

Transportation Agency

Honorable Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Honorable Felicia Cowden
Honorable Bill DeCosta
Honorable KipuKai Kuali'i
Honorable Ross Kagawa
Honorable Mel Rapozo

Excused: Honorable Addison Bulosan

The Committee reconvened on April 4, 2023 at 9:02 a.m., and proceeded as follows:

Council Chair Rapozo: Good morning, I would like to call back to order the Committee of the Whole and the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024 Departmental Budget Reviews. We will start off with public testimony. Is there anyone wanting to testify? Mr. Hart.

There being no objections, the rules were suspended to take public testimony.

BRUCE HART: Good morning, Council. I have been here every session and I am happy that I was. I have a better understanding of the process than I ever had before. Since this is the last of our days of budget hearings and with budget reviews coming up. I would like to state my position based upon everything I heard. My position is that if we had any extra money, that it should be used to pay down debt. I am somewhat ignorant, I think I believed that Finance is not looking at this perspective, but my perspective is that we look at current debt and then interests we are paying on that total, and then we separate it out into the individual loans and we try and find the most profitable of those to either pay down significantly or pay off. I remember earlier in the days past that Council Vice Chair Kuali'i asked about the loan we had and Finance told us it was paid off, and he asked how much we saved and if I remember right, it was \$12,000,000. If we can, that is what I would like to see us do. I wish you all well. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you. We will start with the Transportation Agency. I know the Transportation Agency has different sources of funding, so it shows up in different places. If you want to give us an overview. We had your update recently with all the updates for the Transportation Agency and the bus, so if you want to give us an overview based on what you submitted to us.

CELIA M. MAHIKOA, Executive on Transportation (*via remote technology*): Aloha and good morning, Councilmembers. Celia Mahikoa, Executive on Transportation Agency. I want to thank you for this opportunity to present our current request for our budget funding. This paints our current situation, our operations. Overall, we are being funded through the Highway Fund the General Excise (G.E.) Tax Fund through the County as well as being provided about on average \$1,000,000 a year for operating funds from Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and about \$1,000,000 for ongoing replacement of vehicles through FTA, as well as lately more initiatives towards transitioning our fleet to electric buses, which includes vehicle as well as the infrastructure needs that are coming along with that transition. Briefly going over operational challenges that we have had more recently. Of course ongoing recovering from the pandemic with the staffing issues and those are the same issues that everyone else has encountered, but we tried to be flexible and creative in keeping the transit system going fully for the community. We believe we have been successful up to

this point and just continue to look for better ways to carry out our operations and recruitment to fill the vacancies that we have.

We have space limitations that we are currently dealing with, and thankfully have been provided resources to address that. We want to thank you for your support in that as well. It has been an ongoing challenge for us with the limited space that we have with our base yard and the desires for growth within service provided for the community, as well as with the transitioning and new infrastructure needs that come with that, so again, we are grateful for the support provided within that—federal, state, and county level.

The highlights that we had, most recently, were primarily addressed during the presentation that we provided a couple of weeks ago. Very much in the technology area with going online, the front line type of impacts that it has on our customers, which is to us the most important part in the service we provide is how we can make service more user-friendly for those who use the service and for those potential customers who may use the service along with the app that we have placed in place recently and the success that we had with that and individuals who have utilized it and actually are sharing with us what a wonderful tool it is for them in using public transit. We are going with prioritizing community outreach and are thankful for the Built Environment Taskforce with Get Fit Kaua'i, with our participation in there, they supported us in having an action group for transit in particular and we were able to work on accomplishing goals that have been provided for us through our shortrange transit plan. In particular, this coming up year and this year we are in now, our goal is to finish up a Hanapēpē pilot shuttle plan, of which we will be consulting with the large employers in the South Shore area as well in knowing that they are probably a large number of individuals if not already utilizing public transit that could use public transit where are made more readily available. That is one of our goals for this year. Also, just wanting to thank all the other supported departments within the County. They have been outstanding in helping us to get all that is needed done, HR, IT, Finance with the Workday transition that has occurred. It can be extremely challenging for some who are not very computer literate. All the support that was provided and our prioritizing it with our team, we were able to pull it off quite successfully. Again, just thanking all the support that was received from our other departments. Other than that, I just want to thank you for your consideration as we proceed with going through the budget line items and see if there is anything that you would like more information on.

Council Chair Rapozo:

Thank you very much. Councilmember Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii:

Good morning, Celia. On your narrative, on the top of page 5, you talked about the \$3,500,000 grant for the design, engineering, and construction of additional repair shop space. Would that be in the same physical location?

Ms. Mahikoa:

Yes.

Councilmember Kualii:
expand out a little?

And the footprint will be the same or will you

Ms. Mahikoa:

For this portion of the expansion, it is simply extending off our current repair shop towards the Administration building, so those parking stalls that are there...we are needing to identify additional parking stalls, so we are working with the designers and PBR as well.

Councilmember Kuali'i: Would you say that this is just a temporary fix, because you need even more space?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are approaching it in stages. First step, we originally received the funds that were needed for the shop expansion and we see that as a critical part of us needing to address. The repair shop has historically been quite small for the vehicles which we service in them, so the expansion is going to increase the depth of the base, so that we are able to service them at the same time. We are using this opportunity to also set it up to be able to service the electric vehicles that we anticipate implementing in the next several years.

Councilmember Kuali'i: Right. I saw that, too. Does the repair side of the entire complex have its own restrooms?

Ms. Mahikoa: They do have a restroom in the shop right now. That is correct.

Councilmember Kuali'i: One thought I had and I do not know if you ever thought of it, and if you are doing any kind of big plans for future expansion was that, if you veered into that park area just a little bit, if you would possibly include in those plans a larger restroom that could serve double purpose of your shop and then the park as well. That is just putting an idea out there. I do not know if you thought about that.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is something we could take into consideration. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember DeCosta.

Councilmember DeCosta: Good morning, Celia.

Ms. Mahikoa: Good morning.

Councilmember DeCosta: I am going to ask a question based on the expansion of your shop. You said you folks are going to service our larger electric buses. When do we see these new electric buses landing on Kaua'i?

Ms. Mahikoa: As of right now, we are looking at probably within the next year and a half.

Councilmember DeCosta: Okay. So, in the next year and a half, what are we doing for our technicians in your shop to get them ready to handle any type of problem that these buses may or may not have and do we have enough support in your budget to have them trained? I know electrical vehicles, even the local car dealerships on...their technicians are struggling. How competent are our technicians today and how are we (inaudible) to accept these electric buses for the future with our technicians?

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you. That is an excellent question. In actuality, the technicians that we have onboard right now are excellent. They are knowledgeable as far as they need to know right now in servicing the vehicles that we have

in the fleet and I believe they are fully competent enough to take on learning what is needed for electric bus implementation. With that, will come quite a bit of training and the funding that has been provided also has a workforce development aspect to it, so we will be, in the upcoming probably next several months looking up what is available and getting them able to prepare for that. We do not want to do it too soon, because the timeline on the buses is rather fluid, right now. It could go from a year and a half to two years and if we do it too early, that may not work out.

Councilmember DeCosta: I have no doubt that your employees are competent and good employees, I am talking about a totally new vehicle, which is an electric bus. I am sure it is different than an electric car and usually when students go to a junior college, it takes them 3 years to get some kind of degree and I think it is 18 months for the certificate, so you would not be starting out too early, and where would they train? Have you investigated online, will it be at Kaua'i Community College (KCC), would we have to send them away to the mainland corporation who deals with electric buses? Where would the training happen?

Ms. Mahikoa: It is highly likely that they are going to need to go to the mainland for some training and/or we would have the technicians come down.

Councilmember DeCosta: Did you look into this so far?

Ms. Mahikoa: As soon as we get the bus bid awarded, we will be exploring that with the actual provider, whoever the vendor is, which we are hoping should be identified within the next couple of months.

Council Chair Rapozo: Real quick. I think that the manufacturer would be the one providing the training, right, in heavy equipment, Caterpillar—the mechanics go to the manufacturer.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct. A good portion of it.

Council Chair Rapozo: This is a whole new...it is not combustion engines anymore, that is done, so it is a whole new specialty which I would definitely follow up and see how long that certification will take.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you.

Councilmember DeCosta: We want to give them the tools to be successful. We even told that to the Office of Economic Development (OED) and their staff, "What do you need from us to make your staff competent"? You mentioned something about looking at the numbers that people use the bus and the south side route, you mentioned that in your narrative. Do you have the usage of how many works in the area that use the bus? It is good to have numbers so we know why we are spending all this money on new electric buses, do we need 3 or 4, maybe we only need 1. The last thing I was going to ask is how much cost-share to the people do on the bus? We have a couple different riders, I presume. We have the riders that have no transportation have a job, and they may or may not be able to contribute a little bit to the bus ticket and then you have those who cannot contribute, because I see out here there are a lot of homeless that jump on the bus. What are the numbers that you bring in based on the cost-share of the users of the bus? We are talking about

retaining some money, and it would be nice if we could have some of it, if not, all of them contribute a little bit to the bus pass or bus ticket.

Ms. Mahikoa: As far as our fare structure goes, every individual who boards the bus is required to submit payment at that point, cash payment or show a bus pass of which they have purchased or have been provided by a...there are several nonprofits who are providing bus passes. They purchase bus passes from the County and then they distribute them to those individuals in need, their clients. As far as county transportation and the County's revenue are concerned, every individual is paying to ride the bus.

Councilmember DeCosta: Okay, and the numbers that show the usage in certain areas like the south side businesses that might need us to take our workers...

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct. What we need to narrow down on when I was talking about in our study was more specifically individuals in say Hanapēpē/Ēle'ele, up in the heights and getting them to the south shore employers or if we can identify any other common frequent employment destinations for them, because that is where we would see a higher demand for the service, of which that would drive additional resources going in that direction, typically.

Councilmember DeCosta: Just some food for thought, when you put out that application for that card with the nonprofits buying it from the County or individual passengers, you could have a spot that says, primarily, "Would you be using this transportation for work, and if so, where is your work destination?" You would be able to get all that information at the...

Ms. Mahikoa: Like doing surveys?

Councilmember DeCosta: Well, it is not even a survey, it is the application process you have, right? They must apply for an application to get the card. In the application when they buy the card, you can ask that question, "What are you going to use the bus for besides transportation to the store? Are you going to use it for work, and if so, where is your work destination?" You would then have that number, then you would know where to concentrate your buses, whether you need more on the Westside to go to the farms or work, or you need the south side to go to the Hyatt and Kōloa Landing. You would have a much greater memory bank of information, so you know where to concentrate your buses at, so you are not just taking 2 or 3 people from Līhu'e to Kapa'a at a certain time of the day. Efficiency.

Ms. Mahikoa: Excellent. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a few things that are just building up, what has been asked. Transitioning our fleet to electric vehicles, I have been pretty open that and it makes me nervous, right, where are we going to throw away these batteries? My other concern is we are pairing them on diesel at night, so I do not really see where we are even benefiting. It is not like it is coming off solar, it is coming off diesel, from our powerplant. How committed are we to having go to all electric vehicles?

Ms. Mahikoa: We have been provided directions to transition the entire fleet by 2035, which is 60 buses now. That continues to be our goal, unless we are directed otherwise.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes, okay, I hope we do not get rid of our gas fleet too early, because my guess is that is not going to really manifest very well. It is an aspirational goal that I think is reckless by our state government or whomever decided that is what we are doing. It can be an easy problem. All it takes is one big storm and we would lose solar power and we are going to have a problem. I guess at least I want that awareness out there. It makes me very nervous that we are looking at such an extraordinary change and the cost of these buses will be very expensive.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you.

Councilmember Cowden: I saw in here you talked about the school bus elimination and the ridership was quadrupled, so that is pretty good—quadrupled since when? It says that our ridership by the public has more than quadrupled on page 4 at the bottom.

Council Chair Rapozo: In the last 20 years.

Councilmember Cowden: In the last 20 years, on page 4.

Ms. Mahikoa: Okay.

Councilmember Cowden: Has that been also a rapid increase lately? Are you seeing...no...

Ms. Mahikoa: No, it has been gradually transitioning...coming back gradually since the pandemic impacts. The pandemic took it down less than half of where it was prior.

Councilmember Cowden: I ride the bus occasionally and I do not notice that quadrupling when I am on the bus, so I just was not sure. On page 5, it said, "to effectively respond to increasing ridership levels particularly near the high schools that are experiencing negative impacts of the elimination of several school bus routes on the island." Are we picking up those students on the buses?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are doing our best, yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Are they mostly high school or are some of them young riders?

Ms. Mahikoa: Primarily high school, I believe, there is Kapa'a Middle School as well.

Councilmember Cowden: For example, I know Kilauea Elementary School no longer has a bus. That blew my mind. I only realized this year when we were having problems outside the entrance to the school, everyone must drive their kids.

Ms. Mahikoa: Everyone is struggling to get drivers.

Councilmember Cowden: Drivers, right. Then I guess they were told in some areas there are not enough riders, not enough drivers. I am just wondering if we have any grade school riders that you are aware of. It might be interesting to ask your bus drivers. I know when I had my school, I had encouraged all of them to get their bus passes. Thank you for helping my students at that time too, you were great. It is important to see if we are having this trend towards younger riders, so we are not heavily aware of it, just somewhat, is that correct?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct. I am not aware that there are many them. Most of the time that we hear when there are issues of overcrowding on the buses are when school gets out at the end of the day, Kapa'a and Waimea have been the primarily the reports we are seeing consistently.

Councilmember Cowden: How about KCC, is there an increase in student ridership for KCC?

Ms. Mahikoa: We have not noticed a significant increase, no.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. The part of me that gets accused of being right, politically right, which I do not think I am, but with the survey someone asked me why I am not riding the bus, I would not like that. I think that is intrusion of privacy. That is just a comment. When we were talking about the expansion that we are getting the federal money from for the garage, is that all in Lihu'e or somewhat in Kapa'a?

Ms. Mahikoa: For the expansion of the repair shop, that is strictly in Lihu'e, to get our current repair shop expanded.

Councilmember Cowden: Because when I did a tour there 4 years ago, I was told there is no room to expand it. Are we able to expand it, because we are going to be parking some buses in Kapa'a? How are we going to expand it now?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is the goal. We are going to need to identify additional space, either directly where we are at or within Kapa'a.

Councilmember Cowden: Has there been any consideration of expansion in Kapa'a, because then we are sort of decentralizing our workforce since workforce seems to be an issue? That is just something I would like to take into consideration. I am also nervous about if we get rid of our gas repair area, because I have followed this topic a lot. I know others have more than me, but I am not buying it, we are not going to be able to get all these batteries and we are not going to be able to get rid of them. I hope that we have some conscious choice, like I probably would rather see the electric stuff go to Kapa'a, leave our gas in place so that we have that flexibility, if we tear out our existing infrastructure for combustible engines that might be a problem. I do not know if that was part of a study or what.

Ms. Mahikoa: No, we intend to retain what we have, because it is going to take probably at least 15 to 20 years to transition everything over. In order to

continue service, we are going to need to continue procuring diesel vehicles. It is just a few will be replaced each year by the electric—is the current plan.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, because as we do our DMV, putting some things in Kapa‘a, I am not sure if I am totally on page, I am not letting that happen, it seems like decentralizing where we have things is better for employment and the traffic. I just had a big star on your tech improvements, I am happy with that. Shifting away from the full federal funding, it was nice and amazing to have everything paid for the federal government during COVID-19, pretty much, when we had that. Have we pretty much 100% shifted out of those dollars? Are we back to our General Fund and our bus passers paying for our bus service?

Ms. Mahikoa: For the most part, we are back to where we were prior to all of the pandemic funding that was provided, yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Forgive me if I did not listen well, I was trying to listen. When you were talking about Po‘ipū, are we going to have a stronger Po‘ipū route? There is so much work that goes that way, getting to Po‘ipū on a bus is not an easy pathway. Were you saying that we are fixing that? Is that what I heard? I heard Hanapēpē to Po‘ipū...

Ms. Mahikoa: Our direction is more towards, specifically completing a plan to service Hanapēpē Heights. That is the goal of this project that we are working on through our Built Environment Taskforce.

Councilmember Cowden: Will we have a smaller bus go up or will it be the main bus?

Ms. Mahikoa: It will be a shuttle vehicle, which we usually assign to the smaller vehicles.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, a shuttle. So, you get off one, probably at Moi Road, get on a shuttle that goes back and forth. I think of Hanapēpē Heights as many of them work at the base. Some of them work in Līhu‘e, but there are also plenty of hotel workers, and in Kalāheo hotel workers, do we have anything to get...all those resorts are big employers down there and those service workers do not typically have a lot of money. Is there a good Po‘ipū route on our horizon?

Ms. Mahikoa: The primary focus of our actions to be taken for this year and completing the plan is having discussions with the large employers down in the south shore area.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Ms. Mahikoa: Just anticipating many individuals do travel or could travel if public transit was more readily available.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, that was my understanding gap. I was excited for Po‘ipū, but what I am hearing is it is a plan. We are working on the plan, which we have to do before we work on the route, so we are not getting the route yet, we are getting the plan to make sure we have a good route.

Ms. Mahikoa: We had some community outreach back in November and now we also are wanting to speak with the large employers to see if they may have additional information for us or could provide us with information about their workforce, what would be helpful.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, thank you. Those are my questions on that.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember Kagawa.

Councilmember Kagawa: Thank you for your presentation. Do we have a way to calculate the numbers for ridership for every route?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, we have the ability to poll route ridership.

Councilmember Kagawa: I know before you said we did not, a couple years back, but for every route we know and it ties into the amount of fees that are collected?

Ms. Mahikoa: As far as? You are saying for folks paying...

Councilmember Kagawa: Yes, I do not want to see the numbers be like, "Okay, we have 500 on this route," but when you looked at the fees collected, it only adds up to 100 people. Do we have some way of making the numbers tie into our accounting?

Ms. Mahikoa: Right now, our software program does not tie the actual fares paid or the bus passes shown, the method of boarding, how that payment was handled. That does not tie it to the ridership numbers, so if you are looking for something like a reconciliation on revenue to actual routes, we would not be able to provide that at this point.

Councilmember Kagawa: I am just looking for accurate numbers on basically ridership, so we know on a typical Saturday, the route from Kīlauea to Hanalei would be about this much people.

Ms. Mahikoa: We would be able to provide that. We have data as to how many boardings and how many (inaudible) occurred at each stop.

Councilmember Kagawa: Because that would be your strategy to know whether you are going to increase frequency or decrease frequency on a particular route. Okay.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you.

Councilmember Kagawa: Paratransit—are we still using that 20-passenger bus to pick up one person?

Ms. Mahikoa: For the vast bulk paratransit trips, we are using a 14-passenger bus and about the only time it would be utilized just for one...or any bus, utilized for one individual, if someone books a trip that is of course within public transit hours, but there is no one else making reservations for that time of day, because as far as

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance goes for our requirements are to be sure that we are able to provide an equivalent type of service for individuals who cannot access fixed-route.

