

MINUTES

of the

PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON

MAY 10, 2019

THE COUNCIL OF THE COUNTY OF MAUI, STATE OF HAWAII, CONVENED A PUBLIC HEARING ON FRIDAY, MAY 10, 2019, AT 10:00 A.M., IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KALANA O MAUI BUILDING, WAILUKU, HAWAII WITH CHAIR KELLY T. KING PRESIDING, FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING TESTIMONY, PURSUANT TO SECTION 249-13, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES, AND SECTION 3.24.030, MAUI COUNTY CODE, REGARDING THE MOTOR VEHICLE WEIGHT TAX RATES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020.

CHAIR KING: Aloha, Maui County. This is the Maui County Council Public Hearing of May 10, 2019, it is 10:00 a.m. and calling the meeting to order.

Mr. Clerk, can you call roll for us?

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: COUNCILMEMBERS SHANE M. SINENCI, MICHAEL J. MOLINA, ALICE L. LEE, TAMARA A.M. PALTIN, YUKI LEI K. SUGIMURA, NATALIE A. KAMA, VICE-CHAIR KEANI N.W. RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ AND CHAIR KELLY T. KING.

EXCUSED: COUNCILMEMBER G. RIKI HOKAMA.

(Councilmember Hokama was not present the roll was called; however, he arrived at 10:01 a.m.)

COUNTY CLERK JOSIAH K. NISHITA: Madam Chair, Councilmember Hokama has just entered the meeting, so we have nine Members present.

CHAIR KING: Okay. Good morning, Mr. Hokama. Again, we will start with, first of all I will ask everybody again to silence their noise makers in case you turned them back on from the previous public hearing. And we're going to go ahead and start with testimony from Molokai. I guess we have two people over there.

Mr. Clerk.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

COUNTY CLERK: Madam Chair, the Notice of Public Hearing on the proposed Weight Tax rates for the County of Maui, effective July 1, 2019 was published on April 30 and May 5, 2019 editions of the Maui News.

The public is invited to provide testimony before the Council regarding the proposed Weight Tax rates for the County of Maui, for Fiscal Year 2020.

Currently, we have two testifiers at our Molokai District Office. Molokai District Office, please introduce your first testifier?

MS. ZHANTELL LINDO: Aloha, Chair. This is Zhan at the Molokai District Office. Our first testifier is Liko Wallace.

PRESENTATION OF WRITTEN OR ORAL TESTIMONY

MS. LIKO WALLACE:

Aloha, Chair King, and Councilmembers. My name is Liko Wallace, I am a resident of Molokai and would like to speak against the proposed raise in vehicle weight tax.

In our rural community, both of us own and use heavier vehicles and raising the tax would affect a large portion of our community. I suppose the idea is that the heavier the vehicle the more we put a strain on the roads, but the truth is, a large majority of our travel isn't on paved roads. In addition, tourist who rent cars contribute nothing to the weight tax for our County, yet they use the roads also. I'm not here to dispute the need for taxes or ask to be exempt from our responsibility as a citizen to contribute to our infrastructure. I would however, like to, like us to try and figure out different, more creative ways to get the money we need, rather than tax the people who are already struggling to survive.

Because our lifestyle on Molokai, older, heavier vehicles cost us a lot on fuel but they are necessary. Raising the weight tax would not benefit us, keiki o ka aina, in rural communities. I also would like to lower the \$16 late fee for registration. On Molokai, we only have two workers, and a lot of times one is absent. So, those of us that come on our lunch hour to pay have to stand in line and a lot of times have to leave before that, the opportunity to pay our taxes is available.

So, I understand that you guys have a kiosk there that is available to Maui people and if we could have a kiosk here, that could be used during the evenings or on weekends when our office is not available, then I know we wouldn't have late fees. Anyway, that is my take on the thing. I appreciate you hearing my testimony. Mahalo.

CHAIR KING: Mahalo, Ms. Wallace. Any questions, Councilmembers? No, questions. Okay, next testifier.

MS. LINDO: Our next testifier is, Pualani Pua'o Dawson.

