Implemented** – between 2023-2024, 19 FTE positions have become available.



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/ AUTOMATION/ ELECTRONIC RECORDS/ DIGITAL PAYMENTS

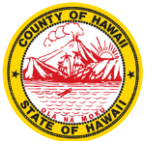
3. To attract and retain talent, we recommend the County engage to bring the **pay ranges up to competitive market rates.**

→ **Implemented** – The Administration, Finance, HR, and DIT have collaborated to execute hiring about the minimum, hiring incentive bonus structures, training and education incentives, and a new Certification Differential Program.



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/ AUTOMATION/ ELECTRONIC RECORDS/ DIGITAL PAYMENTS

4. Implement an **equipment lifestyle management program** to reduce costs through bulk buying, equipment recycling, and planning.  
→ **Implemented** – 20% annual refresh rate for workstations and server hardware with a 5-year serviceable system lifecycle.
5. Adopt the **virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI)**. This solution would allow security updates/software upgrades/patches to be pushed out to the hardware/computers remotely. Saving time and freeing up personnel to work on other priorities.  
→ **Not Supported** – observed execution of VDI resulted in limited success requiring specialized staff, skill, hardware, and software to implement and maintain.



# CAR & VEHICLE COSTS/ VEHICLE TYPES/ VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

1. Improve efficiency and cost savings by **developing a comprehensive, software-based system** that tracks, consolidates, and optimizes inventory, use and maintenance of vehicles and equipment.

→ **In Progress** – reviewing software options

2. Consider a **centralized, main maintenance facility in Hilo**, perhaps using County-owned property adjacent to the Mass Transit Agency.

→ **No action** – we continue to look at options for space



# CAR & VEHICLE COSTS/ VEHICLE TYPES/ VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

3. Consider developing a **Countywide long-term fleet replacement projection and fleet maintenance support**. Fleet replacement projections should include budget analysis to properly set aside financial resources and seek funding as appropriate.

→ **In Progress** – reviewing software options

4. Do **more bulk buying** of standard, common type vehicles and equipment to reduce spare parts, training and servicing variations and related savings.

→ **Not implemented** – we continue to review options



# CAR & VEHICLE COSTS/ VEHICLE TYPES/ VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

5. Do **more lease-buy evaluations**, including electric vehicle acquisition and maintenance, for maximum economy.

→ **In Progress** – R&D is reviewing options for electric vehicle acquisition.

6. Consider a full evaluation of the **readiness of the County's first responders' vehicles** with a long-term financial plan established for continued readiness.

→ **Not Implemented** – DPW does not maintain Fire and Police vehicles.



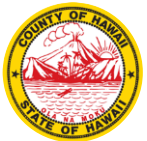
# PUBLIC ACCESS, OPEN SPACE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES EXPENDITURES

1. Hire **additional PONC staff**.

→ **In effect** – permitted under the Charter

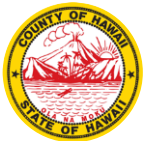
2. Allow for **more flexibility in meetings**, both remote and in-person options should be available.

→ **May be implemented** – pending personnel, technical platform and funding. However, PONC funds can only be used for some of these costs.



# PUBLIC ACCESS, OPEN SPACE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES EXPENDITURES

3. Have **twice per year submission dates** for Maintenance Fund Grants and the 2% Land Fund.  
→ **Not Supported** – sufficient time needed to provide consistent review, award, and disperse grants to stewards
4. Seeking **matching funds** should be part of the job of the commission and ideally in tandem with County of Hawai‘i Research and Development.  
→ **In effect** – covered under County Code Section 2-217





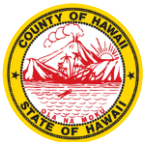
# PUBLIC ACCESS, OPEN SPACE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES EXPENDITURES

5. Continued allowance for ‘unwilling seller’ properties to be part of the listed PONC properties.

→ **Not needed** – this has always been allowed

6. Update and increase transparency of the PONC website.

→ **Implemented** – new website under construction



# OPTIMIZING BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

1. The **Cost of Government Commission** should be restructured and **redeployed** for better results in the future or re-evaluated. Current timing of the deployment of the commission is not sufficient nor practical.

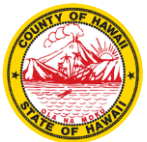
→ **Supported** – County Council passed Ordinance 24-54 for a charter amendment with the recommended changes



# OPTIMIZING BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

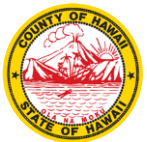
2. There needs to be **access into a secretarial pool for better clerical assistance.** Commissions responded that their secretarial support from the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Planning Department, and the Mayor's office were not sufficient. There also needs to be more stability with Corporation Council representatives with the commissions. Numerous commissions reported a revolving door with attorneys who worked for their group, and guidance was not always the same from attorney to attorney. It also took time to bring new attorneys up to speed on matters that they were not familiar with. It would be more efficient to have the same attorney per commission per term.