Councilmember Kagawa: So, ADA stop priority basically if they need something, we accommodate?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kagawa: What is the other hierarchy for paratransit, because as I always said from before I wanted to have a difference between those that are doing...we do paratransit for public schools, the schools have a special bus picking up special needs kids, and I wanted our paratransit to be the same way. If you are going to work, if you are going to a medical appointment, if you are going to school or daycare or what have you, to me that should be top priority. Now, going to the mall or something, to me that is leisure, but I know for elderly who do not want to drive that feel they deserve paratransit. I know everyone feels like whatever they do is the most important thing, but I think when it comes to public transportation that we provide in paratransit, I think there has to be some points where we say no. Do we have that? When people make a request and book, when do we decide we can book?

Ms. Mahikoa: We do our best to accommodate every individual who is registered for the paratransit service. If the need to prioritize does present itself, we would need to prioritize those who have registered through disability, so those are registering as seniors would need to be of...I do not want to say of lower priority, but we would be required through federal law to service the individuals who are certified through ADA.

Councilmember Kagawa: Alright.

Council Chair Rapozo: Council Vice Chair Kualii.

Councilmember Kualii: When you were answering Councilmember Kagawa's question about the numbers and you said, "Right now our fee collection system does not track," was the use of the word "right now" implying that you are moving to a system that will track?

Ms. Mahikoa: Eventually.

Councilmember Kualii: Eventually.

Ms. Mahikoa: Because we have and I think we had presented the fare collection system where we are implementing, we are hoping to implement within the next 6 months, having those modules whereby individuals can pay their fares through electronic means. That will be trackable, however, not everyone will be utilizing that method. A good portion of it may be able to and it is just continuing to help us progress towards that point where we will have all of that information available.

Councilmember Kualii: At some point in the past few years, you already improved the fare collection system, right? Do you still take coins and dollars and they drop it in the thing?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, we do.

Councilmember Kualii: You do?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: That is good.

Ms. Mahikoa: We try to encourage the most folks who are frequent riders to get a bus pass. That is the greatest deal.

Councilmember Kualii: Along the line of passes, I looked in the fee schedule, the bus pass is one flat fee for everyone, the monthly bus pass fare of \$50 for adults, \$25 seniors, and \$25 for youth. Adults, whether it is a low-income person who cannot really afford, you do not give them a lower rate, you tell them to go to the nonprofits that you work with.

Ms. Mahikoa: Basically, yes. We do not have a category for discount fare for income based. We rely on our nonprofits who service many of those individuals already to assist with the distribution.

Councilmember Kualii: Because the person coming in to purchase the bus pass could easily show their qualifications on income because they may already have an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card or something like that.

Ms. Mahikoa: I suppose we could set up the structure for that. That would probably prompt discussion for additional personnel.

Councilmember Kualii: In discussions about what we are doing to increase our ridership, even though it is a very low fee, I think there is probably more people that would ride the bus if we made it even lower. Not for the general person, but for the people who our nonprofits are trying to help. For years, I have been working with you saying we have to get a bus pass discount program, and we do to a certain degree.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: We do work with the nonprofits and we give them a discount, if you will, so that they can give more of their clients these bus passes, which they pay for out of their budgets or what have you. I learned from the nonprofits that they could even do more, like they have waitlists, so I wonder why we would let them have a waitlist, why would we not try to accommodate all those clients of theirs, so that we get more people on the bus. A lot of the time we still see buses that are not full.

Ms. Mahikoa: If that is the case, we have an existing program that is in one of the line items.

Councilmember Kualii: Where is that in the budget?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is in...

Council Chair Rapozo: Which waitlist are you...do you mean the nonprofit?

Councilmember Kualii: Like Catholic Charities or Easter Seals?

Council Chair Rapozo: So, they have a waitlist because there are not enough bus passes?

Councilmember Kualii: Well, there are plenty of bus passes at full price.

Council Chair Rapozo: Oh, okay.

Councilmember Kualii: But they have a program where the nonprofits can purchase at a discount, I think it is half off, I am not sure, but obviously you can give out twice as many, right?

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes. We do it at Friends of the Drug Court. We give quite a bit of passes out that we purchase from them.

Councilmember Kualii: But you do it with the nonprofits and I think you do it with the college as well, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: The college is a bulk rate pass of agreement with them, so it is a separate program that we have.

Councilmember Kualii: What is that? What does it end up being per pass? It is less than \$50, obviously.

Ms. Mahikoa: For KCC? I believe it turns out to be a \$24 fee that everyone registering at KCC needs to pay and for that, they can utilize their student ID to board the bus. For everyone...covers the cost of those who do use it.

Councilmember Kualii: I know, but that is not telling me what we are discounting it to them at. What is the bulk rate that KCC is paying for these bus passes, because the public is paying \$50, the nonprofits can get a few for only \$5, students are doing great, but who is paying for it? Is KCC paying for it? Are we giving them a nice discount?

Ms. Mahikoa: Every student is paying \$24 when they register.

Councilmember Kualii: Just towards the bus pass?

Ms. Mahikoa: Just towards the bus pass.

Councilmember Kualii: So, KCC collects it and they pay it to us?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay. So the bulk rate with KCC is us collecting \$24 per bus pass we give to a student. To all students, I guess.

Ms. Mahikoa: Well, they use their ID for the semester to board.

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, but ultimately that ID is serving as a bus pass for them?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Whether they use the bus or not, all students at KCC have an ID that they pay \$24 for, and the college is not taking any of that money. The \$24 is all coming to the bus.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Councilmember Kualii: But they are getting a \$50 value.

Ms. Mahikoa: They are actually getting the entire semester of travel.

Councilmember Kualii: Oh! This is \$50 a month. So they are getting one \$24 and they can ride the bus for the entire semester.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right.

Councilmember Kualii: Wow.

Council Chair Rapozo: Not every student rides the bus. I do not know if you folks did the calculation of how many actually use to find out what is per rider paying, is significantly higher than \$24.

Ms. Mahikoa: Significantly.

Council Chair Rapozo: Because I think the majority of the people at KCC drive, as you can tell...

Ms. Mahikoa: Right.

Councilmember Kualii: The drivers are helping subsidize the other students who are riding the bus. Beautiful system, I think.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is how a bulk system works.

Councilmember Kualii: That is why it is so cheap. I will look in the budget when I find the line item, but I think that if any of these nonprofits like Catholic Charities have a waitlist, we should up the ability to give them more discounted bus passes, because that means more people riding the bus. I do not know if your program is maxing out or if they have people waiting that they can support.

Council Chair Rapozo: We do not have the demand like Catholic Charities does, but we never had an issue with a waitlist.

Councilmember Kualif'i: There is an entire list of nonprofits, too, but that is just the one I am throwing out there.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Councilmember Kualif'i: I will follow-up with that and when we get to the line item, you point it out to me.

Council Chair Rapozo: Is there a limit of passes that you folks set for nonprofits?

Ms. Mahikoa: The amount that we have been authorized to issue in this program is \$25,000 and it is allocated to those who have applied and asked.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay.

Councilmember Kualif'i: Is that the amount under advertising that is named "Outreach Program"?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualif'i: I found it.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, obviously if you had more in that account, you could give out more.

Council Chair Kualif'i: Yes.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: There you go. Are the buses full?

Ms. Mahikoa: Depends.

Council Chair Rapozo: Generally speaking.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, that is correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember DeCosta.

Councilmember DeCosta: I might ask an unfavorable question right now, but I think we need to advocate for all of our people on Kaua'i and not just a select few that go through a nonprofit or they cannot afford a vehicle and want to get a ride to their destination. My concern is how many of our bus riding constituents utilize the bus between the hours of the morning for an 8-hour day-shift job and afternoon for a night-shift job? Are we servicing our Department of Education (DOE) kids now? I am going to be frank on the floor, a lot of people are afraid to let their child or their wife or their grandmother ride the bus if the influx of riders are not people that they trust with the children or their elder. I saw it happen right out here. I am a local, rugged cowboy and I would not get on the bus sometimes when I see some of the cliental. I want to know what are we doing as a county

bus system to accommodate our workforce, our DOE kids, so they can get on these buses, feel comfortable enough to get to their job sites or their school, do we have a separate line item or separate bus or separate transit route that can accommodate these users or is it a one-fix all problem? Where all riders have to intermix and they go to point "A" and get back to point "B"?

Ms. Mahikoa: As I believe is probably typical with any public transit system, it is public transit, so anyone and everyone who comes and pays their fare...

Councilmember DeCosta: I understand.

Ms. Mahikoa: ...will be able and allowed to board.

Councilmember DeCosta: I understand that, but you have destinations that the buses can go to, correct? So, if you have a destination route, you are at Waimea Middle School or Waimea High School, and you are taking the kids from there all the way back, why is it so hard not to just load that bus with those kids that are going to be dropped off along the way and then you have another bus that can pick up the other users that are going to Big Save or to the mall? I am looking at servicing our community members that need the bus ride to go to job or school. I do not believe that we should be putting all our eggs in one basket to service a group that are going joyriding because they do not have a job and they are going point "A" to point "B," because today they are in Līhu'e at 2:00 p.m. and they want to be in Kapa'a at 4:00 p.m. I am sorry, but I want you to answer that question.

Ms. Mahikoa: I, thank you. I think that is a concern that we all share. We do have video on all of our buses that constantly run while the bus is on. The video is run inside as well as monitoring what is outside. Our drivers are asked to have individuals say if they see younger children getting on board, to have them sit up front, so it is easier for monitoring. We do our best to monitor. The Kaua'i Police Department (KPD) has been excellent in supporting us when we call for assistance if individuals are being inappropriate, and they respond promptly and assist us. That is about what we are able to provide at this point. I know there are many other actions that could be taken, but there is always the balancing point of cost that comes in. As far as establishing separate routes for schools, we have specific regulations that we need to stay in compliance with in receipt of funds for public transit whereby we cannot compete with school operators, and that is a challenge right now because the school bus operators are having difficulty as well. We specifically cannot provide school transportation. We can have a bus stop near a school, we can transport students, but to specifically schedule to service schools, we would not be allowed to do that as a recipient of the federal transit funds.

Councilmember DeCosta: My last question would be the airport.

Councilmember Kualifi: Can I follow-up to that?

Council Chair Rapozo: Sure, and I have a follow-up on that as well.

Councilmember Kualifi: On the buses at schools, I thought I was at the middle school in Kapa'a a few times and I saw buses come nearby, so do you have a bus stop there?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: And then all of the kids just filled up the bus?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: And then it was their bus because they filled it up.

Ms. Mahikoa: That happens.

Councilmember Kualii: At those hours, the buses are in nearby schools where the kids basically fill up the bus.

Ms. Mahikoa: However, it needs to be...

Councilmember Kualii: There are stops along the way, people get off, and then other people get on, too.

Council Chair Rapozo: It stops at the hub.

Councilmember Kualii: But it is helping the students at the schools.

Council Chair Rapozo: It stops at the hub and then a grandmother, grandfather, or someone has to pick them up. I heard numerous complaints. We would not be having this discussion if the State did their job. That is the State's function. I do not expect you to comment, but the bottom line is that the State has the responsibility for providing bus service. I would assume the State could contract with the Kaua'i Bus. They could contract with Robert's Tours, et cetera, assuming that the equipment met the State's regulations for school buses.

Ms. Mahikoa: Because we receive funds and specifically are not allowed to handle school bus transports...

Council Chair Rapozo: No, you cannot compete. But you would not be competing if the State is contracting you. The problem with the school bus is they do not have drivers, like you, you do not have drivers.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right.

Council Chair Rapozo: This is just my position, if the State is responsible for getting kids from home to school, and if they failed because they cannot provide bus...if they did not have enough cafeteria workers, what would they do? Would they say, "Sorry, no food"? I am not grumbling to you. I am upset because I heard numerous complaints from parents of Kapa'a Middle School who...yes, they are on a bus route, but the bus does not take them to the house, it takes them to the hub and then someone has to pick them up, and what is happening at the hub? Prostitution, dope, all of these things that is going on, which I shared with KPD. These parents and grandparents are livid and they have absolutely nowhere to go. They have reached out to the State. We reached out to our Legislators, sorry, catch the Kaua'i Bus. That is what they are told. I called someone from Honolulu and he told me the same thing. They have to catch the local county bus.

Ms. Mahikoa: And they actually have been increasing the purchases of bus passes and distributing them at the high schools, DOE has been proceeding with that.

Council Chair Rapozo: But again, they are required to stay on the bus route. Some of these families do not have people available to pick the kids up, is what I am trying to say.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right.

Council Chair Rapozo: It is a real problem.

Councilmember DeCosta: I do not know if we are able to do this, but are we doing random stops at the airport, are we encouraging with our visitor bureau like Sue Kanoho to encourage our tourists to get our county bus pass, so we can alleviate the road congestion? Do we do a route to the airport at certain times of the most busiest times that tourists fly in and we can transport them to the south side or areas where the resorts are? Do we have that in place? Are we planning to move that way? Can we move that way and if we are not moving that way, why are we not? What is the hold up? Is it the Airport Division who do not want to let the County bus stop by and pick up tourists?

Ms. Mahikoa: As of right now, we do stop at each of the arrival baggage claim areas. We have our Route 200 and Route 100, which is the westbound bus that will stop there and come through Līhu'e and then continue on to Kekaha. That Kekaha bus, Route 100 will come back and terminate—it will stop at the airport and then will terminate at the Courthouse and then end its route. There is a way to access public transit from the airport. We do have information online; we have our app available and we hear from many individuals who will actually look it up prior to coming and will utilize the bus. Occasionally, when I am riding home or coming back out, they are individuals who are boarding, who say that they looked up the information, they know all about the carryon requirements and have prepared accordingly, and have successfully used the bus. As far as a marketing of it, we have not been involved in any marketing with the tourist industry up to this point.

Councilmember DeCosta: Sue Kanoho is a good person to get in contact with. I am just going to throw it out because the Managing Director is listening, why is it so hard for the County to have a few of our buses just contracted to this kind of cliental? I understand we have federal dollars, which means you have to accommodate all users, but if we had a few buses that we purchased on our own, that we could contract to do the tourists pick up and drop off, then we could charge them, encourage and charge, we have to get them off the road. We cannot fix our traffic problems; I am trying to give you a solution to fix our traffic problem.

Mr. Dahilig: Mike Dahilig, Managing Director, for the record. I know Celia has been bringing up the phrase "Federal funds" quite a bit, but the minute we touch federal funding, it does become very restrictive on our ability to be able to do certain things. A classic example was at the City and County of Honolulu used to operate a football express program, that for UH football games at Aloha Stadium, they would utilize the City and County buses to transport people to Aloha Stadium to avoid the traffic around the stadium, but that was shut down by the FTA very quickly because it was not viewed as a regular route that was for a specific purpose. If we were to buy certain buses for tourists'

activities and would have to run for these types of charter activities, as you see from Celia's budget, she already has to navigate between 3 different types of funding. This would have to essentially isolate her ability to keep proprietary funds separate from the federal funds, the GET funds, and from the General Fund, so essentially would have to ask the Council to add a fourth account to do the type of situation that you are describing for charter buses, that are within the line of the FTA regulation. It has been a constant item with how do we encourage our visitors to use our bus systems and we have tried to, in the past, reached out to hotels directly, but as they do things like charge for parking fees, et cetera, having those situations where driving is encouraged versus driving use, it is not encouraged becomes that policy question that constantly comes up. As much as we would like to direct tourism activity using our bus system to use the mode of transportation without cars, we have to be very careful with some of the regulations that are set forth because we are recipient of FTA funding.

Councilmember DeCosta: The word depreciate goes into our bus system, like any vehicle we purchase, whether you are purchasing it with your own money or federal money, the thing depreciates after a certain time. They have no value for that vehicle or that bus, yet we still own it as a county. Are there buses that have been depreciated by federal funding that now is not regulated by the federal department? Every bus that we have, even if it is 20 years old, is still owned by the federal government funding, because the word depreciate means that it has no value anymore. The truck I drive is a depreciated 2001 Ford, it is not worth anything today. But now, can we take that bus, charter it to the airport and take care of some of our problems? We are trying to get a solution based on the influx of information to you so we can solve the problems.

Mr. Dahilig: I will say that in the understanding Celia's inventory and how she has been managing her fleet, I mean she runs those buses until they cannot run anymore. The supply chains for what she must chase are very uneven and right now given what we have within our fleet, those buses are actually well over their useful life and they have been essentially kept together by their maintenance crew. While it is a good idea that we would be able to take advantage of fully depreciated vehicles, we do not operate on a balance sheet like a corporation where we would look at the value of a vehicle as coming down to zero, simply because it is a government asset and not a corporate asset. It could work, but at the end of the day, those assets for what she needs, she is constantly having to use those vehicles until they run to the ground. I know that when we look at things like Kē'e and how the Hanalei Initiative has come in to try to alleviate some of the traffic concerns, those things do work, but it is because they are on a point to point specific purpose type of service delivery rather than something that is a route that Celia operates that tends to have people hop on and hop off. Whether we are able to take people from the airport to specific points, that has always been the goal and why we were looking at the transportation hub initiative that OED brought up yesterday. Christiana and her staff are working with congressional delegation to see if we can get support for a transportation hub, that may be a point where we can say, "Okay, we can get a fixed route that goes from the airport to the transportation hub in Kapa'a," but that is the type of infrastructure that is needed to be able to front the type of volume that would make something like that work. That is why you see the Kē'e model work because essentially it picks up from one spot, hits one beach, and drops off at Kē'e—if we are able to get that transportation hub that was talked about yesterday in motion, that might be an opportunity for us to move bulk people to one point and have them picked up from Kapa'a instead of from the airport.

Councilmember DeCosta: Can you get me an answer based on when are these buses that we use federal money to purchase, when does it go off the federal radar screen? When is that bus now owned by the County and not the federal government? What is the time span they give us?

Mr. Dahilig: We can take a look at the regulations and response back with the method of disposing of federal assets, because we do have a number of assets regardless of their shop, like in the Planning Department, we have vehicles that are purchased through Special Management Area (SMA) money, but there is a certain disposal requirement.

Councilmember DeCosta: There should be a time, there should be a year, right? There should be an allocation year...

Mr. Dahilig: I cannot recite it off the top of my head.

Councilmember DeCosta: I know.

Council Chair Rapozo: We will send that question over.

Mr. Dahilig: Yes, we will send that over.

Council Chair Rapozo: I would assume every single grant has a different regulation, so every piece of equipment has different rules.

Councilmember DeCosta: I think it is important...

Council Chair Rapozo: That is a good question.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up. If we did something like that point to point, for the visitor industry, you are taking away a whole segment of the market, right? There are delivery vehicles, coaches, and many different companies that do that right now. We must be somewhat careful about how hard we overrun it. Do we have rules against that? Has it come up before?

Mr. Dahilig: It is a supply and demand question. Right now, the supply side on our end...it was two-fold with respect to the ability to provide the service and the number of available vehicles that we have. That is why when we look at, as Councilmember DeCosta was suggesting, we look at our other private vendors, like for example the Hanalei Initiative contracts out with Polynesian Adventures to run that part of the segment. There are private sector solutions to some of these things that may arise that do not involve some of the federal assets, so whether the visitor industry in the Kapa'a area see value in having a hub both in the time it takes to move their passengers from a service or if they all want to *hui* together and provide that as a coconut coast shuttle, those are the types of solutions we are also looking at beyond saying that we are going to provide a fixed route, so that is part of the discussion.

