

MAUI COUNTY CHARTER COMMISSION

Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii

PUBLIC HEARING

- DATE: November 14, 1963
- PLACE: Kahului School Cafetorium, Kahului, Maui
- CALL TO ORDER: 7:40 P.M.
- PRESIDING: Masaru Yokouchi, Chairman
- MEMBERS PRESENT: Masaru Yokouchi, Chairman
 Emil Balthazar
 C. H. Burnett, Jr.
 Richard Caldito
 William F. Crockett, Vice-Chairman
 Shiro Hokama (Lanai)
 Nadao Honda
 Harry Kobayashi
 Keith Tester
 Charles C. Young, Research Assistant
- MEMBERS EXCUSED: Cornwell Friel (Molokai)
 Thomas Yagi
- OTHERS PRESENT: Kase Higa, Deputy County Attorney
 Shigeru Sano, Deputy County Engineer
 John Arisumi, Chairman, School Advisory Council
 Mr. & Mrs. John Fernandez
 Mrs. Yukie Ueoka
 Hiroshi Yoshizawa
 Hideo Hayashi, District Engineer
 Mrs. Anna Dondo, President, Maui Women Voters
 Paul Elkins, President, Pukalani Community Association
 Jack Claytor, President, Maui District PTA
 Augustine Pombo
 David Hardie
 Several Baldwin High School Students
- Maui Citizen's Association for Good Government:
 William Haines, President
 Mr. & Mrs. Paul Van Zwalenburg
 Mr. & Mrs. Sevath Boyum
 Mrs. Gloria Foster
 Eric Lindberg
 Nathan F. Ambrose
 Miss Ahia Davison
 Mrs. Emma Kapohakimohewa

Mr. Yokouchi:

The purpose of this public hearing is to help the Maui County Charter Commission determine two questions:

1. Is a charter needed for the County of Maui?
2. If so, what form of government should we adopt?

In the past session an act was passed to allow the counties to create charter commissions and this act mandated the commissions to look into the present form of government to see whether there should be a change or not.

This commission has held interviews with all the departments of the County of Maui and we have concluded our study on Thursday, November 7. Now we feel that we are ready on the question of whether we need a charter or not. Before doing so, we thought we would like to hear from the public.

Briefly, Mr. Higa will explain the government structure that we have today.

(Organizational Chart of the County of Maui explained by Mr. Higa).

The Chair read a letter recommending the adoption of the Council-Manager form of government from Mrs. Anna Dondo. (Copy of letter attached).

Mr. William S. Haines, President, Maui Citizen's Association for Good Government, read a letter approving the Council-Manager form of government. (Copy of letter attached).

Excerpts of Hearing:

Mr. Balthazar: How many members are there in your organization?

Mr. Haines: About 75.

Mr. Crockett: As a commissioner, I am not solely interested in the number of people who are in a particular organization when the organization expresses its opinion. I am interested in the potency of the argument that is presented. If the argument is sound, I will listen to it and take it under advisement.

Mr. Burnett: I don't think we can get away from the fact that, if the people feel they represent the cross section of the County of Maui, we definitely have to listen to them. I would like to get some expression whether they feel that they represent the electorate of this County.

Mr. Yokouchi: Any person who cares to testify can speak as an individual also.

Mrs. Foster:
(Individual) I think that the council-manager form of government would be a good form to consider.

Miss Davison: I, too, as a member of the Maui Citizen's Association for Good Government and as a voter, am in favor of the council-manager type of government because of the widespread use of this type of government throughout the United States. If what I have been told and what I have read is true, it is becoming more and more popular, efficient and good for the general public. I am in favor of a charter. I am in favor of the council-manager type of government.

- Mr. Hardie: I would like to propose an idea that has been in my mind for many years. I hope you will consider giving the general public the right to vote on each and every piece of legislation that comes up in the Board of Supervisors - whatever form of government you arrive at, giving each person a right to vote for laws, rules and regulations which would affect them. I feel that this right will encourage people to become interested in the government.
- Mr. Tester: As far as I am concerned, I question this in regard to the council-manager type of government - the difficulty of securing a qualified person as the manager. Also, you are two places from being able to get the manager removed if you don't like the manager; he is appointed by the council. Under the strong mayor type of government, you certainly have the opportunity to get rid of the mayor at the next election. Under the council-manager form, you certainly won't be able to get rid of the manager.
- Mr. Ambrose: I heartily approve of the letter which was handed in to you by the Maui Citizen's Association for Good Government. I feel that we do need a change in this county and most any change would have to be for the better. In Los Angeles they have a very efficiently run government with 5 members on their board. I don't think we need as many as 9 supervisors on our board. I am very much in favor of the council-manager plan.
- Mrs. Van Zwalenburg:
(Individual) I have been observing the Charter Commission meetings for some months and, in my function as observer, I have been pleasantly surprised at the way the Charter Commission has been operating.
- I am in favor of a charter. I think it is needed. I think the present form of government needs streamlining and reorganization. As far as form of government is concerned, I think the council-manager form is ideal.
- Mr. Haines: Seems to me that the council-manager form gives the people opportunity to have the best administrator to run the operations in the county and for this reason, it seems it could be the best form to go to. I think we can find someone qualified for this position.
- Mr. Elkins:
(Individual) What is wrong with the present government I don't know. I wonder why there hasn't been a representative from each district instead of all from one area. If we clean up the government we have now, we will have a good government.
- Mr. Young: Are you for a charter or not?
- Mr. Elkins: I am satisfied with the present form of government.
- Mr. Crockett: This problem is my problem and a problem for every member of the commission. There has been no groundswell of public opinion that we should have a charter and, if this is so, how can we as commissioners come out with a report that there should be a charter?