MS. ELIZABETH PUALANI PUA'O'I DAWSON:

Aloha kakahiaka, Councilmembers. My name is Elizabeth Pualani Pua'oi Dawson, from the Hoolehua Homestead Association and I am also a homesteader in Hoolehua.

I oppose the vehicle tax also, as Liko Wallace does. As she said, we are a very rural community here and own old trucks which cost us high tax registration here. I'm also agreeing with her with the kiosk machine. Cause, as she said, we have two workers, the office is full, we have to go on lunch breaks, which is only half an hour here. By the time we get to the office, the line is so long.

We pay late taxes here, late registration fees. So, that's a big thing here on Molokai, we're paying more late taxes here than we are anywhere else. And our gas taxes here is the highest in the State, you know, raising that gas tax, was, I oppose that. Yeah, we'd like to see a kiosk machine here, so maybe on weekends we can pay our property taxes, vehicle taxes. That would help our island.

I oppose the \$80 for license renewal. When I went to pay my license, and they said \$80, I couldn't believe it. I went to Honolulu, my sister paid hers there, it was only \$40, you know, I mean, you doubled our payment here on Molokai and for the County of Maui. I don't think that's fair for our people.

So, in closing, I hope you consider our request. Hope to give more feedback in the future. Mahalo.

CHAIR KING: Mahalo. Any questions, Councilmembers? No questions. Okay, thank you very much for your testimony.

Mr. Clerk.

COUNTY CLERK: Molokai District Office, do you have any additional testifiers?

MS. LINDO: Yes, we do.

COUNTY CLERK: Could you call your next testifier, please?

MS. ZHANTELL LINDO:

Sure. Chair, I am, I've asked to take a 5-minute vacation time to be able to testify, so on my own behalf, as a community resident. My name is Zhantell Lindo and I am testifying as a community resident off the clock.

CHAIR KING: Okay.

MS. LINDO: I needed to stand up and speak for the people who walk in and out of this office through the last couple weeks. Really concerned about the raising of the vehicle weight tax in particular.

There is a huge amount of our Molokai population that would if they could, I guess, buy smaller, lighter vehicles. And, but that wouldn't serve the purpose by which we choose to live on Molokai. I know that when we calculate the dollars and cents it seems like \$8 - \$80 is not a lot compared to all the wonderful things we want to do with that money and how we want to help our community. But for people like my grandparents on a fixed income of \$600 a month, an extra, the extra dollars mean a lot.

The fuel prices continue to rise and we all understand that taxes help us to sustain our community, but I watch our kupuna on fixed income and that's just, pretty much the make-up of our community, is kupuna and families that already are subsidized by the government a great deal.

So, when we taxing as government officials and we are making larger amounts on things like the vehicle weight tax, we really just taking back the money that we gave to them. And so, I guess I'm sitting here in my capacity and watching these things go on and hoping that the Council can come up with little bit more creative ways of helping our community to pay what we need to pay and get the things that we need to get without taxing the things that are necessary to their livelihood.

So, I think that the community, I think that a lot of the world gets Molokai wrong, they think that we want to be exempt from everything. I think we are a really responsible community and we realize we get subsidized by a lot by Maui and, and all that stuff. But I also know that, if we continue to put a weight on the very livelihood of how we support ourselves, we going dig one deeper economic hole for Molokai than we already are in.

And so, like we may not consider for not taxing the tourist because they are our economic engine, I would ask that the Council give special consideration to people in rural areas that have heavier vehicles and use them, not because they have to, but because that's the way that they are able to survive in their community and with the work that they do. Mahalo.

CHAIR KING: Mahalo, Ms. Lindo. Any questions? No questions. Okay, thank you for taking the time to testify.

Mr. Clerk.

MS. LINDO: Thank you. There are no more testifiers on Molokai.

COUNTY CLERK: Thank you. The first person we have to testify in the chamber is Trinette Furtado. Ms. Furtado is the last individual who signed up to testify in the Council chamber or at the District Offices.

MS. TRINETTE FURTADO:

Aloha, Chair and Councilmembers. My name is Trinette Furtado, I am taking vacation time and I'm speaking as a individual on the weight tax and the delinquency tax.