Councilmember Cowden: I am happy to hear that the Westside bus makes it to the airport...you do not have to go into a long answer, but I just hope 400 and 500 the routes to and from the North Shore could also find a way to make it to there, because I think

that would be really good, particularly for residents. I know I will take the bus. We have talked about before, too, about having something like where people could put luggage or shopping material or laundry, where people have room to carry their goods. The new buses, maybe you have some thought that way.

Ms. Mahikoa: We needed to prioritize the actual riders over blocking off a large section for carryon items, unfortunately, because the frequency of service still being once an hour that we are trying to prioritize moving residents and visitors, the actual individuals, and the tradeoff has been the very large carryon that we still deny boarding with.

Council Chair Rapozo: No one has carryon anymore; it is all luggage that they take on the plane.

Councilmember Carvalho: Celia, in looking at your highlights, I just wanted to get an update. I know this is a big thing, technology-wise, especially paratransit. How successful have we been with the app and the downloads? Paratransit is a big part of that, too.

Ms. Mahikoa: As far as the use of the app, what we also activated recently, and I believe we have about 80-85 of our paratransit riders who have registered for the web portal, so that they are able to dial in and look up what their reservations are and get confirmation. That is a vital piece of information for each person each day, so we try our best to encourage that, of all our paratransit riders, who have the ability and the interest to download the web portal and to use it. They win because the information is readily available for them at any time and our team wins because it lessens the amount of phone calls that they are needing to answer or address any of these questions that are available for those folks who have it.

Councilmember Carvalho: 6,100 downloads...

Ms. Mahikoa: Right, that was for the fixed route app that we have that shows live where the buses are, so it is an excellent tool if you are using the bus, you know how far it is from the stop and people can see that information at any time. I think 6,100 was mentioned for downloads over the first year of having that activated. Many of the individuals from outside of the island, as well as outside of the Country can download it and do their homework before they get here, to see if the public transit will work as an option for them. We try to encourage that. We keep our social media posts going out and just taking recommendations that come in from the public as well.

Councilmember Kagawa: I am trying to grasp the total amount of funding that the bus is getting. I see 2024 G.E. fund \$10,500,000. Page 2 says, "Fiscal Year 2024 Highway Fund \$3,300,000," so do I just add those two, is that the total budget of the bus or is there another...

Ms. Mahikoa: It would be that plus the federal funding that we get annually, which comes to about...it fluctuates around \$1,000,000. That would be the total amount that we have for operating funds available to us each year.

Councilmember Kagawa: The budget is \$10,500,000 plus \$3,300,000 plus another \$1,000,000?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kagawa: Is that where we are at?

Ms. Mahikoa: That does include some capital funds, yes, our vehicle match and a consulting match that is included in this as well.

Councilmember Kagawa: So, we are looking at about \$15,000,000?

Ms. Mahikoa: Total.

Councilmember Kagawa: Total.

Ms. Mahikoa: For everything taking into consideration.

Councilmember Kagawa: It has doubled in the past 10 years, Chair. Overall. But beside the point, okay, back when we approved the G.E. tax...I think we did it primarily because Lyle said we had a \$250,000,000 backlog in roads and bridges, but if we are taking about a third of that to fund the bus, which we knew we would try to subsidize some of the bus, but where do we place our gap when G.E. tax runs out? Are we expecting to gain more federal funding or is it primarily going to be upon the mayor at that time to take it from the General Fund. Do we have a plan in place? We have a luxury grabbing G.E. funding right now, \$10,500,000—that is 1/3 of the funds we are collecting. We voted yes because we said we are going to fix every road and bridge in 10 years, that is what Lyle Tabata said. Obviously, we are going to be short because we are taking a third for the bus. What is the plan? Does it run out in 6 years?

Ms. Mahikoa: We, as an agency, Transportation Agency?

Councilmember Kagawa: Yes, are you going to get more federal funding or are we just going to push it all back to the County General...

Ms. Mahikoa: We will look to whatever federal funds are available at that point and should there not be, we are going to need to appeal to the County and at the same time, I am also looking at how we may restructure.

Councilmember Kagawa: Alright.

Mr. Dahilig: There are some tough decisions that are going to have to come in 2030 when that does lapse. There was a conscious choice in, when you G.E. funds come down that...because of the authorization to push the financial liability over to the G.E. Fund, but you are right, once that thing lapses, is it a question of political ask to the legislature to have the G.E. Fund extended. That is a conversation that has started happening at the legislature, but at this point it will become a question of does that get shifted back to more traditional shared funding that it was prior to the 2018 authorization or do we need to look at restructuring the services that are provided.

Councilmember Kagawa: Alright. I think the key for me is to see the budget growing and now we are using G.E., it is kind of the right size for our bus, at some point. That is why I said it is important for me to see the ridership numbers from route to route. We made a big fuss about golfers, we subsidized \$2,000,000, but very few people rode the bus. We are subsidizing a small portion and not all of them go to work, not all of them need to go to school, a lot of them just rides for luxury.

Council Chair Rapozo: Because it is air-conditioned.

Councilmember Kagawa: For luxury and to go to the beach, and that is all great, but at some point, I think we have to right size it for the functional purpose of what the public bus should do is get people to work, to school, because at some point I do not know whether we can keep affording to double the bus subsidy, which is \$15,000,000 right now. It is almost as much as solid waste. Thank you.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you for your question, Councilmember Kagawa, because you asked it better than I would, I had it on my list. Did we limit the number of rides on the paratransit? They have like about eight times they can call paratransit; it is not as open as it once was. It is not a private uber any longer. Seems like 2 years ago we made a big change.

Ms. Mahikoa: Part of that change, we did a complete overhaul with the fare structure and everything else, part of that change was when we restructured it to where we had seniors registered individuals for paratransit services versus those who registered based on disability. The seniors have ten rides per month limit on their trips.

Councilmember Cowden: Alright, because I think that addresses some of what Councilmember Kagawa was concerned about, is people just get a highly subsidized ride anywhere. I know on Maui they still are like private uber, because I have friends to do it. That is what I call it, because it is just wherever they want to go, whenever they want to go for a long way, and it is close to free. I think going with his frustration, even though it is nice for those people, everyone else has to pay for it and we had to change it down to ten, because it was overwhelming the viability of our bus system. It is ten for people who are just age available as opposed to someone who has gotten a very severe challenge.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right, and additionally the fare is \$4 per trip for seniors versus \$2, so we tried our best to incentivize certain...

Councilmember Cowden: The cruise ship overwhelmed...the local route, apparently those coaches that are private sector are not hitting that need, is that correct? I am hearing from people who use the bus regularly that when the cruise is in town, they pretty much overwhelm our local bus.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is what we have been observing.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, and in that case, do you know the business end of the other side, the cabs are the ones that are not doing...maybe it got shutdown during COVID-19, because the cabs and coaches used to be crowded, but maybe not now.

Council Chair Rapozo: They are still there.

Councilmember Cowden: They are still there?

Council Chair Rapozo: But people will take the bus if it is still available, but they line up down there, and you know, the price, right? The bus is cheap. Some people are okay with riding the bus and some will rather jump in an uber.

Councilmember Cowden: Do we have any of our General Fund going into the bus, which is that it is self-sufficient, but in your point, it is taking away from the road.

Councilmember DeCosta: She is shaking her head no, we are not self-sufficient.

Ms. Mahikoa: No.

Councilmember DeCosta: We are not.

Councilmember Cowden: We are not taking from our General Fund...

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, that is correct.

Councilmember Cowden: That is what I meant.

Councilmember Kualii'i: We are taking that from our General G.E.T. Fund.

Councilmember Kagawa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: We are taking it from our...

Ms. Mahikoa: G.E.T. and Highway, yes.

Councilmember Cowden: What percentage does...

Councilmember Kualii'i: We are still paying for it with taxpayer money.

Councilmember Cowden: ...(inaudible).

Ms. Mahikoa: On a fixed route, it usually falls at about 15% to 16%, the revenue.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Ms. Mahikoa: On paratransit, it usually comes to about 4% to 5%.

Councilmember Cowden: Is that written in here?

Ms. Mahikoa: I do not think I have included that this year.

Councilmember Cowden: Because that is really important. 15%...

Ms. Mahikoa: Recovery rate, is what they call it.

Councilmember Cowden: It is probably in the back of our thing here, and then what did you say for paratransit?

Ms. Mahikoa: It usually falls about 4% to 5%, maybe. We need to break that out now between senior specific trips and...

Councilmember Cowden: Yes, I get that. Thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: When you were talking about space for luggage and you said, "We prioritize riders," what is the policy? Do you allow any carryon or large carryon, can someone put something on their lap? How does that work?

Ms. Mahikoa: Right now, our policy is to advise riders to keep it within the airline carryon size, that they need to be able to keep it within their personal space. They cannot take up an extra seat or take up an area in the isle. That is what we need to advise riders.

Councilmember Kualii: That is good. I would think a lot of people can deal with that. All you need is a short and a tank top, right, when you come to Hawai'i. You talked about one-fare, flat fare, not a low-income rate. What about transfers? People have asked about transfers—we do not provide. So, you must pay for one short trip to get to the other bus that you need to get out to get to your final destination, but then you have to pay twice, because you do not get a transfer right.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Have you thought about instituting some type of transfer?

Ms. Mahikoa: We have considered it in years past. We chose to implement the very cheap shuttle cost to address most of those situations. Yes, there are exceptions when it is going to cost you \$4 to get from the airport to head up North. As far as that goes, we are seeing the upcoming fare, the term slipping from me, as far as making so that people can pay electronically. We will be able to address those types of things and design them into the fare payment structure so that it would take care of those situations where individuals need to pay twice.

Councilmember Kualii: Basically, the shuttle gets you from the airport to the hub and then you get on a bus to get you to your final destination.

Ms. Mahikoa: That airport example is probably not a good one, because we use 2 main lines to do that. To get from the airport to Hanamā'ulu is \$2 because it is a mainline. It drops you off at Kalepa and then...

Councilmember Kualii: It is just a matter of you changing that fee from the airport to Hanamā'ulu and call Hanamā'ulu a hub, because if they have to get to

Hanamā'ulu first to get onto the bus to get anywhere North, which is all the hotels, then either we are trying to get more tourists on the shuttle or we are not.

Ms. Mahikoa: We do our best to have other tools available such as the one-day bus pass or if they are going to be here awhile, to let them get the monthly bus pass, especially if they are seniors. Again, the monthly bus pass for \$25...

Councilmember Kualī'i: But no one is at the airport selling bus passes...

Ms. Mahikoa: Unfortunately.

Councilmember Kualī'i: So, they are going to get on that bus and have to double transfer or whatever...think about that.

Council Chair Rapozo: In your update, when you were here a week or so ago, you mentioned a new system you are going with, this new fare system with the app that they will be able to do it all on their app, and not have to worry about paying on the bus?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is ultimately where we are headed.

Council Chair Rapozo: I was anticipating that sooner than later, but it sounds today that it is maybe later.

Ms. Mahikoa: I am thinking 6 months to a year, ultimately, so I really prefer not to direct a lot energy of restructuring.

Council Chair Rapozo: Oh, no, I just wanted to make sure we are still on track with what you had talked about at the update, that way you do not have to have someone at the airport.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: People would be able to go online, get what they need, and then do it through their phone, jump on a bus and not have to worry about paying every time they stop. I think that is crazy, but it is what it is.

Councilmember Kualī'i: I surely was not asking for that.

Council Chair Rapozo: I do not want to create a bus that will be the tourists' mode of transportation and we cannot get our locals on the bus, do you know what I am saying? They do not listen when you talk about small bags, I see them at the airport.

Councilmember Kualī'i: Then the driver denies them, right? I have seen the driver deny them at the airport.

Ms. Mahikoa: Sadly.

Council Chair Rapozo: This is what happens, though, they bring the big bag and they get in and put it on their lap until the bus starts moving, and then they throw it in the isle. The husband and the wife have the same size bag, which should not even been

in the carryon to begin with, but it is, and then about maybe Kapa'a, it gets uncomfortable, and they throw the carryon in the isle. They are all human. If you want to come here, go get a taxi, go get an uber, get on a coach, hire someone, support the local economy, do not rely on the public bus system, take a seat from some *kūpuna* that has to get to where they have to go. That is just my personal opinion, probably not a popular one.

Councilmember Kualii: Mine is just about getting less traffic on the roads. The more tourists are on the bus, the less traffic on the roads. You alluded to it when you talked about the recovery rate. I am sure we have the data, but if you could share it, basically the average cost per rider, per trip. The cost breakdown by percentage and dollars of the fare, and what (inaudible) is paid by, and I guess the recovery thing tells me the percentage; what is covered by the fare and what is covered by County dollars, whether it is G.E.T. or whatever funds, it is County taxpayer dollars. My last question for now is basically I know we always have vacancies and there are 11 bus driver vacancies now. Do we have enough drivers to keep all our routes operating and when we do not, what happens? Do some routes get shut down? How does that work?

Ms. Mahikoa: Thankfully, our team consistently steps up and they are being great with taking on extra assignments. That is a frequent occurrence when individuals call out or need to call and ask others to come in and work the overtime shifts. We do have our on-call pool of drivers as well, who are very supportive and consistently come in when they are available. Thankfully, we have those tools available to us that our team is always committed to stepping up and taking care of the shifts that are opening up. Thankfully, it has been very rare where we have had to impact public service.

Councilmember Kualii: Are the on-call drivers regular positions? What is the title of that position?

Ms. Mahikoa: Are you looking in the line items where you locate them?

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, I do not see them.

Ms. Mahikoa: There are bus drivers.

Councilmember Kualii: I see a lot of bus drivers.

Ms. Mahikoa: And "on-call" in parentheses. It should be just below the full-time bus drivers.

Councilmember Kualii: How many of them are there?

Ms. Mahikoa: We have 10 funded.

Councilmember Kualii: I do not see them. On-call drivers, people stepping up and also regular drivers being willing to work overtime, is that what that is?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Do we see in your budget the dollar amounts that show us that is what you are doing? Because if there are 11 vacancies for bus drivers, and I guess so that you have more than enough drivers, so that people do not have to be working overtime, you do not have to utilize the on-call drivers as much.

Ms. Mahikoa: Right. Because we have the schedules, it is rather slim right now as far as the need for covering what is there, they are very...how should I say, "Slim," so we could use additional drivers in bulking up the schedule to make more service provided on the paratransit side of things, as well as on fixed routes.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember DeCosta.

Councilmember DeCosta: I am listening to all of our questions and I have to support Councilmember Kagawa in his last speech about who rides the bus, how we should structure our bus routes, and I want to ask 2 questions and will give 2 constructive information for you to use to improve your pick-ups and drop-offs. Adults, children, and *kūpuna*, do we have different pay scales, different cost of bus tickets for the *keiki* up until 17 or 18 years old, some 18-year-olds are in high school, because I believe *keiki* and *kūpuna* should pay very little. Those ages in the middle, I do not care whether you work at the Hyatt or you are not working, you will pay to ride the bus. Now, if you cannot afford it and you go to the nonprofit, the nonprofit has ways to solicit funds and they will pay the premium price. We have to get our bus system to where it would support itself. Every time the County has to put funding, taxpayer dollars that all the people sitting here are putting into, and I bet most of these people do not even ride the bus. So, do *kūpuna* and *keiki* have different rates compared to the normal 18-65 years old? Do they pay a different bus fare than the people 18-years-old and above 65?

Ms. Mahikoa: 18-64 currently pays \$50 per month.

Councilmember DeCosta: What do the others pay?

Ms. Mahikoa: \$25. They have a half price pass offering.

Councilmember DeCosta: Would you be open to raising that 18-64 year old price tag, on the monthly cost, if we needed to offset some of the funding coming in? If we needed to be more self-sufficient on our economic cost, would you be open to something like that?

Ms. Mahikoa: We could take it into consideration.

Councilmember DeCosta: Okay. Number 2, I wanted to know what is hard about having cards printed that when the customers comes on, they tap, like how they would with a Visa credit card, and it tells you the destination. When they get to the hub or bus stop, you have a colored emoji, but now you have all solar lights, so you folks can have a solar emoji that says, "This bus route will pick up purple," so all the kids with the card, they have a purple emoji, that is the one that we will service now. You can get away from the federal government amendments by doing both people, but not having them ride the bus at the same time. I am trying to solve this problem. We have a problem. Councilmember Kagawa brought it up and I brought it up that people are uncomfortable riding the bus and feeling unsafe. O'ahu has many situations that have happened. Are we going to wait for Kaua'i to start

happening? We do not have police officers on the bus. I do not think that our bus drivers are trained to handle a criminal situation. Is there a way...

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember DeCosta, I think Mr. Dahilig said that he was going to get back to us with the regulatory...if we can or cannot.

Councilmember DeCosta: I know, I am just...

Council Chair Rapozo: You said that earlier and I think she gets the message, I get the message, if there is a way...I agree with what you are saying, I am just...because there is a lot of regulations we need to look at.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there any other questions? If you have any questions on the budget, just state the page number.

Councilmember Kualii: Page 299. At the very top, the vacant position, Position No. 9568, Accountant III at \$73,000. It has the normal 9% increase. Vacant for 42 days, offer declined, recruit is the HR recruitment status. If it is offer declined and re-recruit, what is the status now? Are you going to get this person hired and onboard for full funding starting on July 1st?

Ms. Mahikoa: We anticipate having it filled by July 1st, yes.

Councilmember Kualii: The Consultant Services at \$183,000, that is to do what for the new base yard expansion? Is it to complement that grant that you talked about?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Then in advertising at the bottom, it was \$45,000 last year and you reduced to \$35,000 this year.

Ms. Mahikoa: It was \$25,000 for that item, consistently, it has been \$25,000.

Councilmember Kualii: But the entire advertising item...

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, because it includes other...

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, so what went down? What was the \$10,000 that you took away, but it was not the outreach program, is what you are saying?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, it is likely the promotional items.

Councilmember Kualii: Instead of \$10,000, it was \$20,000 last year. Okay. Do you know how long you had this \$25,000 outreach program in place?

Ms. Mahikoa: This is either year three or four that we are carrying out right now.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay. I will have a follow-up question in writing, so we can look at it all and I will probably propose increasing it. That is it on that page, Council Chair.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there any further questions on the budget? If not, next page.

Councilmember Kualii: On the automobiles, the \$1,500,000 will get us the 13 buses?

Ms. Mahikoa: They are matching funds for the federal funds we have, yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Is this county funds that will match with federal funds to get us 13 buses?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Are they all the same type of buses or anything special, new?

Ms. Mahikoa: For these, it is likely going to be probably close to half of our 14-passenger diesels and our 21-passenger diesels for the remaining amount.

Councilmember Kualii: All diesels?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, for now.

Council Chair Rapozo: What is the match?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are asking for \$1,500,000.

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes, but what do the feds put up?

Councilmember Kualii: What is our percent versus our percent?

Council Chair Rapozo: I am just trying to figure out 13 buses for...how much is a bus?

Councilmember Kualii: A lot.

Ms. Mahikoa: They are running about \$200,000.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay, so about \$2,600,000. Okay. These are the smaller buses.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember DeCosta: Can I ask about the electric bus?

Council Chair Rapozo: Not in the...

Councilmember DeCosta: I know, but what is the cost of an electric bus? If it costs \$200,000 for a regular diesel bus, what would it be for the electric bus?

