



**CITY COUNCIL**  
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Honolulu City and County Salary Commission  
Malia Espinda, Chair  
Carolee Kubo, Vice Chair  
Sarah E. Guay, Commissioner  
David Hayakawa, Commissioner  
Rebecca Soon, Commissioner  
Lila T. Tom, Commissioner

Dear Chair Espinda, Vice Chair Kubo and Members of the Commission:

Thank you for your questions and providing me with the opportunity to share about my responsibilities as a Councilmember representing District 3 for the City and County of Honolulu.

**1. What do you consider to be your duties as a Councilmember beyond attendance at the monthly City Council Meetings?**

My duties as a Councilmember include, but are not limited to community engagement and outreach, policy development and advocacy, and collaboration with the City Administration.

**Community Engagement and Community Outreach**

Constituent engagement and community outreach is a critical part of my job. I prepare for and participate in multiple neighborhood board meetings, community townhalls, district site visits, and other community-related activities. These sometimes occur after normal work hours or on the weekends. I also respond to hundreds of daily emails and phone calls, and track and follow-up on constituent concerns with various City departments. Responding to constituent concerns takes up about 40% of my time.

COUNCIL COM. 110  
SALARY

## **Policy Development and Advocacy**

As an elected official, policy development and advocacy is the primary role of a Councilmember. This includes drafting, analyzing, and reviewing policies, regulations, legislation, and other forms of communications. I believe in order to be an effective policy-maker, one has to synthesize an enormous amount of information, including current policy, how current policies are implemented, proposed solutions and policy amendments, as well as input from District 3 constituents, subject matter experts, other impacted or concerned stakeholders, and City Administration officials. City Council and Departmental-related responsibilities include preparation for and participation in Council meetings, committee meetings, executive sessions, and meetings with the Administration and directors of departments on district related projects. Policy development and advocacy takes up 40% of my time.

## **Collaboration with the City Administration**

Collaboration with the City Administration is important to our role as City Councilmembers as the City Administration implements our city budget priorities as well as laws passed by the City Council. They are also important in addressing district projects that fall under the kuleana of the Mayor's offices and/or individual departments. The most active in my District include the Managing Director's Office, the Honolulu Police Department, the Honolulu Fire Department, the Department of Transportation Services, the Department of Emergency Services (including Ocean Safety), the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Community Services, the Department of Facility Maintenance, and the Department of Environmental Services. Such collaboration takes up 20% of my time.

## **2. How many Committees do you sit on, and what are the time and duties requirements entailed?**

I sit on and am a voting member of seven committees: Planning and the Economy, which I Chair; Housing, Sustainability and Health, which I am Vice-Chair; Budget; Zoning; Transportation; Executive Matters and Legal Affairs; and Executive Management. All Councilmembers are also members of the Committee on Kapi'olani Park Trustees. Interestingly, there are no committee staff or subject matter expertise allocated to City Council Committee chairs. As a result, we must utilize our personal staff for all legislative, budget, or policy matters that are referred to our committees that we chair. In my case, -as Chair of the Planning and the Economy Committee, in addition to the time needed to plan for the consideration of pending legislation on timely issues before the committee, a lot of time is spent the other three weeks of the month preparing for my committee hearings as well as all other committee hearings that I sit on.

Committee week requires a significant commitment by myself and all Councilmembers. This requires me to become familiar with and in some cases an expert on subject matters before the committee I chair, including economic recovery, economic diversification, and long-term economic development; shoreline protection and special management area processes; the land use ordinance; the American Rescue Plan Act

(ARPA) and other federal assistance programs; historic preservation; and many more diverse issues. Committee week also requires me to keep track of all pending legislation and budget matters relating to my other committee assignments, which includes the key Budget and Zoning Committees.

As Councilmembers, we are also allowed to attend and actively participate in other committees as a non-member. Because there are a lot city park legislation that impacts my district, I actively participate and advocate for District 3 interests before the Parks, Enterprise Services and Culture and the Arts Committee.

**3. Approximately how much time do you estimate that you spend per week during a typical month in executing these duties?**

During a typical month, I dedicate 40 – 50+ hours a week to my duties as a Councilmember.

**4. Are there busier periods than a typical month, such as during the Budget process? If so, please describe those duties and time requirements.**

Yes, there are busier periods for Councilmembers than a typical month including the Budget process that requires extra hearings over a number of consecutive days. During this time, it is typical for my staff and I to invest additional work hours to prepare, participate and follow up on various items that are discussed in hearings.

Another busy period is the week prior to the committee week when we are deciding on legislative amendments that I may want to introduce to be heard during committee week, as well as committee week itself. Committee week is the busiest of all times every month. However, there really is not a week out of the month where full dedication by my staff and I are not needed relating to community engagement and outreach, as well as policy and budgetary advocacy.

Again, as Councilmembers, we are also allowed to attend and actively participate in other committees as non-members, and I often attend and participate before the Parks, Enterprise Services and Culture and the Arts Committee.

**5. Can you help describe Councilmember duties related to representation of your communities and constituents that may be harder to quantify?**

The City and County of Honolulu impacts quality of life for communities on a daily basis. Therefore, constituent engagement and outreach is a 24/7 job. Constituents contact us at all hours through phone calls or emails, including for emergencies like a fallen tree, stream flooding, a sinkhole, severe traffic congestion, etc. Oftentimes, response on our end requires us calling the relevant City Administration agency to address the issue immediately. For complicated and long-term projects, I do site visits with my staff or in concert with the relevant city agency with kuleana over the issue.

We are also contacted by Administration officials at all hours of the day when there is an emergency, whether it be the Board of Water Supply updating me on a water main break on Kailua Road on April 22, 2023, or the Department of Environmental Services notifying us of an elevated count of bacteria in treated effluent at the Kailua Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant on April 21, 2023.

Hundreds of non-emergency calls and emails occur daily as well, and follow-up is needed if it is a city issue or, if not, we coordinate with our elected officials from the state or federal governments. Due to the sheer volume of emails, often times I have to respond to constituents during the evenings or weekends just to keep up with the workload.

My responsibilities often require me to attend meetings or events in the evenings and on the weekends. Schools, organizations, or individuals in my district or on O'ahu often reach out for my participation and support of various events and activities, and I attend as many as possible. I also regularly attend the four Neighborhood Board meetings in my Council District 3 - Waimānalo, Kailua, Kāne'ohe, and Kahalu'u. Each month, I invest hours to prepare for, participate in and then follow-up on community concerns that are addressed during these meetings.

**6. Is there anything you think we should know regarding the pressure or impact of Councilmember duties on your personal or family life and health?**

I have been in public service for well over 30 years, at the city, state, and federal levels of government. Although this is my first elected position, both Councilmembers and staff members equally have a lot of responsibilities and duties to fulfill the important kuleana we have to meet the needs of the people of the City and County of Honolulu. Unlike my 24 years of public service in Washington D.C., when I was away from my 'ohana, my work as a Councilmember does not adversely impact my personal life or health. While it can be challenging to balance work, my personal life, and my health, I consider it an honor and unique opportunity to be able to serve my community in this way.

Sincerely,



ESTHER KIA'AINA  
COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 3  
WAIMĀNALO, KAILUA AND KĀNE'OHE