→ **Partially Implemented** – Access to a secretarial pool is in progress. However, Corporation Counsel deputies are appointed and sometimes duties are rotated among attorneys to cross train.



# OPTIMIZING BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

3. Overwhelmingly, hybrid meetings were strongly preferred. However, some commissions meet in areas where they or community members have limited internet connectivity, creating IT issues/challenges. There should be **better IT support** to standardize access to the internet and streaming capability from everywhere.  
→ **May Be Implemented** – The county is required to comply with HRS. We may be able to offer enhanced services if we have additional personnel, technical platform and funding to implement.



# OPTIMIZING BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

4. Not all appointed commissions actively participate in or contribute to commission business. Some commissioners also said they do not have equal representation and/or participation from members across the island. Although quorums are generally being met, **Boards and Commissions Application and nomination process should put more emphasis on background and experience** for desired positions and more closely examine willingness and ability to prioritize attendance and constructive participation.  
→ **Implemented** – It is always a challenge to identify candidates willing to serve and who share a similar vision of the administration.



# OPTIMIZING BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

5. County Code should be changed to **adjust for the Transportation Commission.**

→ **In Progress** – The Transportation Commission does not meet very often, but they hope to review the Hawai‘i County Code proposed amendments by the end of the calendar year.



# REVENUE GENERATION IDEAS

1. We propose that **vehicles imported to Hawai'i be charged \$6 per year of age at the time of importation.**

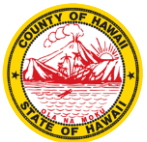
→ **In existence** – This appears to be a fee meant to support the AV fund which exists during vehicle registration and can be increased if necessary.



# ADDING PUBLIC INFORMATION RESOURCES IN HAWAI‘I COUNTY

1. In addition to the existing Public Information Officer position with Hawai‘i County Police Department, a **Public Information Officer position** should be added to both Civil Defense and Hawai‘i County Fire Department to facilitate communications in any incident, emergency, or disaster between each agency, between HI-EMA, between the military on-island, between members of the public, and members of the press.

→ **Implemented** – CD has hired a community liaison who will serve as their PIO.

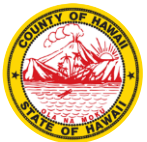




# ADDING PUBLIC INFORMATION RESOURCES IN HAWAI‘I COUNTY

2. If it is not possible to add Public Information Officer posts within the Civil Defense and Hawai‘i County Fire Department, the County should consider **creating an Office of Public Information** that “owns” and elevates efficient communication between incident and emergency resources on the island as well as news, health, and safety information from the County to the press and public. Within the Office of Public Information, the Mayor’s Office, the County Council, Hawai‘i Police Department, Hawai‘i Fire Department and Civil Defense would each have a member to create dialog between each special broadcasts, social media, and traditional media. These resources would also interface with state and federal resources in a state of emergency or disaster to streamline communication to meet the needs of the community.

→ **Not Implemented** – The county is moving in the direction of the National Incident Management System. This approach is implemented nationally and will utilize a public information officer.



# COUNTY MANAGING DIRECTOR/ DEPARTMENT HEAD HIRING

1. Consider **modifying the current system of Mayoral appointments of the Managing Director and department heads** to a more permanent employment hired by County Council members to improve leadership/management stability, corporate knowledge, morale, continuity and efficiency.

→ **Not Being Considered at this time**



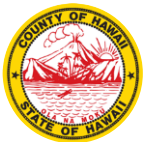
# PERSONNEL REQUESTS

1. Evaluate impact of **adding new permanent positions.**

→ **Implemented**

2. Include **HR review of Form B-52.**

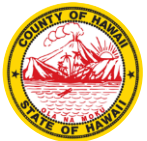
→ **May be implemented in the future, new positions are discussed with HR as part of the process**



# VOLUNTEERS

1. **Increase use of volunteers** to reduce costs and backlogs.

→ **We continue to use volunteers whenever possible**



# VEHICLE REGISTRATION AND LICENSING (VRL)

1. **Clarify website information** regarding renewal of REAL ID Gold Star driver's licenses.  
→ **Implemented** – website updated 2024
2. Consider **new IT position**.  
→ **May be considered** – with all the new requirements
3. Evaluate **increase in vehicle registration fees**.  
→ **In progress** – will be submitted to Council in FY2025