Ms. Mahikoa: There are 2 things to take into consideration with the electric buses, one is that we are going from diesel to electric and two, that we are going from cutaway bus, like the ones we use to a transit size bus, which have distinctly different useful lives, as well as passenger capacity. The electric buses, I think they are probably coming in about \$700,000 to \$800,000, which is the anticipated amount, where it is going to land.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, by the time we get it, it is about \$1,200,000 to \$1,300,000.

Ms. Mahikoa: But the electric buses are anticipated to last probably 2.5 to 3 times as long as the cutaways that we have, so that is the tradeoff.

Council Chair Rapozo: These are big, those electric buses are long buses, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: Well, we are going for a scaled down size.

Council Chair Rapozo: They make them smaller?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, thankfully, because these roads...

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes, because I was thinking we are going to have to spend money on the (inaudible).

Councilmember DeCosta: And we need 60 of them, right, you said by 2035?

Ms. Mahikoa: That is the goal.

Councilmember DeCosta: 60 of these at \$1,200,000.

Council Chair Rapozo: Like what Councilmember Cowden said, "it is not going to happen."

Councilmember Cowden: Not going to happen.

Councilmember Carvalho: I wanted to follow-up on the bus shelters. How is that going? Are there any new bus shelters coming onboard and I know we have the maintenance program in place, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: Right.

Councilmember Carvalho: And the light-emitting diode (LED) lighting, is that all connected?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes, thank you. As far as the maintenance goes, things have been going excellently, we have our utility workers that take care of the stops and the surrounding areas. We have wonderful support from the Department of Public Works and the Department of Parks & Recreation with all of the other items such as when the lighting needs to be attended to, the photovoltaic lighting needs to be replaced or repaired, and other bus stops sign issues. Regarding construction, again, we are extremely grateful we are being included having bus stops included in the roadway projects that are occurring, such as in Po'ipū that we are seeing happening outside of Kapa'a High School, up at Kawaihau. They are designing them into these roadway projects and actually just continuing the trend of providing these great shelters for the public, as they wait.

Councilmember DeCosta: The price on the little kit bus stops with the covered shell and the solar lights, like those little hubs that we buy to put in and we said we had none in our inventory, and I know Kalāheo was one spot and I am pretty sure I have a couple other spots on the bypass road. It would be nice to have those kits, half a dozen in our shop that in case we need to put in or we need to upgrade, because I do not want to see our people, no matter what they pay on the bus pass, sitting in the rain on plastic chairs, like we have out there in Kōloa. We need to have a better way to install these bus stops if the community says, "We need a light at the bus stop," we cannot say, "Oh, we will order it and it will be here in 6-9 months." We need a way to put it in. Just food for thought. There are 2 spots that we brought up to you, right?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember DeCosta: Can you investigate that for us?

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you.

Councilmember Cowden: I do ride the bus, you must not. I do ride the bus and so I know those shelters do not protect you from the wind, the rain, or the sun. All you can do is sit on it. They are designed so people who are without the people that you do not want on the bus, they are designed such that those people will not sit at the bus stops. Are we going to continue with those types of little shelters, because they are just shelter, they are just a place to sit?

Ms. Mahikoa: What are we envisioning?

Councilmember Cowden: The green things, you get completely soaked, you get wind blowing...it is just a chair. It is designed so they cannot lay down on them. I think they are terrible. I hope we are not continuing with them, but I guess we have to.

Ms. Mahikoa: We do not have to, however, that was the intended plan.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay, because Councilmember DeCosta was saying like "you have shelter," but I am saying there is no shelter in that. There is a place to sit and that is it. Do you ever sit on those? If it is raining, you are soaked.

Ms. Mahikoa: I do.

Councilmember Cowden: If it is windy and raining, there is no protection.

Ms. Mahikoa: The balance that we are trying to maintain is that we do not want to set up shelters that will have individuals moving into them, sorry.

Councilmember Cowden: So, it is a chair, it is not a shelter.

Ms. Mahikoa: I think we see what...

Council Chair Rapozo: If you have side-way rain, the wind is blowing the rain, you get wet. That is just unfortunate.

Councilmember Cowden: They have holes purposely...

Councilmember Kualii: Welcome to Kauai.

Council Chair Rapozo: On the roof?

Councilmember Cowden: The roof is so small.

Ms. Mahikoa: On the side.

Council Chair Rapozo: These were designed as bus shelters, not tiny homes. I do not know how else you would do them, unless you enclosed the sides, but...it is like a dugout. If the rain is blowing a specific way, you get wet.

Councilmember Cowden: They do not work.

Council Chair Rapozo: Again, the intent was for it to be bus shelters and if you build it where it becomes a home or a shelter then the bus people will not have a place to sit. We have seen how that goes. The bottom line is this, if we have to protect our houseless community, let us do it. But we also have to make sure we provide for our bus users, and they are not showing up and having to stand out in the hot sun because some people have decided to take up shelter in our bus shelter. That is a tough one.

Councilmember Kualii: Page 302, more positions. Starting in the middle of the page, Position No. 10397, Automotive Storekeeper I at \$39,800 is the normal 8.9% increase. It says, status recruitment closes on March 22nd, did that happen?

Ms. Mahikoa: It closed and no applications were received, so it was reposted on continuous recruitment the following week.

Councilmember Kualii: No applications received, reposted. Do you think you are going to be able to get through the process and get someone hired to start on July 1st? Do you know why you did not receive any applications?

Ms. Mahikoa: Certainly, hope so. I am trying.

Councilmember Kualii: The other position is, Position No. 9393, Heavy Vehicle Mechanic II. It said, "Selection made," so I just wanted to confirm that you have someone and if they accepted?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: When are they going to start?

Ms. Mahikoa: It is already...we transitioned them.

Councilmember Kualii: Was this by chance a promotion from within?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: So, does it create another vacancy?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: What is the new vacancy?

Ms. Mahikoa: We have historically recruited from our lowest level mechanics, because of the Commercial Driver's License Program (CDLP) requirement that it takes to...

Councilmember Kualii: Was it one of these positions right here and below?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Whether it is Mechanic Helper—well, this is a Heavy Vehicle Mechanic II.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: So, was it a Heavy Vehicle Mechanic I?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

(Councilmember Kagawa was noted as present.)

Councilmember Kualii: One of these positions either Position No. 9348 or Position No. 9392, one of those positions was promoted up into that position?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay, so that position being vacant, have you requested HR to fill that position or do you still have another person lower down that you can promote up to that?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are checking on that right now and we will decide how to proceed probably within the next week or two. We need to determine whether

it would be beneficial to open it up to that level with the requirements that it takes to come in at that level of our operation or we will need to reclassify the position and recruit at that level.

Councilmember Kualii: Based on what you need to do and then in consideration of what time we have, just between now and the next...what comes back to us in May, if necessary, then make an adjustment to this full salary, if the person will not start on July 1st.

Ms. Mahikoa: Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Janine, can I ask you a real quick question. Councilmember Kualii does a good job with the positions and he references the 8.9% is the standard increase. Again, this is the fiscal year starting July 1st, when does the collective bargaining increases start?

JANINE MZ. RAPOZO, HR Manager III: Janine Rapozo, HR Manager. We are going to have another increase July 1st.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, the next one is scheduled for all unions?

Ms. Rapozo: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: It seems like every position has an 8.9% increase.

Ms. Rapozo: Yes. There is a little bit of difference in the actual percentage increases and how they take it. Some bargaining units have step movements and things like that, but everyone is scheduled to have increases on July 1st.

Council Chair Rapozo: Of 8.9%? I do not remember reading any of the collective bargaining rate increases being 8.9%, because you also have to adjust the benefit packages.

Ms. Rapozo: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: Which I assume you already did.

Ms. Rapozo: Yes, so I am not sure where you are getting the 8.9%.

Councilmember Kualii: From the Vacancy Report listed salary...

Ms. Rapozo: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: ...to the Budget listed salary.

Ms. Rapozo: If you recall at the last budget, we were not able to put in the raises as part of the budget, so it was not reflected, so it is almost like 2 raises.

Councilmember Kualii: 2 raises.

Council Chair Rapozo: Oh, so the last increase—was there an increase last year as well?

Mr. Rapozo: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: And that one obviously was not reflected in the last budget.

Ms. Rapozo: It was retroactive, yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay, thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: But it is consistently 8.9% so...

Council Chair Rapozo: That is what I am trying to think, but I do not remember any union getting an 8.9% raise.

Councilmember Kualii: May I continue?

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: The last part at the bottom of the page is the bus drivers, so 63 total at \$58,032. Of those 63, 11 of them are vacant and 4 of them were vacant for 3 years, 987 days. One of them 386 days, another one 257, and then the rest of them less than 150, some of them even 13, one of them 13 days, and one of them brand new, April 1st vacant. And they all have the 8.9% increase. Under the recruitment status, it says, "Training current van drivers." Do you even have 11 total van drivers?

Ms. Mahikoa: They are all classified as Bus Driver for budget purposes. We bring them in briefly as On-Call Van Drivers and run them through the qualifications to become CDLP qualified and convert their position into the Bus Driver position.

Councilmember Kualii: Is that the position on the next line item under wages and hourly pay?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: We have 11 vacancies here, right, as Bus Drivers? And then you are saying in the next line item, the On-Call Drivers...what is "EX Bus BC-7" and then "Van BC-5?"

Ms. Mahikoa: "EX" is exempted, appointees, as our entire Agency is. Bus Drivers are BC-5 level within the Unit 1 Collective Bargaining Agreement and then Bus Drivers...I am sorry, Bus Drivers are BC-7 level, and Vans are BC-5 level in the Unit 1 Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Councilmember Kualii: If this says, "On-Call Drivers 50% EX BC-7, Van BC-5," how many of these 11 positions are bus drivers on-call and how many of them are van drivers on-call?

Ms. Mahikoa: I would need to go back to our list.

Councilmember Kualii: My logic is that some of them are bus drivers already.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Then recruitment status says, "Training current van drivers," on all 11 vacant positions, but you do not even have 11 van drivers.

Ms. Mahikoa: That is because our strategy has been...we have been desperate for recruitment, so our strategy is to bring in individuals, get them trained up, and those who are in on-call positions...

Councilmember Kualii: Are you having to hire more on-call van drivers as well?

Ms. Mahikoa: We are utilizing that tool to get them to bus driver level and those who are interested in the full-time position will be moved there, which will free up the van driver position that they are currently in. We have been needing to do that in order to keep our bus driver positions recruitment effective. There are not enough CDLP qualified individuals out there looking for work. We are taking on the training of the individuals to get our bus driver pool bulked up.

Councilmember Kualii: It does not seem likely that these positions being fully funded will be filled, not all of them, so just look at that when you come back to us in May. Looking at potentially partially funding some of the positions. On the next page, after the On-Call Drivers is Regular Overtime. On this line item, you just leaving it as flat and I am wondering if you have all of these vacancies and if you are having to utilize thankfully the team has constantly stepping up and helping you cover all routes and taking on extra assignments. That may mean that you need more money in your overtime budget, because I think as of January, you have already spent \$138,000 of your \$162,000 for this year, so you will probably go over.

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Look at that also, possibly increasing your overtime line just a little bit to be realistic. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember DeCosta.

Councilmember DeCosta: Page 302, you have quite a bit of Heavy Equipment Mechanic, Transit Fleet Mechanic, Mechanic Helper, Heavy Equipment Mechanic I. What type of certification do they need when they move up in-house?

(Councilmember Kualii was noted as not present.)

Councilmember DeCosta: Like that position you just filled, are we giving these mechanics the necessary certification degree and opportunities to grow, are we able to allow them to get that certification?

Ms. Mahikoa: Yes.

Councilmember DeCosta: So, they can get the higher pay, and I want to see our employees not only be able to move up the ladder of opportunity, but do a good job and we must provide them with those training tools. Can you tell me a little more about your in-house promotion and whether these mechanics, what type of certification they need when you bring them on, degrees or what types of opportunities are we giving them right now?

Ms. Mahikoa: I do not believe any degrees are required. They are required to have certain ASC's certifications, as well as the experience transit mechanic work is quite different from many others in some ways. Just about every single one of our mechanics has come in at a lower level and has been raised as they gained experience and expertise. We just have an excellent shop team and the method in which they are carrying out the ongoing training and experience that they have been able to carry out these types of actions where they are being moved up to the next level as opportunities.

Councilmember DeCosta: Do we provide them opportunities to travel if they need to go to another State or go to O'ahu to get certified? Do we give them those opportunities to grow? I noticed they make small money for being a mechanic. If you go to the private sector, I do not know if you can meet that.

(Councilmember Kuali'i was noted as present.)

Councilmember DeCosta: I just want to make sure our county employees have the right tools, so they can make the right pay scale to live a comfortable life. The second one is on page 305. Could you educate me on the Equipment \$17,000—it looks like it will go up, maybe almost doubled to \$32,000, what is that Equipment that you have there under fuels.

Ms. Mahikoa: The \$32,000?

Councilmember DeCosta: Yes, it is almost doubled.

Ms. Mahikoa: I believe a portion of that is serving as matching funds for our equipment that we are going to need related to the base yard expansion, as well as inputting the infrastructure for the electric bus charging.

Councilmember DeCosta: Your next line item on the new charging infrastructure, you have \$20,850, so those are for the new...

Ms. Mahikoa: Those are part of the \$32,000, yes.

Councilmember DeCosta: You are getting ready to hook up the new EV line, so you can charge...

Ms. Mahikoa: This is preparation for, yes, the equipment that will be needed, or at least matching funds.

Councilmember DeCosta: Thank you. I understand.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there any further questions for the Transportation Agency? If not, all done. Thank you. Perfect timing, we will take a caption break.

There being no objections, the Committee recessed at 10:58 a.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 11:15 a.m., and proceeded as follows:

Housing Agency

Council Chair Rapozo: The meeting is called back to order. We are now with the Housing Agency. Adam, thank you for being here. I apologize for the delay. Can you give us an overview? We received your narrative, so if you want to go over the highlights, any challenges, if there are any, we will go from there.

ADAM P. ROVERSI, Housing Director: Will do. Thank you, Council Chair. Adam Roversi, Housing Director for the Kaua'i County Housing Agency. As the Chair suggested, I will restrain myself from going into a long explanation of everything we are up to, because we have a long list. As you can see, we got the same shortage of increases in personnel budget that you see in most of the other departments from collective bargaining agreement increases. The only other change in our personnel numbers is a new position request for a Homeless Coordinator Assistant to work with our current Homeless Coordinator. We are asking for the position, because it will allow our existing Homeless Coordinator to work on many more long-term solutions based projects, as opposed to being an on-call person to respond to community complaints and concerns from other departments. Our intention would be that the assistant would be sort of that day-to-day "boots on the ground" outreach person allowing our existing Homeless Coordinator to focus on more long-term planning, seeking out grant funds, long ranged projects. You will note that we only have 1 vacancy in the Housing Agency. We are currently working with the HR Department to reclassify that position as an Assistant to the Housing Director. It will function in a much of a way that a deputy position would in other departments that was based on the Charter. We have already conducted a few interviews for that prior to the classification being completed, but envision going out for a full public recruitment before July 1st. I do not know whether we will have someone onboard by then, but we should begin the actual recruitment before the budget takes effect.

As I noted in the summary, we qualitatively changed what we do at the Housing Agency, it has become more complexed, but also rewarding and beneficial to the community, rather than our historical tasks of doing one-off projects on—find a lot, do an RFP, seek a developer, and then the next year find another single lot and do it again. With Lima Ola, we have moved into this large scale development mode of operation to provide many more units in the long run we feel with that the County can control that we can keep affordable effectively in perpetuity through the County's ownership of the project. Lima Ola is ongoing as you know, Waimea 400, we are moving into predevelopment and community planning work out there, and the next project following that would be Kīlauea, which we have talked about a couple of times here in previous Council Meetings. Some specific operational items

that you will see are different in the budget, we have asked for a slight increase in our training budget. It is only a \$10,000 line item, but particularly during COVID-19, there was not much training available, seminars were canceled and we think it is important to keep all of our staff up to date on all the federal regulations. You will note that the Development Fund was now statutorily set by the Council's action last year at 2% of Real Property. We have seen a slight increase in the typical development funding over the last years. The biggest item, which I provided some additional information for you folks in the budget follow-up questions is the Administration's request to pay off the Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund loan in full that funded Phase I infrastructure work at Lima Ola. That is essentially \$12,500,000 budget ask. I highlighted in my response memorandum to the follow-up questions, the savings that are generated by the paying off of that debt now that we have essentially the County is currently flushed with cash, taking the opportunity to pay down that loan saves up to \$7,700,000 in interest payments over the 15-year lifespan of that loan, and a \$7,400,000 over the lifespan of that loan and frees up the development funds that would otherwise be required to make those annual payments to do ongoing housing development work...getting more homes for the people of Kaua'i. One thing that does not stand out in the numbers, but I wanted to point it out is that more than 50% of the Housing Agency personnel budget is paid by non-County funds. Our Rental Assistance Division, which makes up a little more than half of our personnel is entirely paid for by the federal government and within our Development Division, that is the other half of our office, I believe about a third of the staff is either partially or fully funded by non-County sources of funds. My point being, the Housing Agency's a bargain as far as County budget costs go and the work that the staff does. That is my wrap-up.

Council Chair Rapozo: Adam, before I open it up for questions, as part of your overview...because you come up quite often for different grants and so forth about projects; Lima Ola and all these different projects. What I have not had since being here and maybe the other Members have is, and now with your Homeless Outreach, I want to get an idea as part of your overview what are we doing about the homeless/houseless situation here? What tangible things are we doing? We got the compound or the community right down here across the Office of the Mayor, we got the one behind by the airport, I mean they are growing. I received quite a few calls, but I do not know what to tell them because I do not know what the County is doing. Can you make that a part of your overview? What have we accomplished in the last year?

Mr. Roversi: A little context is worthwhile before I leap into what we are doing today. Traditionally for the County and for the Housing going back, let us say to 2018, pre-2018 homelessness and work to address homelessness was viewed primarily as the State's problem. The State controlled all of the funding for homeless programs and most of the federal funding that was for homeless programs were all administered by the State and was distributed to nonprofit organizations or State entities like the Adult Mental Health Division or the State Human Services Division. The Housing Agency per se was not deeply involved in addressing homelessness at all, aside from the fact that we were working to build affordable housing, which provides housing units that can serve some housing units that can serve some homeless individuals.

Council Chair Rapozo: Let us be real, the affordable housing projects that we are looking at are not going to service the houseless community or the homeless community that we are seeing.

Mr. Roversi: I understand.

Council Chair Rapozo: That is my focus and the question I want to know is what are we doing to target those who will not get into our affordable projects?

