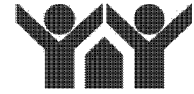




Downtown Neighborhood Board No 13 NEWSLETTER



Annual Issue

Spring 2009

c/o Neighborhood Commission Office • 530 South King Street, Room 400 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Layout: Bryan Mick (NCO)

What Happens at a Neighborhood Board Meeting

By Frank Lavoie, Chair

At each Neighborhood Board meeting we collect information and discuss issues that concern our community.

Reports

Every month we have reports from the Honolulu Fire Department and the Honolulu Police Department. HPD usually has a large variety of questions asked of it and HFD provides fire safety tips.

Gary Omori of the Honolulu High Speed Capacity Transit Corridor Project gives monthly updates on the status and progress of the proposed fixed guide way system.

We also have the opportunity to listen to reports and ask questions of Hawaii Pacific University, the Honolulu Culture and Arts District and Safe Haven shelter.

Meet and Question your elected officials. The Mayor's Office, Governor's Office, and City Council member Tam's Office send a representative every month. State Senator Brickwood Galuteria and State Representative Karl Rhoads usually attend the meetings themselves. This is a great opportunity to address your concerns directly to our elected officials. They will respond by the next meeting at the latest.

Receive presentations and make decisions

Every month there are issues that affect the community that we address by gathering information, receiving testimony and then voting to support or oppose the item. Recent presentations included:

1. A full debate of the rail issue. Representatives from Stop Rail Now and Go Rail Go presented both sides of the issue. Board voted to support putting the question on the ballot.
2. Information on TheBoat which docks at Aloha Tower.

3. Council Bill 35 to prohibit sleeping and other disorderly conduct at city bus stops. The Board voted to support the intent and purpose of the bill.
4. The possibility of Neighborhood Board elections being only by internet or phone voting. The Board opposed such limitations.
5. Restrictions on bicycles on sidewalks.
6. Moped parking.

Public Concerns

This is a time in our meeting where anyone in attendance can speak for up to two minutes on any issue that is not on the agenda. The Board cannot take action on such concerns (unless they are urgent and related to health and safety) until a later meeting (due to the Sunshine Law). However, the Board and other officials present can follow up and possibly provide answers.

Reports given by the Board

The Chair always gives a report. Information that was not deemed part of the regular meeting can be brought up at this point. Discussions on matters between Board members is done at this time, such as future agenda items.

Other reports are from Permitted Interactive Groups (PIGs). A PIG is created to allow Board Members (less than a quorum) to work on issues outside of the regular monthly meeting. PIGs that regularly give reports now include:

1. Liquor Commission and noises from alcohol serving establishments.
2. Ohana Housing Network Oahu (OH-NO).
3. Public restrooms in the Downtown/Chinatown area and how to identify locations, coordinate with adjacent businesses and to seek funding.

And finally, Adjournment

The above is a quick summary of what happens at your Downtown Neighborhood Board meeting. Come over to the Pauahi Recreation Center at 7 pm on the first Thursday of the month and join us. We would like to hear your concerns!

Chair's Reports:



Jaywalking

Recently, a key issue has been HPD's enforcement of Jaywalking in Downtown and Chinatown. Many residents have expressed concerns that the police unfairly target our community and is often overzealous in its enforcement. We have worked closely with HPD in connection with the Fourth Watch (training) Officers based in our district after their initial training.

Crime fighting

In July the Board received a proposal from the Prosecutor's office to reduce crime on Pauahi Street through environmental changes such as removing parking spaces on the mauka side between River and Maunakea streets. There was heavy drug activity on the sidewalks, including drive by purchases. Many residents were afraid to walk the street.

The recommendation was to replace eight parking spaces with "No parking/standing" signs. This allows the police to stop, examine, and if warranted, ticket vehicles.

Concerns about parking were voiced from the community. Residents voiced opinions about punishing all for the acts of a few.

The Board supported a 45 day trial period. This took effect October 1 and included a community sign-waving against crime on Saturday, October 4.

Fort Street Mall Benches

Former Mayor Jeremy Harris removed benches on the Fort Street Mall between King and Beretania streets which were used by many residents walking to work and to conduct business downtown. Now, they have no place to rest as they go about their daily business. The benches cannot be found. The elderly continue to complain about the lack of seating. Board members continue to press Mayor Hannemann to replace the long lost benches.

Board Shoots Down City's Housing Plan

By Lynne Matusow

In October, the City gave an update on its proposed River Street Residences project, located on River Street between Kukui Street and Vineyard Boulevard. The proposed project, to be built on City owned land, would replace a two-story commercial

building with at grade parking. When first presented by the City in March, the project was to contain 60 permanently affordable rental units. The revised plan was a marked change from what had been previously envisioned. In its latest incarnation the City said that it would offer up to 100 studio and one bedroom rental units to accommodate single adults, couples, and small families. The City would require that approximately 40 percent of the units be set aside as permanent supportive housing for homeless persons with severe and persistent mental illness, and other disabilities. An onsite program of supportive services would be provided to assist residents in maintaining their housing and to live independently in the community to the extent possible. The project would be staffed on a 24-hour basis. Some Board members, residents, and community groups questioned the choice of location for the project. There was concern that this type of facility did not belong near a temple, down the street from a school, across the street from the Chinatown Cultural Plaza which has a mix of parking, food establishments, and retail store, on the route children walk from Kukui Gardens and Mayor Wright housing to Central Middle School, and by a pathway used by young families, seniors, and others as they go about their daily routine to work, school, worship, and shopping. This location is also a block away from Beretania Community Park. More than 8,000 people live in the immediate area. It was also noted that two other facilities helping the mentally ill are nearby, one on Nu'uaniu between Kukui and Vineyard and the other at Fort Street Mall and Beretania.