- Mrs. Van Zwalenburg: You will get a popular feeling at the 1964 election. You were appointed under the enabling act and, if you feel we need a change, change it.
- Miss Davison: The elected officials wrote into the constitution that there should be an opportunity for a charter. The last legislature felt sufficiently strong about putting this into effect. None of us are well versed. The State is mandated to consider this so this is the machinery to put into effect.
- Mr. Haines: I would feel that the Charter Commission is charged with the responsibility for looking into the pros and cons and decide to their best judgment whether we need a change and whether we don't, and if so, what form. I don't think you have to feel that there must be a big ground swell for public opinion. You should propose one form of government or another. You should consider all your research and try to reach your own conclusion. It is your responsibility to reach your own conclusion. I don't think you can expect the populous to reach your decision for you.
- Mr. Lindberg: I realize that this commission has done a tremendous job. I myself have lived under various forms of government. I feel that there is a strong mayor feeling since the other two commissions have decided on that. I think it would be easier to get a manager out of office than a strong mayor. I don't know how you are going to educate the people in the County of Maui. Because of certain situations in this county, people have not been allowed to speak their piece. People are afraid to get out and speak.
- Mr. Elkins: I talked with several residents in Pukalani in the past few days and they are happy with the present form of government. I don't think I have the right to represent those people. I feel they should be allowed to go out and vote for it. I wish you would give us a chance to think about it.
- Mr. Van Zwalenburg: I personally feel that we would benefit from a change. Maui has been in a long period of economic decline. We have recently begun to turn the corner, perhaps, but we are banking very heavily on the tourists' hands, and the tourist industry is noted for its instability. I think we would benefit from a charter, and I personally favor the council-manager form because of the fact that it has been very favorable in many communities. I don't say it is perfect. If you don't get a good city manager, this form would not be good as any other. There has been some unhappy experiences under the council-manager form on the mainland, but over the last few years it has proved very successful in a community the size of Maui.
- Mrs. Boyum:
(Individual) Perhaps we do need a charter. I think this is a day of specialization in all fields. Government is big business. I think we need a professionally trained person at the head of the government. I have not studied all the forms of government but, with a professionally capable city manager, we might have a better government.
- Mrs. Kapohakimohewa: I feel that the County of Maui needs streamlining. There are several inadequacies here. I feel strongly that the County of Maui needs a charter. The City Manager form is most beneficial. I think there should not be any worry about getting a poor manager because the council will see to it that he is put in place.

- Mr. Hayashi: As a private citizen I would suggest that a charter be formed for whatever type of government you think is necessary for the county. In the charter I would suggest you delineate powers and functions of the government. As it is now, it is very ambiguous between the county and state government. I think for an area of Maui with such a population and the different enterprises, we need a strong mayor type of government.
- Mr. Burnett: I am completely confused by what I have heard. The elected officials, with the exception of one, want some changes, but they did not want their particular department stirred or upset. I have talked to a lot of people, and 90% of the people I have talked with think that what we have now is not too bad. At this point I am confused. I don't think that the majority of the people in this county want to have any change. I am not saying that this is my feeling. There are some things I want to see changed. As a citizen I want to give the people of this county what they want. We should be guided by what the people want. I don't think we were mandated to come up with a charter. The majority of the people are not in favor of any particular change. They all have a few things within our county government that they would like to see changed. As far as I am concerned, there are a lot of changes that should be made within the framework of our government.
- Mr. Pombo: I am not for any kind of charter. These people are wasting their time. I will campaign against this at the next election.
- Mr. Boyum: As a citizen, I would like a point of clarification. If you people decide not to present a type of charter, is it still possible to have a referendum to say whether you want to have a change or not?
- Mr. Yokouchi: If we decide against a change, we will just submit our report to the legislature. If we decide we need a change, we will submit our draft to the Board of Supervisors, who can make amendments.
- Mr. Hayashi: Is it possible for the Charter Commission to come up with more than one form of government from which people can choose?
- Mr. Yokouchi: We will submit one charter to the board and they can amend such charter. Our duty is to come up with one charter.
- Jack Clayton: We will not get a change if we do nothing. The chart is going to get bigger and bigger. So we do need a change. Everybody admitted that we need a change here and there. I am not familiar with the various types of government, but I say we need a change.

After thanking everyone for attending the hearing, the Chair called for adjournment at 9:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Harriette E. Miyamoto
HARRIETTE E. MIYAMOTO
Secretary