Mr. Roversi: Context aside of how it used to be viewed, we have been shifting to taken on a more active role at the County Housing Agency level with the creation of our homeless program coordinator to work with the nonprofit groups on Kaua'i. The homeless coordinator is also the vice chair of the Kaua'i Community Alliance, which is a (inaudible) of nonprofit groups that receive federal and state funding to address homelessness. We act as a coordinating entity trying to assist in those programs. In a concrete way, what is the Housing Agency itself doing? We do not provide outreach work, we do not do social services, we do not provide medical services, we do not provide mental health services, and we do not provide drug treatment services. What we have attempted to do starting with our Kealahou on Pua Loke project is design and provide physical housing units under what is nationally known as a housing first model, to provide a very low barrier to entry for people who are homeless. Rents are dirt cheap, at a price point, so that people who almost can afford and/or we are providing assistance to help with the rent to let them get stable. What makes that project specifically designed for homeless individuals is that hand-in-hand with you tendency at that project is the receipt of social services specifically designed for your specific needs. At the Kealahou project, we work with Women In Need as our nonprofit management company and essentially an onsite case worker. When a tenant moves into Kealahou, they must be certified as a homeless individual by one of our nonprofit partners to become a tenant. They receive one-on-one case worker interaction, design a plan specifically for them to help them eventually get back on their feet and move from Kealahou, our supportive housing project to permanent housing elsewhere, and what they receive is dependent upon what their needs are. They are connected with all federal and state programs that they might qualify for, they are signed up for health insurance, if they do not already have health insurance connected with health providers, they are provided with financial counseling, they are provided with...

Council Chair Rapozo: Adam, that is all provided by our contractor Women In Need, correct?

Mr. Roversi: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: Not the County?

Mr. Roversi: We fund it, we pay for it.

Council Chair Rapozo: I understand we fund it, but once Women In Need—they take all of that.

Mr. Roversi: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: The County does not participate.

Mr. Roversi: Correct, other than overseeing and funding it, making sure it runs properly...

Council Chair Rapozo: Right.

Mr. Roversi: ...that is now our nonprofit partner's job.

Council Chair Rapozo: Right, okay.

Mr. Roversi: We are currently building a second supportive housing project at Lima Ola, we have already broken ground on that, which would be an additional 24 units, matching what we are doing at Kealahou. We are working with the State to acquire a portion of the Department of Forestry and Wildlife property next to existing Kealahou project, which we hope to be able to...if we make that happen, that will allow us to expand that existing Kealahou project by another 20 or so units. We are currently working with Representative Nakamura to identify another site in the Kapa'a area near Samuel Mahelona Memorial Hospital on State land to do yet a third supportive housing project. If we do all of those, we will have the capacity to house 300+ currently homeless individuals. There is money in the budget for the redesign/reconceptualization of our only emergency shelter on Kaua'i at the Kaua'i Economic Opportunity (KEO), so they are currently operating a 19-bed capacity. We would like to at least triple that, the capacity at that site by redesigning the facilities and through those supportive housing projects that I mentioned and the KEO project, we will get close to a number of physical housing units and work with our nonprofit partners to provide all those ancillary services to the people in those projects that could come close to addressing just the number of homeless individuals that are counted in the annual point in time count each year.

Council Chair Rapozo: What is the requirement to get into one of these, Kealahou or Mahelona...Mahelona is going to be affordable, and again, all of those are still an envisioned place that we had, it is probably 10 years out, Representative Nakamura told us. I am trying to figure out what we are doing now to get those houseless people into some sort of shelter. What does it take to get into Kealahou?

Mr. Roversi: You must be certified homeless...

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay.

Mr. Roversi: ...by some nonprofit organization that you have worked with and you have to pass a very basic criminal background check, that is it.

Council Chair Rapozo: Do you need a job?

Mr. Roversi: No. You need nothing. That is why we call it a low barrier to entry. You do not have to be certified, clean and sober, you can move in right now and you can work on your problems once you have moved in with the help of our partners.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay.

Mr. Roversi: The only criminal offense is that exclude occupancy are serious violent felonies, sex offender registration, any criminal record is not going to bar you from entry, so it has to be fairly severe offenses.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay.

Mr. Roversi: We are working to increase the number of those units available. That is our primary strategy to address homelessness.

Council Chair Rapozo: Is Lima Ola is going to be the same requirements?

Mr. Roversi: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: And at some point Mahelona?

Mr. Roversi: Yes, and hopefully the expansion of the existing Kealaula site.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I noticed that a big portion of the people who have gone into Kealaula are children. Seems to be that we prioritize the young. Where do you envision when the governor is saying to do these safe zones, how the Housing Agency might be able to...or does the Housing Agency not have anything to do with the safe zones, it is essentially a decent parking lot type of environment where people will not be continuously moved? That is something that both the Office of the Mayor and the Governor's Office said that we are going to be moving into with this emergency proclamation for safe zone, do you feel that is anywhere under the Housing Agency's umbrella? I really think Kealaula is great, but it is only 29 units, so how do we find a good place for people to be not criminalized without a shelter over their head?

Mr. Roversi: Given the County's experience with establishing safe camping zones during COVID-19 in 5 designated beach parks, the Housing Agency's position, the Administration's position is that we would be happy to work with any nonprofit or private organization that wanted to establish something like that, but we do not want to take ownership of such a facility on County property. We do not have the capacity to manage it, we do not have the capacity to operate it, and provide what we think are the necessary services that have to go hand-in-hand with something like that. We are open to cooperating with any outside groups that want to pursue that, we have had a few conversations here and there with groups who have indicated an interest, but the Housing Agency does not intend to establish a County run and operated safe zone on County property at this point.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember DeCosta.

Councilmember DeCosta: I have a couple key questions that can actually help you. That Plantation Camp Subdivision Ordinance that Ka'aina Hull worked on with Kaumakani, that can be conversed to other landowners who are willing to work with the County? We have Waimea 400 coming up. I am going to give you a person's name who owns quite a bit of acres out there, I believe the amount of acres can put 80 units up, if you do the plantation-style zoning, maybe a few more than 80, because I think it is only 3,000 square foot lots. Richard Faye who brought the land from his LLC, from his parents, the Waimea 400. Have we talked to them? I know we are only in the developmental phases, but are we in contact with those people, so they can do teacher housing for the westside and medical facility housing on the westside? Please investigate that. I will give you the contact number, I talked to Ka'aina about if that could transfer over and he said possibly 50 acres or more

that they could qualify for that. That would be one way of solving some housing problems. Not for the houseless or for the low-income, but just for our service-oriented workers on Kaua'i, which is another group of middleclass to upper class that we never service. You do not have to respond now—food for thought.

The next thing I wanted to ask you about is, the Homeless Coordinator we have now, you want to free that person to do different responsibilities and then bring another person in to solve the emergency calls. Tell me, what is the plan of action with this new position? What would they accomplish that the other person did or did not accomplish? I want to see the benefit value of that funding we are going to put towards that position. Every department wants a new position, some, 2 positions—they need it, but I want to make sure you have a plan in place, if we are going to consider this position, what can it do to improve the homeless and houseless situation right now?

Mr. Roversi: Okay. Currently, we have a single homeless coordinator who encourages homeless activities for the County. I would say...

Councilmember DeCosta: Tell me what that person does.

Mr. Roversi: Maybe 50% of her time is currently occupied with responding to complaints from the community, calls from other county departments, other state departments or from businesses about a specific encampment, about a specific person. An example, we get a call, there is a lady at the bus stop at "x" location, can you look into that? That will take up half of my homeless coordinator's day. Tracking down who is this woman, which nonprofit groups is she working with, contacting her caseworker, and putting her in touch with adult mental health services or something. With so much of her time occupied by addressing those day-to-day calls, she cannot do the bigger picture things like planning for getting additional funding, working with the state for grant moneys, we are the only County...to Council Chair Rapozo's point, what is our plan to address homelessness, we are the only county that does not have a detailed written plan of how to, in a methodical way deal with homelessness over the long-term. Those are the sorts of things that our current homeless coordinator could address and spend more time on, those long-term solutions, if we had an assistant to deal with those day-to-day triage sorts of calls.

Councilmember DeCosta: I was trying to follow you, so you have this all laid out in your explanation, but what was that homeless person doing so wrong at a bus stop that we had to have our person from our County pay scale go and deal with. At that point, if anything illegal happened, we could have called the police. If it was not illegal, how do we remove them from that bus stop if they do not want to be removed. Maybe they are just hanging there to catch the next bus. I did not understand what that person was doing with a homeless person at the bus stop.

Mr. Roversi: I brought that up as a hypothetical, made up example. Every individual is different.

Councilmember DeCosta: Because you have an encampment in Līhu'e right here, did we go down and visit that encampment and take you worker that you have on your staff and figure out what they need. Some of them do not want to move from that encampment, that is the sad part. They like to live like that. Tell me a little bit about how you service these large encampments? Have you been there? Do we know how much people

are homeless? You said that you are going to solve 300 homeless people with transitional housing, but if every day we got 3 or 4 new homeless people coming in from the mainland, in that time we are solving 300 homeless, we might have 600 new homeless. How do we fix that, how do we manage those numbers?

Mr. Roversi: The number of homeless individuals on Kaua'i based on the annual point in time count has been relatively steady over the last 4 years. It is not going up by hundreds every year. Admitting that the annual point in time count, no one believes the counts every single homeless on Kaua'i. We understand that it does not do that, but it is an estimation of increases or changes.

Council Chair Rapozo: What was the last count?

Councilmember DeCosta: What is that number?

Councilmember Cowden: 440.

Council Chair Rapozo: How many? 440?

Mr. Roversi: 444.

Council Chair Rapozo: I think we can all agree that there are more than 444 homeless people on the island.

Mr. Roversi: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: If you drive behind the airport, if you go down to this compound right—that are just two that are the obvious ones, but there are so many more. The hidden homeless or hidden houseless are not counted. Councilmember DeCosta's point is...and I do not understand why people are calling the Housing Agency when they have an issue. I look at the Homeless Coordinator as finding ways to resolve the issue, communicating with the state, working on getting funding, looking at possible landowners who are willing to participate. I do not except that person to be driving to...as I understand the position, that is not that function. We are not doing the social services, no—we are trying to end homeless houselessness. You do not have to answer today, but I would like to see what this position does and why we need another one. A good start would be getting an accurate count of our homeless. For me anyway, that would be a good start.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a follow-up.

Councilmember DeCosta: I am not done yet.

Councilmember Cowden: Can I make a follow-up comment?

Council Chair Rapozo: A comment or a question?

Councilmember Cowden: I can frame it into a question.

Council Chair Rapozo: No, I interrupted Councilmember DeCosta. Go ahead and finish, Councilmember DeCosta, and then you can go. I interrupted you.

Councilmember DeCosta: You mentioned something key. The County does not want to take responsibility. I have spoken to our Managing Director and he has a compassionate heart. I had this conversation with a few other important people in our County and I know you have a compassionate heart, but the County does not want to take responsibility for creating an area where we can put these homeless/houseless people. Do you think a private landowner wants to take on that responsibility in a partnership with us? No way. The County does not to. How much outreach have we done with other counties that are successfully, or not successfully, handling homelessness? I recently went to the mainland, checking my son into college, I saw what the County of Chico does. They took one county park...this is just some food for thought, because no one has the answer. The County of Chico took one park where they have electric and running water for showers and a few bathrooms and they put it to the homeless people, so now they went out and took all the homeless people from wherever they were and relocated them to this park. The service, the mental health go there with a bus, pick them up if they need it, there is a controlled area, yes, there may have a little bit more crime going on in that one area, because you have more people in that one area, but now you got more control. Your police department, your fire department has one area that they go to and when you folks clean out one homeless camp, they do not just relocate to another place, they have a place that they can go to, and it is a county place. Maybe it is time we take on the responsibility and do something like that. Do we have some County or state land that we can create a houseless/homelessness camp that we can start to put these people in, because I know for a fact...let me finish, when I take my wife for dinner down in Līhu'e Town and we need to walk past a homeless person sleeping in the street, that person should not be sleeping on the street and we should not be going out on a nice evening having to stumble across a homeless person. How difficult would it be for us to get a piece of land, county or state, and create a nice little off the grid homeless camp?

Mr. Dahilig: To answer that question, this was tried a few years ago, and the area where the current skatepark is was tried as a safe zone for...

Council Chair Rapozo: Mike, are you talking about this...

Mr. Dahilig: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: You are talking about the cage?

Mr. Dahilig: The cage.

Council Chair Rapozo: That is not what he is talking about.

Mr. Dahilig: But I did want to explain that when we are looking at providing a safe zone, the amount of work that is required to managed that is why we have...that was a very small scale versus...

Council Chair Rapozo: That was not anything like a safe zone. That was a chain link fence enclosure that you...that is not what he was talking about. So, we did not try, what he is suggesting?

Mr. Dahilig: Well...

We set up a cage.

Mr. Dahilig:

I understand, Council Chair. That was our

County's experience with that, and if I could finish. We also had the ability to look at what Hawai'i County did with than Mayor Kim looking at trying to put together their safe zone. Those two (2) experiences in comparing notes as Adam is suggesting, providing a county space where we are providing that type of service is very labor and cost intensive. It is something that we can policy-wise take a look at again, but the liability on it and why we start running into the issues that Hawai'i County faced when they actively built something becomes that concern of how deep we are going to start owning some of those issues, as Adam mentioning should either be...but in a supportive way from the County standpoint or looked at from a standpoint of where does Department of Homeland Security (DHS) come in. We do have a current facility that is for homeless sheltering. We recently upgraded a sewer line to be able to expand the number of beds in our current County facility for that overnight sheltering, but in terms of providing that level of camping with services in that safe zone context is very difficult for us to say if we can support that.

Have you talked to the City & County of

In terms of what they have been doing?

Of how they have handled it, because they have

In terms of taking the parks and putting a

The temporary little mini homes.

Mr. Dahilig:

But that was done with a large amount of federal

funds, I believe during the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) moneys, so that is something that could be done, but it is again, cost and labor intensive. I believe there were the Honolulu police department officers that were on a rotating basis, there to provide security for that facility. It is not impossible. Chair, I do not want to suggest that it is not.

Council Chair Rapozo:

I guess my question is then, does the

Administration believe that what we have now is acceptable? We can find reasons why we cannot do it, but the reason for the question is, is what we have acceptable?

Mr. Dahilig:

I think what we are trying to do is meet where we

can. Whether meeting all the expectations, as Adam mentioned, that is a shared responsibility between us, the State, nonprofit agencies, so what we are providing to the pot in terms of that fabric or safety net, that is why we are saying maybe we need to look at the triage area as a way to provide more opportunity, but whether in terms of if we are doing enough, I readily can see that we can do more.

Council Chair Rapozo:

I do not believe we are doing anything, that is my

concern and you are asking for a new position. I would love, before we get to Decision-Making,

Adam, to see exactly what this position does and why we need another position. This budget year is the year that we can do things. I have seen almost every department come here with new positions, more this and that. There is a lot of money this year. Funding honestly is not the issue. It is a priority issue. Do we or do we not want to do something or are we okay with the status quo? That really is the question.

Councilmember DeCosta: I want to finish.

Council Chair Rapozo: I am sorry, I interrupted you again.

Councilmember DeCosta: You interruption was good and we can interrupt each other, that is fine. I am okay with it. The bottom line is, Mike, you know my passion is not about putting them in a controlled environment. I want to see them flourish. I am a "hillbilly," you put me in the mountains, I have a cabin off the grid, solar light, rain catchment water, and I can make it work. Can you imagine if we gave these homeless people who want to be dignified a little place with a tiny home off the grid, where they can have their services, they can have their own little garden? We do not need to put a whole bunch of infrastructure. It is like a Disneyland of camping in a tiny home with an outside garden that they can feel dignified. I am not talking about throwing them in a caged area. You folks are going to build another Kealaula, but how much more homeless will move into there? We have more numbers than we can help. If you go along the beach, you see a whole bunch of homeless people behind the airport. They built their own house out of pallets. These people who are not homeless, are trying to live someplace. I am looking at trying to find a spot for these people that want to live somewhat dignified, off the grid, can we make it happen with a piece of land somewhere?

Mr. Dahilig: Again, that was the safe zone question and I think if we are going to go down that path, it does take a big policy shift for us to go down that realm of are we going to make large investments in that area. It is not impossible, but it is something as Adam mentioned, there are other agencies besides the County that have been trying to take pieces of this issue. If you look across the State, we have been having many agencies try to figure out if it is a supply issue with respect to affordable housing, is it a drug epidemic issue, is it something relating to sheltering, so not one size fits all. I can tell you with confidence that we have been touching on all those three areas I mentioned with some degree of participation. Now, whether we take the leadership element of it, it will take a large investment to do so. That is what I want to...as Adam has couched the discussion point, it really is a policy shift by the County to actively take that role there, which we can, but it will take the resources to do so.

DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, Mayor: Before our Administration was misread by the public as not doing enough, I can completely say I do not think society in general has been doing enough. If you take historically, previously we used to have state hospitals that would house people that had mental health issues. Those institutions were shut down during the civil rights movement. When state hospitals were underfunded, under resourced, and you had media like Geraldo Rivera going in and doing exposes, the government thought it was cheaper to shut them down rather than to resource them appropriately. What ended up happening is, a lot of people with mental health issues end up in the streets. They do not belong in our prisons because they are not criminals, but there is literally no place for them to go. Many families will not even take in family members in. For years we have been trying to get the legislature to allow psychologist to have limited prescriptive authority for rural

communities like Kaua'i, so that our psychologists under the guidance of psychiatrists, can prescribe medicine that can help stabilize individuals. Those efforts have been shut down year after year, because of jurisdictional wars. If you listen to the testimony, it can be quite offensive for the people who live on Kaua'i. You have psychiatrists that will say if a psychologist wants to prescribe drugs, they should go to school, just like what we had to do. This is what the U.S. Military does. They allow psychologists under the guidance of psychiatrists to be able to prescribe medicine. You folks can tell me how many psychiatrists we have here on Kaua'i that can handle the mental health side of it. It is few and far between. When you look at the root of the problem for many of our individuals, there is some degree of untreated, mental health issues. We are taking a look at those families that are just living paycheck to paycheck, may have missed a payment that can work, that are working, those "ALICE" families, and that is really what Kealahou is all about. I am not sure if Adam has talked about adding capacity to our emergency shelter.

Council Chair Rapozo:

He did.

Mayor Kawakami: But that entire area, if you look at it, was designed to be holistic. We have our emergency shelter that we added capacity, we have Kealahou, which yes, the units maybe smaller than what we would want, but it is the very first one we did. The pilot. To show the communities that these are not homeless encampments that they are envisioning. These are families that we know that we probably know their kids, and most of them are going to graduate out of Kealahou and move onto the workforce housing right across the street, that used to be just a vacant parking lot. We are trying to do as much as we can. I would say some of the ideas that we heard sound good in concept, we look at other places like Hawai'i County that tried to do a safe zone. They ended up spending so much money on security that pilot failed to take off, so we are not rushing to repeat mistakes that other people in other places have made. It is such a more complicated issue than just building homes or creating an area. If you look, many of the encampments have already created an area, but you have issues like security, waste disposal, sanitary conditions that they are living in, and that is why we are hesitant to designate a park. If you hear the communities surrounding these parks of the complaints, if you folks can think of a good park to start off with, we will look at it, but it is a double edge sword when we are trying to balance the needs of our community as a whole. Our homeless population is a part of our community, it must be one of the most complex challenges that our Administration has faced. If you can see the amount of people flying in during COVID-19, when we had national guard at the airports to verify addresses or whether people had a place to stay, it became apparent that there were a lot of people trying to fly into Kaua'i that really did not have a designated place to stay. I think the numbers were resounding when we looked at the data. So, we are trying. State Representative Nakamura has indicated that she would like to see a Kealahou on the east Kaua'i, but that is a work in progress, she is going to have to do her community outreach and we are planning another one for Lima Ola. I think this one right here for Pua Loke, if anyone is hesitant about a Kealahou, they should go and take a look at it. It is a thriving neighborhood. It is the most heartwarming thing to see kids thrive, play, and then eventually move out. It is a big challenge. I am here to advocate for a support position. If you folks are wondering what it is that Ashton does, she does a tremendous amount work as far as bridging between service providers and the houseless community themselves, and I think as Adam has said, she does have a long-term vision, she does want to start working on a blueprint for this Administration and future Administrations, but the amount of calls that she has to field and respond to really prevent us from moving forward with a good detailed master plan.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you, Mayor. I just thought that position was for something else. I thought that homeless coordinator was to go coordinate facilities, and not be a social worker, helping our nonprofits who are providing those services. That was my misunderstanding.

