

COUNCIL OF THE COUNTY OF MAUI

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

October 4, 2001

Committee

Report No. 01-185

Honorable Chair and Members
of the County Council
County of Maui
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii

Chair and Members:

Your Parks and Recreation Committee, having met on August 1, 2001 and September 19, 2001, makes reference to County Communication No. 01-151, from the Council Chair, transmitting a letter from Carole Joy Ameral dated April 28, 2001, relating to the condition of and activities at the Banyan Tree in Lahaina ("the Tree").

By memorandum dated May 24, 2001, your Committee Chair transmitted a copy of a news article from the April 22, 2001 edition of the *Honolulu Advertiser* entitled "There's life yet in the old banyan tree" and a brochure entitled "The Historic Banyan Tree of Lahaina", submitted by Theo Morrison of the LahainaTown Action Committee.

By memorandum dated June 1, 2001, your Committee Chair transmitted copies of correspondence from Bettina Jones, which outlines research conducted on the health of the Tree.

At its meeting of August 1, 2001, your Committee met with the Planning Development Chief of the Department of Parks and Recreation, a representative of the Maui County Arborist Committee, and a Deputy Corporation Counsel.

Your Committee received testimony from five individuals expressing concerns about the deteriorating condition of the Tree. They felt that because of the drought conditions and the severe trimming of the Tree for the Old Lahaina Courthouse renovation, the Tree was in need of serious attention. However, each testifier indicated that the condition of the Tree improved significantly over the past six months.

The Executive Director of the Lahaina Restoration Foundation provided details of their efforts to improve the irrigation system in Banyan Tree Park, which has helped improve the health of the Tree.

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The Maui County Arborist Committee representative provided your Committee with a copy of correspondence explaining the proper care for the Tree that is distributed to artists and merchants. Mr. Ernest Rezens, a certified arborist consultant, testified that limiting activities under the Tree, conducting soil compaction tests, and developing a master plan to enhance the care of the Tree would extend its life.

In response to an inquiry from your Committee, Mr. Rezens suggested that limiting activity under the Tree would improve its health and the soil conditions. He recommended that an aeration project, including organic mulch, would significantly improve the topsoil. Furthermore, he suggested that cordoning off certain areas around the Tree or restricting activity under the Tree would be a great benefit to extending its life.

The Planning Development Chief advised your Committee that the Department will continue to monitor the condition of the Tree and will review the activities permitted at Banyan Tree Park.

Your Committee recommended that a resolution be drafted to express the Council's support for the enhanced care of the Tree, urge the Administration to provide necessary funding for the Tree, and develop a master plan to extend its life. As a result, your Committee deferred the matter pending further information and discussion.

By letter dated August 7, 2001, your Committee Chair requested that the Director of Parks and Recreation provide a list of activities that are scheduled to take place at Banyan Tree Park.

By memorandum dated September 13, 2001, your Committee Chair transmitted a proposed resolution entitled, "SUPPORTING AN ENHANCED MAINTENANCE EFFORT FOR THE LAHAINA BANYAN TREE". The purpose of the resolution is to urge the Mayor to provide the necessary funding to improve the care for the Tree and develop a master plan that would help extend its life.

At its meeting of September 19, 2001, your Committee met with the Director of Parks and Recreation, the Chair of the Exceptional Trees

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Subcommittee of the Maui County Arborist Committee, and a Deputy Corporation Counsel.

Your Committee received testimony from three individuals. The Chair of the Exceptional Tree Subcommittee ("Subcommittee") reiterated that the Tree had been impacted by drought conditions and the severe pruning of the Tree. However, the Subcommittee has monitored the Tree for the past six months and has seen a vast improvement in its condition. He further stated that the Subcommittee would contract for scientific research testing of the soil before recommending a master plan for the care of the Tree. The same testifier spoke on behalf of the Lahaina Restoration Foundation ("Foundation"), and distributed correspondence to your Committee outlining the costs for the improvements made to the existing irrigation system at the Banyan Tree Park. He stated the Foundation completed the improvements to the irrigation system and was subsequently reimbursed by the Department of Parks and Recreation for the materials, but not labor. He further stated that the Foundation is seeking an additional \$7,390 to help offset the costs for improvements to the irrigation system. The other two testifiers expressed support of any efforts to continue to improve the health of the Tree.

The Director of Parks and Recreation advised your Committee that the Department is seeking the advice of the Maui County Arborist Committee to develop a plan for the care of the Tree. He further stated that the Arborist Committee is also reviewing the permits for the use of Banyan Tree Park. In response to an inquiry from the Committee, the Director indicated that he will look for funds to assist the Foundation in caring for the Tree; however, he pointed out that the Foundation is permitted to charge fees to help offset the cost of maintenance for the facility under its lease agreement with the County.

Your Committee reviewed the proposed resolution and recommended revisions to reflect the source of funding to support the maintenance of the Tree, and to add that copies of the resolution be sent to the Maui County Cultural Resources Commission; the International Society of Arboriculture; and the Department of Interior, National Parks Service, National Register of Historic Places. Your Committee voted to recommend adoption of the resolution, as revised, and deferred the item in order to continue to receive status reports.

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Your Parks and Recreation Committee RECOMMENDS that Resolution No. _____, attached hereto, entitled "SUPPORTING AN ENHANCED MAINTENANCE EFFORT FOR THE LAHAINA BANYAN TREE", be ADOPTED.

Adoption of this report is respectfully requested.

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