I believe that both are also, both are unfair for many of the reasons that the Molokai testifiers have iterated to you. Older vehicles, heavier vehicles are used not only by our rural residents, but by kupuna, by people who cannot afford newer vehicles that are lighter, that may be more gas efficient, that may not have so much wear and tear on the roads. These are also maintained by people who can barely afford the cost of living; that maybe live paycheck to paycheck, or maybe have just encountered an emergency they did not account for and now find themselves either houseless and living in that car, or trying to figure out how to pay a delinquency tax because they could not pay for that car.

I agree with the, all of the testifiers on Molokai that we need more kiosks, we need them available in more rural areas. Having moved from Haiku, right now being in Kula, I see a lot of our farm vehicles, our trucks, you know, people that are working from really early in the morning to really late in the afternoon that cannot make it down here; that perhaps don't have access to the internet, because the signal is bad on Omaopio Road and you know, I don't know how many farmers have Spectrum or Hawaiian Tel.

But you know, I mean, just the kinds of technology that we're embracing and we're asking our community to embrace, we must also remember that there are vast segments of our community that don't have access to that, and thus become delinquent

on paying these, these taxes. And so we need to take that into consideration because some people are on fixed incomes and they just, that extra money really does make a difference between whether they can pay their rent, whether they can continue to put gas in those cars to go to work, you know, whether they can continue to provide those basic things for themselves and their families that they need. So I ask you to take that into consideration when you deliberate this. Thank you.

CHAIR KING: Mahalo. Any questions, Council? No questions. Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. Clerk.

COUNTY CLERK: Madam Chair, there are no other individuals in the District Offices nor the chamber who wish to offer testimony and we have received written testimony for this meeting.

CHAIR KING: Okay, so, is there any objection to receiving written testimony into the record?

MEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTION.

THERE BEING NO OBJECTION, WRITTEN TESTIMONY
RECEIVED FROM PAMELA TUMPAP OF THE MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WAS MADE A PART OF THE
RECORD OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING:

CHAIR KING: Okay. And seeing no other testify, any other testifiers in the chamber who would like to come forward? Seeing no other testifiers. Any objections to closing public testimony?

MEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTION.

CHAIR KING: Okay, public testimony is closed and no further business, so we will entertain a motion to adjourn.

VICE-CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ:

SO MOVED.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE:

SECOND.

CHAIR KING: Moved by Ms. Rawlins-Fernandez, seconded by Councilmember Lee. All those in favor say, "aye".

AYES: COUNCILMEMBERS HOKAMA, KAMA, LEE,
MOLINA, PALTIN, SINENCI, SUGIMURA,
VICE-CHAIR RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ, AND
CHAIR KING.

CHAIR KING: Okay, the public testimony on Weight Tax for May 10 is now adjourned at 10:13. We will see you at 11:00.

ADJOURNMENT

The public hearing of May 10, 2019, was adjourned by the Chair at 10:13 a.m.



JOSIAH K. NISHITA, COUNTY CLERK
COUNTY OF MAUI, STATE OF HAWAII



MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
VOICE OF BUSINESS

**Testimony on the Proposed FY20 Vehicle Weight Tax Rates
Friday, May 10, 2019**

Dear Chair Rawlins-Fernandez, Vice-Chair King and
Members of the Economic Development and Budget Committee,

Aloha and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Vehicle Weight Tax rates.

We appreciate that the Mayor sought to keep these rates the same as he was seeking an increase Real Property Tax to generate additional revenue.

As we support shared investment and believe in the Rotary model of being fair to all concerned, we appreciate that the Council is looking at the same level of increase for the two vehicle weight categories. However, we are concerned with multiple proposals to increase costs for residents and businesses in different areas and want to insure the overall impact on all levels is being considered in terms of family and business incomes and budgets.

We are also concerned with the doubling of penalties for late registration, even though it is doubled for both categories. We recognize that penalties are established to improve compliance and the Chamber stands for compliance with applicable laws, however, many businesses will be hit much harder for the same mistake as businesses often have fleets of cars that need to be registered on the same day. Therefore, we ask that the penalties be left as they are now.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. We ask for additional consideration of these two points.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President