Mayor Kawakami: No, Chair, that is not a misunderstanding. Really, when we hired Ashton, we were so new to this. We were a blank slate. We had a rough thought of what we wanted her to do, but she really just picked up the ball and ran with it before we could even come up with a real detailed job description, she was already doing the job. I have been nothing but impressed by the work, mostly just the heart that she has for that community, it really helps us out.

Council Chair Rapozo: This is not about Ashton. It is not about the person, because I actually was in several meetings...

Mayor Kawakami: Is she here?

Councilmember Cowden: Right behind you.

Council Chair Rapozo: She is here. I have been in Zoom meetings with her, homeless meetings, so it has absolutely nothing to do with the person, it is about the position and I just need to understand what that position is for and the necessity to have an additional position.

Mayor Kawakami: Yes, and we were hoping that we can collectively have more support. For years, the faith-based community has been wanting to step forward and said, "Hey, our areas are pretty much not utilized except for Sundays when we have our services," I think they are looking for some sort of indemnification, so that them being good Samaritans, they would be immune from liability and we would be more than willing to look at it. I think it rises to the level of the Attorney General's (AG's) or some piece of legislation that our legislature may need to pass, if it has not been passed already, but several faith-based organizations have said, "We want to do our part," but I think the fear of being sued is really what is the roadblock.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I fully support this position or request. I appreciate the job that Ashton does. I feel like I am a part-time person who does what she is asking for. I do this regularly and I have to say I enjoy the job. If I did not have this job, I would ask for that job, because these people are human beings, they do not lay on the side of the sidewalk to disrupt someone else's dinner evening. We have quality human beings...this could happen to anyone. People need to have someone to show up and care for—it makes all the difference in the world for them. I appreciate the hard piece that we are facing and this is a national choice, an economic choice that happened in 2008, that pushed us so far, but I think when we look at the nonprofits, I see them out there too. We are all trying. It is a big problem. I just want to make the correction that it is not the majority people from somewhere else. The majority of the people are from here and they are generationally from here and a painful amount at part Hawaiian. I care about everyone who is hurting. I say 75% of them are long-term people in our community that have had death, disease, divorce, certainly the mental illness situation. I have all the confidence that Ashton would be able to do a better

job and a stronger job if she had the support, that to me only makes sense. Honestly, I would appreciate it because Mike, you know, I am out there. I am right there and in that whole time we had those parks, I was out there every week, at least 2 parks a week checking on how they were going, paying attention. I never took my eye off it. Thank you, Mayor, for allowing those parks during our COVID-19 time.

Mayor Kawakami: I would love to take the credit, but that was a team effort with Pat Porter and the Department of Parks & Recreation really made that happen. The rise to work program during COVID-19 where we took gig workers and people who could not get on unemployment and we partnered them with nonprofits and put those folks to work, that was actually born way before COVID-19 where we were trying to figure out a way to work through some of our nonprofit partners, identify folks like ALICE families, Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed and living barely paycheck to paycheck and getting some of these folks to potentially partner up with the Department of Parks & Recreation to do some beautification projects. Of course, we would have to work through the unions to get concurrence, because we do not want to run afoul of violating collecting bargaining agreements, but really, when we created that rise to work, it just happened that COVID-19 came about, but really it was going to be a way to offer a helping hand to some of our homeless community members that could go to work and there is other places that have done those types of programs, have gotten their state hospitals to get nurses to come and eat lunch, do blood pressure, and wellness checks, womb care, but also to get employers out there to identify people that, "this person can really work," and it would be sort of like an open job fair, sort of like tryouts like the National Football League (NFL) combine, to get employers restaurants that are struggling to come and take a look at our skilled people that just because of the high cost of living are down and out, and put them to work and give them the benefits they need. We are going to revisit those efforts; we are going to open the communication lines with our union partners to see what we would be able to and not be able to do.

Council Chair Rapozo:

Thank you. Councilmember Kagawa.

Councilmember Kagawa: I just want to thank the Mayor. I think Kaua'i, overall, if you compared it with the rest of the state and the nation, I think we are probably up there on the top. The types of things that the Mayor goes through with Salt Pond, with trying to move them, cleaning up the camp, and they give the workers a hard time when he was in, they were planting taro along the telephone post, which is the barrier from the cars going on to the park. There must be some rules. If you allow the homeless to be there, then work together, but a lot of them in many cases are not reasonable. They do not listen—not all of them. I say some of them listen, they play by the rules, but a lot of them do not. That is the problem. The problem with trying to establish zones that we are going to manage is the security, because they do not abide by basic rules. You tell them "No drugs," they do drugs. It must be for kids, you do not want to do drugs, but they still want to do drugs. It is not easy, and it will never be busy until we get them the help they need to stop the alcohol or whatever they take to respect the children and their safety, because a lot of people come with children. My suggestion is, for now we have these camps that are going, let us support them right where they are. I know at some point maybe the private landowner is not going to want them there, but for right now, I think what Ashton is doing is good, trying to provide them with basic needs. Some of them said it is about having their things locked up safely while they go to work. They do not want to go to work, because they do not want to leave their things, and someone who does not listen will take their precious belongings. You have all those types of things that Ashton tries to bring up and tries to help, it is a functioning

community there. They like being there for now. Is there a better place? Sure, but again, it is hard when you have a lot of people who do not want to listen. It is not an easy job. You folks know. And there are a lot of people who are not from here. The lady with the pink hair walking around, she is not from here. The man walking around with the sweater shirt and jeans across the street is not from here. A lot of them are not from here. Lots. Open your eyes. A lot are flying here, and I do not blame them, Kaua'i is a beautiful place to be. They can get a cheap ticket from their government, a lot of them will come here.

Council Chair Rapozo: Let me just make one comment because I think everyone assumes that what is happening here is a happy town, but I can tell you when I worked at the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, the reports come across my desk: sex assault, robbery, death, and family abuse, happening right there. It is not a well-functioning community. The reason no one knows about it is because no one knows about it. So, in some sense, yes, just keep them there and keep them out of everywhere else, that is one strategy. I would agree with Councilmember Kagawa, that if we are going to make an effort, if the nonprofits are going to make an effort to get into these communities and the landowners are okay with it, absolutely. You cannot tell me you never passed that place one time in your life and never seen police cars parked there...if you live on this side of the island. If you live on this side of the island, you have seen it. There are issues. God forbid the issues that are happening behind the airport and over there has lots of kids. Getting back to what I envision this position is, is to identify possible solutions. That is what I was under the impression it was and that is why I was asking what tangible things do we have. What options do we have? In the very short period of time, the mayor blurted out a few, but that is what I was kind of looking at. Not "blurted," was the right response, because you were very eloquent.

Mayor Kawakami: I was not, I was huffing and puffing, but...just for the public knowledge, not that close from my office here, so it is not that I was overly passionate or upset, I was just out of breath. Chair and Members of the Council and to the public, I would have to say that if people were to ask me what is one of the toughest decisions I have ever had to make as mayor, one of the toughest ones is when the community build up of frustration gets to a level where we have to displace people from our parks, because those are places for our families. I think every mayor has had to do it. The toughest decision that he or she is going to have to make is going to be displacing families, but it is one of those things that is part of the job. That would be one that I would say rises to the top level. We collectively have a way to address the issue. We are willing to work towards it, because every time I have to make that call, those are the types of decisions that keep me up at night and not much will keep me up at night, but thank you, Chair.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you for coming by. Councilmember Carvalho.

Councilmember Carvalho: This is a very important conversation and having been involved in it in different levels, but this camp here at the airport, Adam, to me there are 4 areas; the houseless community, and we have talked about this before, is what is happening at Kealahou, the mom with 2 to 3 kids and barely making it. All they need is a place to stay for a month before they can qualify, so that is the houseless. The (inaudible) is the community that is experiencing mental health issues, like the mayor was saying. To me, this camp right here, if I call it a camp, is the location we should all be looking at right now. It has a different type of set up. Maybe we can consider that a place where we can assemble a team that can do a site visit there and do an oversight assessment and see what mental

health issues are happening and use that location. It is centrally located. We talked about this before. Let us see how we can do an assessment on that type of layout that is already there. The homebound is the ones...someone mentioned "the lady with the purple hair," and what we did was some type of opportunity to relocate them back home to Oklahoma or where they came from, but in order to qualify, you have to reconnect with a family member, doctor, or church, and then you would qualify for a grant that would pay for your way back to where you came from. We did that too. Example. The homeless is just a homeless who decided to be homeless, you going have to deal with that anyway. The big part, like what the mayor mentioned about the mental health part, how we can assemble a team that can actually visit the site, on-site assessment or something like that, that is part of the community in this setting. We talked about this before and I think we have good projects happening already, but we are missing that mental part of it that was brought up by the mayor. I think that is where we need to do an on-site assessment or some type of process.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you. Are there further questions for the Housing Agency on any part?

Councilmember Kualii: On the budget master page 251, the line item is Other Services, what is the line, the subcategory that is described as Wastewater Conversion Program \$78,851? How is that money being spent to convert what properties?

Mr. Roversi: That was a program that Council created; I think there was a bill that former Councilmember Evslyn sponsored with former Councilmember Chock to work with the State Department of Health to establish a cesspool conversion program. It has not started yet, so none of those funds have been utilized. We are still working with the state to try to go through the details of how we will receive state funding. The ball is now in the Department of Health's court. We sent them back our comments on a funding agreement and we are awaiting details. The number in here was intended to cover the administrative cost and the potential personnel who would operate that program, but none of it has been utilized in the current fiscal year and we do not have a clear path forward until we get word from the Department of Health about how we will ramp it up in the future.

Council Chair Rapozo: Can I follow-up quickly?

Councilmember Kualii: This amount is just the administrative personnel, the funding would actually be a state pot of money that we would manage to lead the program?

Mr. Roversi: It is federal money passed to the state that will then be passed to the county.

Council Chair Rapozo: How much will the pot be?

Mr. Roversi: It is estimated at \$2,000,000.

Council Chair Rapozo: \$2,000,000, and that would be for the residents to convert from cesspool to septic?

Mr. Roversi: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: When do we expect...I have been getting calls and the only thing I know is that the money was in the Housing Agency, but it is the Department of Health right now?

Mr. Roversi: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: ...they are holding it up?

Mr. Roversi: The Department of Health receives an annual allocation of Clean Water Act funds from the federal government and they were open to providing that money as a passthrough to the county, if we can work through the details of how we will receive the money, how we have to account for it, how the program will have to operate. We are trying to get through those details with the Department of Health.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay, so you said the ball is in their court right now.

Mr. Roversi: Correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: Is there something we can do to help them move the ball back this way? A letter or a resolution. It has been a while and a lot of people have been asking about it. When did we submit our information to the Department of Health?

Mr. Roversi: 3 months ago.

Council Chair Rapozo: 3 months.

Mr. Roversi: The last update I had was that the Attorney General's Office was reviewing the paperwork.

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay. We will send something over to the Department of Health to find out what the hold up is. We want to be able to get those moneys out and get some of these conversions done.

Councilmember Kualii: Is the \$2,000,000 all for Kaua'i?

Mr. Roversi: \$2,000,000 is the entire pool of federal funds that the state has for the entire state. Kaua'i was selected as a pilot program to be the initial recipient. If no other counties step up and want to do a similar program, our understanding is that Kaua'i would be the recipient of the total pool funds. If other counties in the future wanted to operate similar programs, the funding would then start to get divided up and shared amongst participating counties.

Councilmember Kualii: Is the \$2,000,000 an annual thing?

Mr. Roversi: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there any other questions for the Housing Agency? Do you have a question?

Councilmember Cowden: I feel like we have met so much and we are going to meeting again. The big points of interests to me are things like this bonds that we are going to be having coming up, but that is going to come up in a separate Council Meeting.

Council Chair Rapozo: Right, yes.

Councilmember Cowden: I see that the biggest piece of this expense is the repayment of the Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund (DURF). I do not have big questions because I interact with them so much, I see that Ashton came forward, I did not know if you wanted to say something.

ASHTON VARNER, Homeless Coordinator: I am Ashton Varner, I am the County's Homeless Coordinator and my office is out of the Housing Agency. Chair, I wanted to answer your question for you and everyone to provide context about what my position does. I have been in the position for a little over 2 ½ years and most currently I coordinate the emergency housing voucher (EHV) and tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) voucher program with nonprofits, manage grants for Kealaula Supportive Housing Projects I and II, and that is with grants, contracts we have with the state and a nonprofit. I am the liaison between the County, other government agencies on the local, state, and federal level, and to do that well, I attend a variety of monthly, bimonthly, and quarterly meetings. I also respond to phone calls, emails, and immediate needs of County departments regarding the homeless. I would say probably the way that my job affects the homeless most directly is by connecting nonprofits to avoid having them work in silos so they can be more effective, so they provide the social service, specific functions. If I was to receive an assistant position, I would focus on long-term plans, funding research and program proposals, and continue to manage contracts and grants and then also focus on an action plan. The assistant would focus more on the day-to-day, receive those phone calls and emails, respond to County departments in need of in the moment assistance, represent the Housing Agency when I am absent, create and update presentations that we use for a variety of things. So, that is the vision. Additionally, my vision...we can call it an assistant position, but my vision would be for that to be a teammate. I am a department of one, so I can only get so much done.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you.

Ms. Varner: So, it would make the entire program more effected and more efficient.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you very much.

Ms. Varner: And the department would not be empty upon the coordinator's resignation.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you. Go ahead.

Councilmember Kualii: On page 350, the Special Projects line item, just the Buyback row, the Buyback row has \$750,000, how has that been working? Could you actually be buying back more homes if you had more money or is that enough money?

Mr. Roversi: That specific program, the Buyback program is only called upon when someone who is living in a deed restricted or a leasehold home wants

to sell the home, and then we utilize those funds to purchase them back from the individuals who bought it from the Housing Agency, and then resell it at an affordable price to someone else. Those funds are not funds that we are using to go out to the open market and purchase homes. It is simply to buyback homes that are already within the Housing Agency's programs and then resell.

Councilmember Kualii: Have you ever not been able to purchase something back because there was no money in that line item?

Mr. Roversi: Not that I am aware of, no.

Councilmember Kualii: On page 371, Other Services, \$150,000 increase and it looks like the increase is...there is Kilauea Sewer Feasibility Study, so is that for the entire town?

Mr. Roversi: The purpose for that study is primarily to study the wastewater solutions for the property that the County is working to acquire and beyond to that, to identify whether it is economically feasible to extend the service of a future sewer wastewater treatment plant to portions, at least, to the existing town. The oldest parts of Kilauea Town that is most dependent on cesspools are closest to the County's acquisition area where we are going to be building affordable housing. It would make the most sense, we assume before the study is done, to be able to extend some sort of wastewater solution to serve those older homes, so they can retire the cesspools that they are going to be forced to do by 2050. It may not be economically feasible to go to the newer parts of town that are less in need of the wastewater treatment system.

Councilmember Kualii: Just below that, Special Projects, \$1,400,000 increase, additional rental unit subsidy, what is happening with that? How is that money being spent.

Mr. Roversi: That is, again, a Council passed initiative from I believe 2 years ago, the Affordable Additional Rental Program. The way that program, which is still ongoing operates, if someone pledges to construct an affordable rental unit and rent it as specified low rental rates for 5 years, we provide an array of subsidies: waiver of their permitting fee, we pay their facilities, reserve charge to the Water Department. This fund was specifically set up to pay the Water Department fees for additional rental units (ARUs).

Councilmember Kualii: When was it set up?

Mr. Roversi: I believe 2 years ago.

Councilmember Kualii: How is it being utilized? Do we need more people to participate?

Mr. Roversi: We currently have 18 participants in that program, so we are not utilizing the full amount of funds that are available.

Councilmember Kualii: How are we making folks aware of it?

Mr. Roversi: We have done several PR pushes, press releases, article in the paper. Admittedly, we are probably due for another because it has been a little while to just make people aware that this program exists. For better or worse, one of the impediments broader take up of this program is simply the dramatic increase of construction costs that have taken place for everyone in the last several years. It is difficult for many homeowners to justify constructing the affordable ARU with the understanding that the rents they are going to receive are not going to pay for the cost of building it.

Councilmember Kualii: Is this program available to all properties on the island?

Mr. Roversi: Any property that would qualify for an ARU. For example, you cannot build an ARU west of the Hanalei River. It is inapplicable out there, but otherwise your first step is to work with the Planning Department to see if the land you own would qualify for an ARU. If it qualifies, then you are qualified to participate in an affordable program if you want to.

Councilmember Kualii: That includes Hawaiian Home Lands?

Mr. Roversi: I believe so, yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Except that right now DHHL does not allow ARUs. We have to work on that. My last question on the same page is, the DRF loan \$12,500,000. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Mr. Roversi: That is the Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund loan that the County took out...I want to say in 2008 to fund Phase I infrastructure development at the Lima Ola affordable housing project. The project funded by that loan was completed last year and the loan was effectively closed, so we began year one of repayments. It is a 15-year loan, interest only is due, but there is no repayment penalty, principal payments can be made, and there is a potential 5-year extension to the 15 years that the County could ask for if we wanted it. I noted earlier that by paying down this loan, we save \$7,400,000 in interest over the 15-year life of the loan.

Councilmember Kualii: This is the line item to pay down the loan.

Mr. Roversi: Correct, it will pay off the loan in its entirety, so we will no longer owe the State any money.

Councilmember Kualii: Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there further questions for the Housing Agency? If not, thank you. Elderly Affairs.

Agency on Elderly Affairs

LUDVINA K. TAKAHASHI, Executive on Aging: Aloha, Chair and Councilmembers. Kealoha Takahashi, Executive on Aging with the Agency on Elderly Affairs, and with me is Donna Loo, my assistant, and Teresa Nero, the accountant. Basically,

our ask is \$143,129. Part of the is the increase in grant employee benefits in the amount of \$50,075. As I have written in the synopsis, operational challenges that we faced, especially with our healthy aging, with our enhanced fitness instructors, from 4, we are down to 2. We are hoping to really quickly do in-person, right now we are doing virtual classes, but we need to move on and have us conduct in-person classes. On a good note, we have hired our vacancy and the person starts this month on the 16th, reporting on the 17th.

Council Chair Rapozo: That is good news.

Ms. Takahashi: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: Especially for Councilmember Kualii.

