

**RES22-286
Testimony**

MISC. COMM. 35

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Jan 25, 2023 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 0

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 1

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Representing: Self	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Jan 25, 2023 @ 08:55 AM

ORDER OF BUSINESS
REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
2ND SESSION
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2023
10 A.M.

Resolution 22-286

Confirming the nomination of Dawn E. Takeuchi Apuna to serve as the Director of Planning and Permitting of the City and County of Honolulu.

Aloha Chair Waters and City Council members:

I wish to share some thoughts about the Department of Planning and Permitting and hopes for a better future and culture for DPP.

It's been a perennial joke and ridicule amongst many that DPP is the Department of Permitting and Permitting. Or DPP is the Department of Pay to Play.

Whether it's fair or not, there had also been recent serious indictments against a few workers.

My experiences with DPP have mostly been good. The workers are very helpful and eager to help the public. I recall a long time ago when we instinctively offered a DPP inspector a plate lunch, like we offered to other workers during a construction inspection. But that inspector refused that plate lunch saying that he was not supposed to do that so there was no bad appearance. We were so impressed.

My hope for DPP is that it will **respect private property rights** and not be too quick to unduly punish harshly our residents who may have problems. **DPP's goal ought to be how it can help Oahu's residents correct their discrepancies and shortcomings by being fair and consistent across the board.**

DPP cannot abuse its strong arm of the government for political retaliations on those who disagree with a Mayor's agenda. We've witnessed DPP being nefariously used by past Mayors with fabricated violations, visits from DPP inspectors threatening fines or

holding up permits and so on.

Personally, the recent treatment of the immigrant family relating to Resolution 22-011 was one of the worse bullying cases I've witnessed in my years of participation at Honolulu Hale. It was a very poor and unethical action of our former city council woman with a huge personal ambition for herself - who **did not** provide sufficient vetting of the circumstances and problems. Instead of reaching out to educate and help her uneducated constituents to correct their violations, she created a toxic situation that stirred up a lot of strife and pit neighbors against neighbors. The record shows she was personally set on destroying this constituent through inaccurate accusations for whatever motives she might have.

I was also astounded to hear the former DPP Director vilified the subject property owner during public hearings to the extent of repeatedly accusing (wrongly) this immigrant constituent of "flipping the bird at us". This was an incendiary rhetoric of a city official.

We certainly understand that neighbors must have the right to voice their concerns and opinions. But DPP must always be above the fray and be a knowledgeable and educated peacemaker in the public interest. DPP must be fair and consistent to all of its constituents, even if a city council member may not be. But we're asking for understanding, consistency, and compassion for our residents.

Through my years of involvement in real estate, there appears to be an increasingly "cultural divide" between some residents. Some appear to be very concerned about the lifestyle or the "cleanliness" of their neighbors and become unhappy when neighbors do not reciprocate to their perceptions or meet their "mainland" tidy standards. I've also seen tenants sabotaged landlords by vandalizing the homes and then reporting to DPP about safety concerns and so on. DPP had been known to make a kupuna to tear down their unpermitted tiny handicap ramp to their front entry door while other more major discrepancies were ignored by DPP.

It's not easy to manage DPP. We understand this. But,

**NO MATTER HOW THINLY THE CHEESE IS SLICED,
THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO IT.**

Above all, DPP must **respect private property rights**. Not many of our local residents are born with a silver spoon in their mouths. Most property owners work their tails off for real property ownership. Their property is usually the biggest investment in their lives and that of their families. **DPP's role out to be helping residents correct their discrepancies not seize their property through Power of Sale based on DPP fines.**

I have high hopes for Dawn Apuna to being fair, consistent and being open to all residents.

Mahalo, Choon James