The City, using a mainland model, said it believed that by putting this facility in a downtown location it would address the homeless and mentally ill persons in the area and get them off the street. Yet, there is no way their actions can be controlled when they are out in public and out of view of project staff. Others felt it would not be a safe environment for single parents and others living there with young children.

The board voted to oppose the project unless the quota of setting aside units for those with severe and persistent mental illness was dropped. The board supports creating permanent housing but not with the caveat included.

Affordable Housing

By Steve Lohse



Affordable housing remains

a vital issue in our community due to the large number of affordable rental projects in the area, especially city-owned projects. The Neighborhood Board works with the affordable housing issue through its Ohana Housing Network Oahu (OHNO) Permitted Interaction Group. OHNO is a coalition of affordable housing tenant associations concerned with preserving existing affordable rental housing with dignity for all residents. Call (808) 591-0000 for more information.

This past year, OHNO advocated for the Right Buyers for city-owned housing and drafted Resolution 08-108 to establish city policy to ensure that new owners will have both the qualifications and the will to preserve existing affordability in perpetuity. City Council unanimously adopted Resolution 08-108 on June 4, 2008. Council members Ann Kobayashi and Rod Tam were instrumental in supporting and adopting Resolution 08-108.

The next challenge for Affordable Housing will be the transition of city-owned buildings to private ownership, while the city protects affordability through leasing the land. Unfortunately, we are learning that private ownership alone does not guarantee that residents will be treated with dignity, especially elderly residents. We foresee a serious role for the Neighborhood Board in preserving affordability with dignity in our community.

Late-Night Noise



By Steve Lohse

Late-night noise continues to be a challenge in the Downtown/Chinatown area, where a number of clubs remain open until 2:00 a.m. literally in the shadow of major residential complexes. During a Honolulu Liquor Commission presentation to the Neighborhood Board in November 2007, Administrator Dewey Kim reported that widespread noise problems are increasing as new bars open in densely populated areas. He strongly advised concerned residents to get involved early in the liquor licensing process, while he reminded us that excessive noise is illegal and that a liquor license is a privilege that can be revoked for violations of the laws.

The Neighborhood Board members continue to question all applicants for new liquor licenses regarding their proposed activities and their plans to mitigate noise. Representative Karl Rhoads and residents continue to monitor Liquor Commission hearings as well as noise levels in our community. It is important that Board meetings remain a place where all stakeholders can congregate to share their visions toward a livable community for all of us.

New Neighborhood Board Procedures and Policies

Sunshine Law Changes.

By Tom Smyth

The Legislature passed Act 153 giving Neighborhood Boards more flexibility to respond to resident concerns. It amends the state Sunshine Law to provide that:

1. Boards may meet without a quorum present to receive information or presentations from safety and elected officials or others who want to speak to the board or those at the meeting. The board can't take action until a full quorum is present.
2. Public input can be given to a board, even if the items were not on the published agenda, but the board can't make a decision until the next meeting.
3. If an "unanticipated event" comes to the board after the agenda is published, the board may discuss and act if timely action is necessary for public health, welfare and safety.
4. Two or more board members, but less than a quorum, may attend other meetings or presentations on matters related to board business, without announcing the intent to attend at a previous board meeting.

The New Neighborhood Plan. After more than five years effort by volunteer Neighborhood Board members and Neighborhood Commissioners, a greatly updated version of the Neighborhood Plan was signed by the Mayor on October 10th. The 100 page document includes administrative rules for the City's Neighborhood Commission that oversees all boards and the Neighborhood Commission Office who provides staff support. The portion of the new plan affecting boards themselves has many changes that include:

1. Creating a "Conference of Board Chairs" so Chairs and Vice Chairs may meet to discuss issues that could affect all boards, especially procedural and administrative matters.

2. Changing the two year term of board service to match the City fiscal year, extending this year's end of term of office from June 1 to July 1.
3. Changing the board member election schedule so candidates must register by the third Friday in February rather than the third Tuesday in January.
4. Allowing boards to work with other boards, especially on regional matters.
5. Allowing boards to have committees with board members and non-board members.
6. Clarifying how a board chair or a board majority may require a disruptive person to leave a meeting.
7. Providing for the recall of a board member through a petition signed by one hundred persons or five percent of the registered voters in the board district.
8. Allowing the Neighborhood Commission to sanction a board or board member that includes removing a board officer, suspending a board member or a board's operation.



DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD NO. 13
C/O NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION
CITY HALL, 530 SOUTH KING STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

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You can also contact the Neighborhood Commission at 768-3783 or fax 768-3111 to be added to the mailing list.

The mailing address is the Neighborhood Commission, Honolulu Hale, 530 S. King Street, room 406, Honolulu, HI 96813.

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