Ms. Takahashi: Our providers also have staffing challenges stemming from a host of things, inflation, inability to hire, and retain their employees, so that has affected our services as well. We are working toward collaborating with our persisting agent to find a means of addressing our waitlist right now. We have a waitlist of 64 for personal care homemaker services, respite. On the high note, we continue to provide our meals through KEO and Mom's meals. Our added funding with ARPA funds has able to provide food delivery to older adults, especially with brought on Nourish Kaua'i and Malama Kaua'i to help with the fresh produce and meals. With the extra funding that you provided, we were able to address our waitlist on the home delivered side as well. We also provided ARPA funding, the mental health funding. You addressed it earlier with our housing homeless community, and so we have addressed that as well with our seniors. So far, we have 22 consumers who are using this service and have contracted Child and Family Services and YWCA to provide those services. Of course, throughout COVID-19, we were so fortunate to have our RSVP volunteers to help and support in making the deliveries and working in partnership with Hawai'i Food Bank, Hawai'i Independent Food Bank, in delivering these services. They really have been an added value, not to us but to the community. Besides the food security, the volunteers also provide to help address social isolation, they have what we call "telephone reassurance program." We call it "TLC," tender, love, and care, where they would call up and talk story. This has been helpful, especially in providing a friendly voice for those that are isolated and a listening ear. I must say with any department, our greatest asset is our employees. I am grateful for all that we have and what they have done throughout the pandemic and so one of our priorities is to help. Everyone faces stress, so it is to address those things that we are looking for and provide training and doing that. They have been the root of our backbone of our agency and we are grateful and thankful that we do have service providers out there, they are the ones who are out in the trenches and providing the services to our seniors. With that, thank you for this opportunity and I am open to any questions.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you for being here.

Councilmember Kagawa: Thank you. You folks have always been my favorite department, just because I have experienced the joy you folks brought to my grandma when she was getting home-delivered meals and she looked forward to the visits. They even used to clean her house, too. The food, what are the reviews? I have never ate a home-delivered meal. Are they considered good or is there room for improvement? I want to tell you why I am going in that direction. I taught at both Waimea High School and Kapa'a High School, and I will be honest the food was terrible, both schools. From what my kids say who attended Kaua'i High School, they said the food was bad too and that is why they never ate

there. It is sad. Talk about a service that is delivered to kids daily and for them to fly hordes of food constantly, the entire thing goes in our rubbish. It used to baffle me. When I was growing up, 'Ele'ele Elementary School's food was so good. When I eat someone's good food, I sometimes say "that tastes like 'Ele'ele School's chicken," way back, high quality stuff. How is our food and the quality? I know people love the visits, they love the fact that they do not have to prepare a meal, but is the quality to the point where they praise it?

Ms. Takahashi: We have conducted surveys and they have accepted it. If anything, we have not heard that much of a complaint. Some of them may not like the whole apple, because they cannot chew or milk, but other than that, we have not had...unless...no.

Councilmember Kagawa: Who is the vendor?

Ms. Takahashi: KEO.

Councilmember Kagawa: Oh, KEO, okay.

Ms. Takahashi: We do have frozen meals that our vendor's Mom's Meals are shipped. So, they receive 10 meals for 2 weeks, and it is frozen meals.

Councilmember Kagawa: I mean, when I was growing up, I used to throw Banquet chicken with gravy in the oven and it was great. I just wanted to check on that. We keep telling the principal at the school that the food tastes like dog food and it does not change, 20 something years. I do not know what the difference is from when I attended school. Something drastically happened where it turned from great food to dog food. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember Cowden.

Councilmember Cowden: I have a different question.

Council Chair Rapozo: I was going to say I will pay and have them deliver the meals here, so we can taste.

Councilmember Cowden: The 10-11 callers, the people who made the phone calls, is that populated by the retired and senior volunteer program (RSVP) volunteers? Okay. So, that is a big win-win, because it is not at an economic cost, it is just a gift. Hopefully, the gift goes both ways. I would think maybe both people enjoy the conversation. When we have the 60 people on the in home care waiting list, are the all economically disadvantaged or can they in any economic group?

Ms. Takahashi: I will have to check on that, but it could serve as a they need help with...

Councilmember Cowden: The reason why I am asking is if it was such that they are the economically disadvantaged, who are sharp enough to call your agency to ask for help. I am just curious across all senior populations regardless of income basis, how many people there are available? I know when I had hurt myself, there was almost no one available even 3 ½ years ago. I think that the problem is going to be ever growing, because there is a housing crisis for even if people are paying modestly well. What is our trend line of aging? It

was going that our population was getting increasingly older, but since COVID-19, I think we really shifted our population a lot, at least on the side where I live. You see a whole lot of new people moved in and they tend to be younger. Are we continuing to be increasing our senior population? Is it a growing population group or is it getting smaller?

Ms. Takahashi: It is a growing population.

DONNA LOO, County Assistant Executive on Aging: Donna Loo, Assistant Executive on Aging. As we do our area plan, we have seen research showing already reflecting the aging population growing, especially the Baby Boomers age in the next 10 to 20 years, there will definitely be an increase, and of course with an increase we do see more need for that types of services for that vulnerable population.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes, I just want to comment that I think we are doing well and we need to continue, and that is for senior housing to have space for a caregiver, because that helps more than just that senior generation. If people can live with their daughter or sister, I think that helps to remove that gap, because when people are just struggling to see or reach the top shelf or whatever it might be, we want to be able to keep people living independently as long as possible. Those are my questions. I appreciate you very much, the entire group. I like showing up for your meetings and everything, you do a good job.

Ms. Takahashi: Thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: On page 246, where you show all the positions, near the bottom of the page, there is a line item called, "Grant Employee Benefits," and so that was \$185,000 up to \$235,000. An increase of \$50,000, which is a 27% increase, this is something different it seems. I have never seen this in other departments. The positions up above, there are 5 of them which one asterisk, which means 100% fully funded by other source and 3 of them with 2 asterisks that says, "Partially funded by other sources." Is it those 8 positions that are grant positions that the grant only pays for the flat salary and not the benefits that go with it and that is why it is listed in this line item, the benefits are being paid out of this line item?

TERESA NERO, Accountant III: Teresa Nero, Accountant. Yes, that is partially correct. We do have one or two of the positions that the grant does cover the fringe.

Councilmember Kualii: So, is it just how the grant is written or was it a decision that you could have more positions if you subsidize it with...

Ms. Nero: We have been told, as far as which ones we can charge the fringe to and which ones we cannot.

Councilmember Kualii: Are all these grants state grants?

Ms. Nero: State and federal.

Councilmember Kualii: State and federal. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember DeCosta.

Councilmember DeCosta: I need to say that you folks are one of my favorite divisions, too. Thank you for all you do for the elderly. I know you have a protocol for when you drop off the meal, there has to be someone there that accepts the meal. What happens if that elderly person is having a nap and he or she cannot hear the door, would you leave the meal in the cooler or would you not and drive away?

Ms. Takahashi: During the pandemic, what they have done is leave a cooler at the front door and the deliverer will put it in the cooler.

Councilmember DeCosta: Thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: On the next page, page 247, there is a line item called "Consultant Services," and the increase is slight, like \$12,000. The detail only says, "home and community-based services." Are there multiple types of services? Is the meal service one of them and it is in this line item?

Ms. Takahashi: That is correct.

Councilmember Kualii: Is this all meal services?

Ms. Nero: As of right now, we are using all these funds for the home-delivered meals.

Councilmember Kualii: Then that is fine. These are all home-delivered meals. I thought if you had different home-based services that you were providing, that you should break it down, but it is all meals. Thank you.

Councilmember Kagawa: Full disclosure, I am not a city-slicker, I am a Westside boy, growing up with the plantation days and even if non-food and I am hungry, I will eat. There was one school that was really good and it was at Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School when we just opened in 2002. On the cleaning service or just check up, how long do they typically plan to spend time, is it once a week?

Ms. Takahashi: Twice a week and 2 hours.

Councilmember Kagawa: Twice a week, 2 hours, excellent.

Ms. Takahashi: They go in and clean, that is home-maker. Oh, once a week. We are down to once a week.

Councilmember Kagawa: Once a week, 2 hours.

Ms. Takahashi: Personal care is bathing and grooming.

Councilmember Kagawa: So, once a week, they go out...

Ms. Loo: They are provided 16 hours per month for personal care and 8 hours per month for home-maker services.

Councilmember Kagawa: Okay. Thank you.

Councilmember DeCosta: How do we pay for that? Do we pay for that out of our County budget or does the elderly individuals have to cost-share?

Ms. Takahashi: It is our federal, state dollars, Kupuna Care program that pays for those.

Councilmember DeCosta: I did not know we had that provision in there to allow the personal care.

Councilmember Kagawa: A lot of it is just being lonely. They have great workers who have that experience and it just adds to their quality of life that may not be there all the time.

Ms. Takahashi: It is through our providers that do those services, so we are fortunate and thankful for the providers stepping up.

Councilmember Kualii: Just following up on that. The state dollars are provided by the providers, but do you have people on your staff that is actually doing the coordination by putting the seniors together with the providers?

Ms. Takahashi: We have a case manager.

Councilmember Kualii: That is one of your positions here?

Ms. Takahashi: Yes, that is correct.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there any further questions? If not, thank you. I will say that my mom got Meals on Wheels and she loved it, and sometimes I liked it. There was a year that we did not have enough grants to support the program, are we okay now? Do we have enough money or is there a waiting list on Meals on Wheels?

Ms. Nero: Right now, we are fine. We have tried to cover our waitlist. We are just waiting to see...

Council Chair Rapozo: Do me a favor, just because I am not going to expect you to answer this here, let me know what you expect the waitlist to be in the next fiscal year and what would it take to get rid of the waitlist. I think that one is our obligation.

Ms. Takahashi: This is regarding meals?

Council Chair Rapozo: Is there more? Yes, let us just start with the Meals on Wheels. I know that one year the waiting list was bad.

Ms. Nero: Would you also like to know about the caregivers as well?

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: Do we have enough caregivers to give care to the waitlist? Is there a shortage of caregivers?

Ms. Nero: It is about feeding the caregivers as well.

Councilmember Cowden: Oh, okay.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you so much. With that, County Council Clerk.

Council Chair Rapozo, the presiding officer, relinquished Chairmanship to Council Vice Chair Kualii.

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as not present.)

Councilmember Kualii: County Clerk Jade, can you start with your overview?

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA, County Clerk: Would you like to start with the Office of the County Auditor's budget?

Councilmember Kualii: Yes, we can do that.

Office of the County Auditor

Councilmember DeCosta: What page are we on?

Councilmember Kagawa: In the back part of the Council. The last 2 pages.

Councilmember Kualii: Pages 182 and 183.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: On the budget run, page 147.

Councilmember Kualii: Master page 182.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The budget before you is the Office of the County Auditor. There are only 2 items. This is the Department that funds our Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) this year. We are in the fifth year of a 5-year contract, so we will be going out to bid in May and hopefully we will have an auditor onboard for the ACFR in November.

Councilmember Cowden: I understand the ACFR bid and we typically have the same company, what was the company? They have done it every time that I have been...

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: N&K.

Councilmember Cowden: We have dollar-funded the auditor position because we have struggled to hire that.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Correct. The position for the County Auditor is on a continuous recruitment.

Councilmember Cowden: Four years ago, we set up 4 audits as a Council.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Right.

Councilmember Cowden: We did not do it last year; we have not done it in the last 4 years ago.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The one that you are referring to, the Performance Audit, would be separate from these audits.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay. Is that on a different page?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The performance audits would be in our budget, the Council's budget.

Councilmember Kualii: This line item Consultant Services, that is where you are talking about for the annual ACFR.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Does it cost that much?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes, this is the fifth year. In fact, it may be a little bit more.

Councilmember Cowden: I do not know if we are planning to try for another auditor, but if we did decide to, then we can find money somewhere and put it in this budget, and we have dollar-funded it because there...it has been 6 or 7 years since we have had an auditor?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Oh, gosh, at least, if not, a little bit more. Because it is on an annual recruitment, if the Council finds an auditor, we would make the necessary revisions to the budget to fund the position.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Councilmember Kualii: That is finished. Let us go back to the narrative of the Office of the County Clerk.

Office of the County Clerk

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The major changes and the variances in the operational budget this year primarily due to the \$1,000,000 that may be used for Council Assistants, and as agreed upon the use of these funds will be determined by the Council as a body in open session. In addition, salary and benefit increases for collective bargaining and noncollective bargaining employees account for the remaining budget increase. This FY 2023, we did have a few operational challenges. One, significantly has been establishing

protocols for remote public testimony via interactive conference technology. It has been frustrating for both the public and the office due to the guidance and sometimes lack thereof from the State Office of Information Practices (OIP). Public testimony, as you are all aware, has been suspended pending public testimony via ICT has been suspended pending further discussion and clarification, so it is our hope that resolution will be quickly forthcoming. Within the counties, each county has received different guidance, so it has been very frustrating for all of us. Some operational highlights for FY 2023, we have the county building and Council and Committee Meetings are now completely reopened to the public. I would really like to take this time to thank all of you for your support for the salary increases for all of our noncollective bargaining employees. It made a huge difference and thank you very much for that. I think we were able to offer salaries that really were quite possibly stopped some key staff members from leaving the office for better opportunities, so thank you for that. In addition, we have been able to...because the salary structure is a little higher, we have been able to fill 2 vacancies, one Council Services Assistant and the other with our Council Legislative Assistant.

(Council Chair Rapozo was noted as present.)

Councilmember Kualii returned Chairmanship duties to Council Chair Rapozo.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The 2 individuals have seemed to fit right in and are doing very, very well.

Councilmember Kualii: Councilmembers, are there questions on the narrative? Councilmember Kagawa.

Councilmember DeCosta: I am glad that you made a comparison to having a salary increase and able to fill the 2 vacancies. As we went through the budget from the Department of Public Works to now, I believe your division was probably one of the lowest paid and for the amount that you folks manage and the personnel of the type of high-level administrators that we are, I just wanted to let you know that you and your staff do a very competent job.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Thank you.

Councilmember DeCosta: I am very impressed. I noticed that the comradery is at an all-time high, which I would like to see in other departments. I know we have some departments that is pretty high, like the Fire Department, but can you tell me a little bit about what you do to keep that comradery at this high level?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: I think it is a bunch of different things. At the end of the day the staff understand that they are not just staff. They are kind of an extension of the family. Being treated with respect, not being yelled at or spoken down to makes a huge difference. I would never want anyone in this office to every experience something like that, but we have remarkable staff members. I am exceptionally proud of the work they do.

Councilmember DeCosta: Thank you for that, and we know that too, because your work reflects how good we do. Thank you.

Councilmember Cowden: I just have a comment on the raises. I would say in the future, let us know earlier, because I think we might have gone too long without noticing that, and so on seeing it, it was uncomfortable to realize that we needed to adjust that income level. We have had such intense inflation that I think from a selfless mindset (inaudible) we must listen to across the street, so it was probably harder for them to ask us, but I am glad that we did get that ask and want to make sure that door continues to stay open.

Councilmember Kagawa: Thank you, Jade. Thank you for the overview and retaining our wonderful staff, I am so happy that we saved some of them from leaving. Do we have a line item...or should we to the year we need an audit of some sort? I am thinking out loud that maybe a performance audit for the bus, maybe something that I may be something trying to push through? Do we have funds?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes, we do. We have \$250,000 for performance audits, on page 11.

Councilmember Kagawa: Okay.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Other Services.

Councilmember Kagawa: What is the Council Assistants budget?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: That is the \$1,000,000 that was provided this year. According to my discussions with the chair, this is something that will be discussed amongst the Members and will be decided on.

Councilmember Kagawa: Sounds good. I really like the fact that we padded a little bit with not having a County Auditor who could take some of those concerns that we had and done an audit to validate or not validate some of our concerns, but we have this line item, which adds flexibility for us. Thank you for that.

Councilmember Cowden: I do not have a page 11.

Council Chair Rapozo: Me either.

Councilmember Kagawa: Master page 16. We were looking at Other Services and Council Assistants line items.

Councilmember Cowden: I also think that it would be a good year to start to consider if we want to contract out other audits.

Councilmember Kagawa: That is what I was saying.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes, I agree with you. You mentioned the Transportation Agency, I do not necessarily have a department that I want to raise right now, but it seems like it might be appropriate. On that point, Jade.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: It seems like there is still one left. I believe there was an audit of the 2018 flood spending.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Cowden: When is that going to be finished, because that was asked 4 years ago.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: We have gone in for a contract amendment and the work...well, today, we are awaiting finalization of the contract amendment, which shall be...I do not expect it to be any longer than a couple days. We are waiting for a certificate of insurance from the auditor and their work will begin again in...or should take about 6 to 8 weeks.

Council Chair Rapozo: The auditor said that from the day they start we should have a report back within 6 to 8 weeks.

Councilmember Cowden: They have not started...

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: No, they have started. This is in addition to...

Council Chair Rapozo: That audit triggered a necessity to have more contracts.

Councilmember Cowden: More questions answered. Okay. Because 4 years of asking, and they just started now.

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes, that was my first question I asked the auditor when I got the briefing, but it is moving again.

Councilmember Cowden: Okay.

Councilmember Carvalho: I have a question on the audit, it is moving, right?

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes. It moved and then it stopped.

Councilmember Carvalho: So, we are all good, right?

Council Chair Rapozo: It had nothing to do with the clerk.

Councilmember Carvalho: Yes, I just wanted to make sure.

Council Chair Rapozo: It had nothing to do with the clerk and it had nothing to do with the Administration.

Councilmember Kagawa: To clarify, what I am looking at is not to put down the bus. What I am looking at is the overall paratransit, who and what we are picking up for that purpose, because we need to right size the department. It has gone from \$7,000,000 to \$50,000,000 in the past 10 years that I have been here. I am concerned about right sizing our services, so we comply with ADA in the most efficient way and yet...with our bus routes, we

struggled with school buses. School buses cannot find bus drivers and we may reach that point, so how do we correct our bus. We are not trying to expand when there are no bus drivers to drive those new bus routes. That is kind of where an audit would help. I have never seen of the things I have been asking for, like the ridership on each particular route, I have been asking that for years. I think it is hard, they cannot ask the bus drivers tally while they are making sure the passengers are putting money in, but with computers, maybe we finally can find a way to get those numbers. It is just an overall audit that I am looking forward to help and guide us with the bus and where we go from here.

Council Chair Rapozo: I am glad to hear two people so far supports audit. If we can get one more, we can actually do some audits this time. How much is an audit?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: I would say, for the smaller ones \$50,000 to \$75,000 for like your average, about \$100,000.

Council Chair Rapozo: Just keep in mind, we have \$250,000 in that line item. That is there to be used, that is not there to be held. Like Councilmember Kagawa said, it is not a "gotcha audit." The Mayor has openly accepted audit as a tool that we should use to become more efficient. Are there further questions?

Councilmember Kualii: On the vacant positions on Master page 15, the E-53, Council Legislative Assistant, vacant 195 days. On the budget, it says, "Council Legislative Assistant," on the vacancy report, which I am thinking the vacancy report is wrong, it said, "Council Services Assistant I," but the status is saying list referred. Is this position is in recruitment?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The Council Services Assistant is upstairs; the Secretarial Assistants are downstairs. We do have a recruitment out for a Council Services Assistant I. A list has just been provided, so we will be interviewing. For the Legislative Assistant, a list has also been provided and will be coming over shortly. We will be reviewing that and interviewing.

Councilmember Kualii: Actually, it is E-2901, Council Services Assistant I, there is only one (1) of those positions?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The vacancies would be from the bottom, Council Legislative Assistant E-2900 and Council Legislative Assistant, E-53.

Councilmember Kualii: Which one of those, because you said Council Services Assistant I. That is a third position? We have two (2) Legislative Assistants and we have a Council Services Assistant I also?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes, the Council Services Assistant I would be the Clerical Support team in the office, the ones who types the minutes, Darrellyne's team. The Legislative Assistants are your research branch, so Allison, Randall, both Jenelle and Christiane are legal analysts.

Councilmember Kualii: But I am looking at the budget here, there is only one Council Services Assistant I, oh wait, there is 2901 and 97, so one of those two (2) are vacant?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: No.

Councilmember Kualii: Because the vacancy report used the number E-53, but the title Council Services Assistant I...so either the vacancy report is wrong or this budget is wrong.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: What I believe happened was the vacancy report...when we went in to hire the current person in the position, we had to redescribe an existing position.

Councilmember Kualii: Okay.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: That is what occurred.

Councilmember Kualii: Right there, that explains it. It indicates both are being interviewed and you are expected to fill it in full budget for July 1st.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: The other thing I noticed was that E-2711, Council Legislative Assistant, \$60,000, that was vacant before and then was filled?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Yes.

Councilmember Kualii: Great. Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there further questions for the Clerk?

Councilmember Cowden: When we talk about the Office of Information Practices (OIP), if one of us had a conference or something, can we not Zoom in? Can we not Zoom in anymore?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: No.

Councilmember Cowden: Even if it is one of us?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Correct.

Councilmember Cowden: That seems bad. Not that it was your fault.

Council Chair Rapozo: The Zoom?

Councilmember Cowden: It worked. If someone had to quarantine and whenever they were home, I did it twice when I was not able to go back into the building, I just did it from my kitchen table.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: I believe that exemption may be allowed, but only in very narrow circumstances.

Council Chair Rapozo: You must be sick. Jade, Matt, and Lyndon are working with OIP as we speak to try to restore the remote access. The problem is, and it is for the public, because I know I got hammered for that, is that we had a different opinion from the OIP than the Hawai'i Island. The people that govern the Sunshine Law. Hawai'i Island, the County Council was running their meetings with remote testimony quite differently and I had assumed that they were breaking the law, because I saw the memorandum from OIP. It was clear that they were doing it wrong, when they sent us their opinion from OIP and it was just completely the opposite, so Jade, Lyndon, and Matt are working with OIP to get a written formal opinion of what we can and cannot do. State tuned people, we may be getting remote testimony.

Councilmember Kagawa: Having the remote, it turned a midwife item into a 6-hour item that consequently died the next day. When we have important County issues, the Zoom promotes these types of issues that do not belong here. It does not. It does not belong here as a priority and the Zoom contributes to wanting to have those types of items. I want to focus on County of Kaua'i issues. That is why I am in favor of letting go back to doing it like we have been always did it, without having problems like Planning had by having the interruption with the WiFi.

Council Chair Rapozo: That was the reason why we stopped it.

Councilmember Cowden: The only reason why we had that State topic here is because there was a resolution on the agenda and then a good 2 years of being where we did do this remote work, it allowed us to have experts and people from O'ahu and representatives, that was just a very unique day. It was one of your early days, but it was because of a state resolution. That is what the issue was than the Zoom and technology. It was handling a contentious state issue.

Councilmember DeCosta: I want to chime in on what Councilmember Cowden brought up because she said, "Does this Zoom testimony apply to us as a Councilmember to use it," and I believe the answer was no and Chair said, "Unless you may be sick and then we can Zoom in to be part of this meeting." Our constituents are watching, every one of these chairs are filling during the meeting because they voted for us to be here. If we are not here at a meeting, we are letting down our constituents whether we went to a conference or any type of trip, it does not matter. They voted us in, we should be in this chair and if we are not and we are sick, then we can get on Zoom, if it is provided by whoever makes that decision.

Council Chair Rapozo: The entire purpose of that was so that legislators whether with the County or State would not just be home in their car because they were lazy to drive into the office, but we have been around this table numerous times over the years where one vote mattered. Had we had Zoom capability back then, things could be different today. Life as we know today would be different if we had Zoom testimony because someone was home with an injury or illness, or could not make it in. I can weather prohibited people from getting to meetings, and we had to just count them out. Like you said, not intended to be, "I do not want to drive in today." In fact, when I had COVID-19, I felt awkward to Zoom.

I am sick. Good thing we did not have pressing issues. Are you going to cover the Elections Division as well? I know we talked about it and I am sure it is in your supplies budget and we talked about the transcription software, and I just wanted the employees to know that it is not going to replace them. It is just going to allow them to focus on corrections rather than typing. Maybe you can follow-up with IT. I am sure IT has that software license available.

Councilmember DeCosta: That software is very voice activated sensitive, so I know even sometime with the iPhone, if you are trying to make a conversation piece, it asks you "What did you say," so we might have to be even more careful on what we say.

Council Chair Rapozo: Yours just might come out "inaudible."

Councilmember DeCosta: Beep, beep, beep.

Council Chair Rapozo: Any further questions for Council Services or the Elections Division?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The Elections Division—it is a decrease from the regular and typical off-election year; however, we have a request in for \$165,000 for a new ballot and envelope scanner (inaudible). This is in preparation for the 2024 election cycle. In addition, we have a request made for 2 temporary Elections Clerks, which start in January. The intent is to bring them on a little earlier and get everyone up and running, and comfortable with the upcoming election. We did, as I am sure you heard, have had operational challenges in the 2022 General Election, which exposed weaknesses in our current operational model, which will be addressed in time for the 2024 Presidential Election. The delay of producing the final election results was especially problematic and we attribute this shortcoming to a combination of a late surge of incoming mail ballots and in-person voters and insufficient staffing and underperforming ballot, envelope scanning, and sorting equipment. Additionally, due to the uptick in election misinformation and the resulting confrontational constituent interactions, staff, especially this past election, really feared for personal safety. As a result, we did request the support of off-duty police officers at the voter service center and at the counting center on General Election Day. While no incidents occurred, and due to the increasingly decisive political climate, we will likely expand the request for 2024 to include the presence of law enforcement throughout the operational period of the voter service center and whenever ballots are being processed at the counting center. Also in 2023, we awarded a \$30,000 contract to S360 to develop and implement a voter engagement campaign targeting Kaua'i's residents aged 18 and older. The campaign consisted of a micro website and digital marketing campaign to deliver ads to targeted audiences on Facebook and Instagram and via Google searches. The campaign appeared to be quite effective and Kaua'i County led the State with voter turnout of 51.4%, which is the highest turnout in the last 4 non-presidential General Elections. We also conducted the 2022 Primary and General Elections and completed statutorily mandated automatic recounts for Kaua'i Council contest, following both elections. Recounts failed to change the outcome of either contests.

Councilmember Cowden: Thank you. I know it was a rough election and I really was sensitive to you folks more than even myself when that voter count took so long at the end. I am wondering a couple things. In this next session when we are not actually having an election, is there any type of effort that we can put in place to repair voter confidence? I know there were seemingly a lot of people who wanted precincts again. I know I had even gotten such mail, so much bad mailing, United States Postal Service (USPS). I have gotten campaign checks 5 to 6 months late; it takes that long to get to me in the mail. I get other people's mail, I do not get some of my mail. People have confidence problems. I wonder how we can work ahead of time...he is laughing at me, but how can we work ahead of time to soften this sense of distrust.

LYNDON M. YOSHIOKA, Deputy County Clerk: We do try to take care of addressing issues year-round, that is the primary purpose of those mailings that we do. On the card, prominently, you will see things like...I believe the message is "if the person addressed on this card is not here, put it back in the mail," because that allows us to get the mail piece back and then we can flag that individual's record. Unfortunately, a lot of these mail pieces are just tossed. That is the messaging thing...

Council Chair Rapozo: Or they vote.

Mr. Yoshioka: Pardon me?

Council Chair Rapozo: Or the people going vote on the ballot.

Mr. Yoshioka: Well, they can, but the signature will not match, it will be kicked out, and then trigger a follow-up process that we are required to complete.

Councilmember Cowden: How about the Elections Administrator position that is now open?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: We are in the process of going over the specs and the (inaudible) and we will be going out and recruiting an Elections Administrator.

Councilmember Cowden: So that will probably be done by July...

Councilmember Kualii: Keep going.

Councilmember Cowden: Are we going to 6-month fund it, are we going to 1-year fund it, do we think we are going to have that position filled by July? Am I asking that right?

Councilmember Kualii: July 1st.

Mr. Yoshioka: I actually asked for that position to be funded because at the point that I transitioned over, we were actually speaking to someone highly

qualified, but it did not pan out. By that time, the numbers had already been submitted, so that is why you see the position funded.

Council Chair Rapozo: I have my interview on Thursday, so we should fill it.

Mr. Yoshioka: You would not want it, trust me.

Councilmember Cowden: We want to make sure...to me, last year was a really uncomfortable year with the way the public had so much distress. I felt pulled into the whole problem. I just want to make sure we are able to avoid that for the next time around.

Mr. Yoshioka: We will do what we can do to control and get our process worked out. I just have to say that there are things we cannot control. Part of our voter education effort this year, and I already started speaking to our perspective contractor, will be to incorporate some ads to counter the misinformation that has been all over the internet. Whether or not that is successful, we can only try.

Councilmember Cowden: I think if we were to have a short-term position, like an 89-day hire or something like that, where we had paid people and not just volunteers to do the 10% precinct count, the paper ballot count comparison. If we had people planned in advance, paid to sit there and count through it, I think that would silence so much of what we had as distress and it would be consistent with the statutes, and so that is something that funding would help it. It seems like it would be a doable action.

Mr. Yoshioka: We will certainly consider it, but it is also something that would require some input from the State Office of Elections, as they are statutory responsible for the audits, but we will certainly discuss it with them, yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: We are going to have that discussion at some point as the Council. I believe we are required, so we will have that discussion. The other thing, as a follow-up, who determines where the voting stations are?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Drop boxes?

Council Chair Rapozo: No, like the actual in-person...are we control of our own?

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, we can set up polling stations?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Voting service centers.

Council Chair Rapozo: Yes. Obviously, we need to fund it, but this is not working, this one-box, one-place to vote. On Election Day, you can only come here to vote,

you cannot vote anywhere else, and there is a lot of people who will not vote in the mail. Like Councilmember Cowden, people will say, "My dad's Christmas gift which was sent out from Oregon to Seattle, we sent it on December 18th," which is about a 3-hour drive, he received it in February.

Councilmember Cowden: Yes.

Council Chair Rapozo: That is when I realized...my dad thanked me for the card in February, I thought he was losing his mind. I asked "What card," and he responded it was a Christmas card. That is when I realized, that does not help. Not the County, USPS. My story is one of many that people was stuck in traffic, because at the Primary Election the State decided to cut trees on Kaumuali'i Highway on a Saturday, on Election Day, and all those people from the Westside got stuck. It was one-hour, two-hour, three-hour, turn around and go home, I am not voting. I am not saying we need 5, but at least 3. One in Lihu'e, one on that side, and one out on that side. Again, we can have that discussion later, because it is going to come with a cost.

Mr. Yoshioka: I would like to note, though, if it is the will of this body, Voter Service Centers decision needs to be made sooner rather than later, because that would require new equipment being ordered and we need to amend the voting system contract, because right now that equipment is currently not part of that...

Council Chair Rapozo: Okay, we will have that discussion sooner than later.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Other than election day, there were multiple drop box points, right? Was there only one drop box?

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The ballot...

Council Chair Rapozo: I am not talking about drop box, I am talking about where people can vote.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Oh, in-person voting.

Council Chair Rapozo: In-person voting.

Councilmember Kualii'i: It (inaudible).

Council Chair Rapozo: A lot of the misinformation that we do not control is because of that.

Councilmember Kualii'i: Yes, but you cannot suffer the majority of voters who are taking advantage of the convenience of mail-in voting because there is a small group of people making a big noise.

Council Chair Rapozo: I am not saying get rid of mail-in voting. I would encourage people to mail in their vote. Especially for the *kūpuna* that they like to vote in-person, that is just their tradition, that is what they do. That is what “I” do, I guess I am an old person. I am not saying we do away with mail voting, that is not what I am saying.

Councilmember Cowden: I am someone who actually enjoys the mail voting, because I can sit there and really think about it. I do not mind it, but I will say I dropped it in the box, because when I come to work, I dropped it in the box right here. Why I am bringing this up right now is that it was not just a small group of people. That is why we had that big surge on that last day. It was not a small group of people who were concerned. I think it put on the pressure for our Election Division’s team and we need to think about this now and not later, because the length of time to get different equipment or if we need to be prepared to change anything and the reason why I am bringing it up here is not to make anything difficult, but to really have the budget in front of us. It seems like that is the time. If what we need to do was have a few more paid people for that two weeks of counting, three weeks of counting, it is your job, not mine, I do not know exactly what is needed, but that we are able to do that. Also, to have some little tablet or some little form, because people were uncomfortable with what they called the chain of custody. Let us just do it right, where we do not have the lost confidence that was there. I felt like a continuously defended our own team. There was a lot of stress and that is why people waited to the bitter end to vote.

Council Chair Rapozo: So, we will have the discussion.

Councilmember Carvalho: I like the idea of having at least one on the east and one on the west.

Council Chair Rapozo: I mean, if you want voter participation, you have to make it convenient.

Councilmember Carvalho: And the mail-in, of course.

Council Chair Rapozo: Mail-in is good, I have grown to enjoy that.

Councilmember DeCosta: You folks know this as well as I do, I am going to dictate what the rest of the Country does, that is why it got an upward, it started in the United States and then it trickled down to Hawai’i, right? Good to be prepared. Like Lyndon said we need to know now, so he can make his order of equipment, but it is how the election go in the U.S. and it will trickle down. It got pretty frisky.

Council Chair Rapozo: I have a feeling in 2024 that it will be friskier.

Councilmember DeCosta: Well, then, we can make sure that staff is feeling safe and secure at the Elections Division.

Councilmember Cowden: When I did my elections field trip in Denver, at the National Association of Counties (NACo), I was stunned to see all the (inaudible) glass

and all the security. I mean, you think you were entering a prison or something to go into this building that felt to me that inside the building felt like 2-acres that gets used every other year. The amount of security and just equipment, I am not saying I want that, but it gave me an awareness of how frightened the Elections Divisions were in the Continental U.S., in the urban areas anyway. I am in full support of the Elections Office. I guess between now and then, the budget, if we wanted to adapt something in here, we can think about it and make that adaptation.

Council Chair Rapozo: Maybe what you can do is give us some scenarios, maybe two additional in-person voting areas and the cost attributed with the additional manpower equipment, machines, etcetera.

Mr. Yoshioka: Just to give you folks some food for thought. Each site would need to essentially be...we would replicate what happens downstairs in the basement in every site. As far as staffing and equipment, we need to have everything in place. We need to be able to provide accessible voting equipment. It will require a lot of support from IT because we will need access to the network to connect to...

Council Chair Rapozo: We have done it before. Here is the most baffling thing is, when we did no mail-in...when we have absentee, everyone had to vote in-person, we got our results that night.

Mr. Yoshioka: We used to get it done...it was a struggle though. We would get it done that night.

Council Chair Rapozo: I mean, I am not talking about just Kaua'i. I am talking about...since we got better technology, it seems like we have to wait longer.

Mr. Yoshioka: Well, a lot of that is the mail just coming in late and no matter at what point the mail comes in, we still need to go through that signature verification process.

Council Chair Rapozo: But that is what I am saying. That is part of the new technology, we are going to mail-in voting, we going do machines. When everyone came to vote or you had the small percentage that did an absentee, but it was all manual. I am talking back in the day, when you would wait up at night, and then you would know who the winner was. Now, you go sleep and the next day, at total different result.

Councilmember DeCosta: Can I comment? That night before I went to bed, you sent me a nice purple heart text that said, "Do not worry it will be alright," and I was like, "Ya, right."

Councilmember Kualii: In the middle of page 5, you made comment about the uptick in Election misinformation and I think that is a really important piece in this, and then you said something about possibly doing some ads or whatever. Do you have enough money in your budget to do a good job with that, because I think that is a big piece?

Mr. Yoshioka: The State Office of Elections with Homeland Security and all the federal partners, they are already on it, so they are working to develop these ads. What we are hoping to do is take some of those ads, not all of them, and use that in that campaign that we do establish.

Councilmember Kualii: The other piece to that in bringing on potential for violence, you mentioned off-duty police, do you have money in the budget to cover that? Okay. Enough? Okay, and now thinking about having other sites, too.

Council Chair Rapozo: Is this for next fiscal year?

Mr. Yoshioka: Yes, we would need to put it in for the next budget.

Council Chair Rapozo: It is going to be for the next fiscal year. The election is in the next fiscal year, not this fiscal year.

Councilmember Cowden: What is the message in the ads? What do those ads say?

Mr. Yoshioka: I am not aware of what the specific verbiage is at this point.

Councilmember Kualii: I think it would be good if you gave us talking point, because as leaders, we can instill confidence in our election system with our people because they look to us. Therefore, if we are the ones who question it, we are helping build the lack of confidence in our system. So, you are the expert, you give me the talking points of how you are addressing some of the misinformation, so that when I talk, I am talking in a knowledgeable way.

Mr. Yoshioka: We can definitely do that.

Council Chair Rapozo: Are there further questions? Are there any closing comments? If not, thank you. I was out talking to the mayor when you folks began, so I did not get a chance to share my comments about the salaries, but I just want to say that our staff waited way too long. As we see every year, we see these different departments come up and it increases, increases, and increases, and our staff never had that honor or that opportunity.

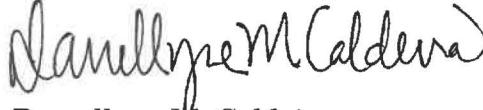
Councilmember Kualii: Chair, you also missed the discussion on the Auditor, so if you want to share anything on that.

Council Chair Rapozo: As far as the Auditor, and again, I am not sure what you spoke of, but at some point we need to make a determination whether or not we are going to continue looking for an auditor or are we going to seek a Charter Amendment to remove that and let the legislative body do the audits. It is much more costly, but it is also

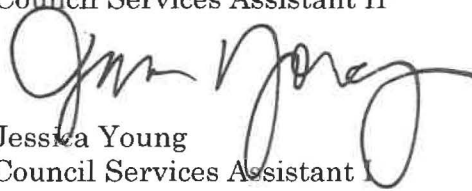
very difficult to find the right person that is qualified, committed, and culturally familiar with this place to be an effective auditor. That is another discussion we need to have later. With that, this meeting is now adjourned.

There being no objections, the Committee adjourned the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Departmental Budget Reviews at 1:40 p.m.

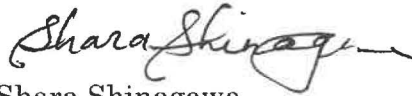
Respectfully submitted,



Darrellyne M. Caldeira
Council Services Assistant II



Jessica Young
Council Services Assistant I



Shara Shinagawa
Council Services Assistant I

APPROVED at the Committee Meeting held on June 21, 2023:



MEL RAPOZO
Chair, Committee of the Whole