

O'AHU HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
KOMIKINA A'OA'O MĀLAMA HALE KUMUPA'A O O'AHU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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MAYOR
MEIA



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THOMAS S. DYE

April 11, 2024

The Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair and Presiding Officer
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Proposed City Fiscal Year 2025 Budget
O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission (OHPC)

The OHPC has been meeting regularly and is on the verge of attaining full Certified Local Government status. In our monthly meetings, the Commission has been ably assisted by Mr. Michael Kat from the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP).

The Commission seeks to address systemic gaps in historic preservation efforts and to provide recommendations that simultaneously strengthen and streamline historic preservation reviews. However, the Commission realizes it has little ability to affect change at the moment.

The success of the OHPC will hinge on the support it gets from the City Council through the DPP, particularly via the Commission's designated full-time staff member who would be able to act on behalf of our volunteer commission. Mr. Kat is currently on special assignment to support our Commission, which is his "second job" at DPP, as a Planner VI (i.e. SR26, \$74,124). We understand that the civil service position for the Commission's staff position is currently being budgeted by the DPP at a Planner V level (i.e. SR24, \$68,556), based on the assumption that the work involved is akin to the role of an archaeologist at the State Historic Preservation Division.

However, our Commission believes that what is needed to support our work involves the type of skills possessed by Mr. Kat, which exceeds the skills of a field archaeologist. Specifically, we require a staff member who has experience in working

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with historic preservation laws, archaeology, historic architecture, geographic information systems, urban and regional planning (as a discipline), the City and County of Honolulu's planning and permitting processes, the State Historic Preservation Division's processes, and federal historic preservation processes that may be overlaid upon our local regimes

We worry that the requested civil service position will not attract qualified individuals based on the wide range of skills required and high-level of work involved. The DPP already struggles to fill positions that are not competitive with the State or private sector. Creating a position that will not be competitive will only add to the large number of vacancies at the DPP. Furthermore, retention of qualified individuals will be difficult at the proposed position level as there currently would be no means to advance aside from applying for other City positions. As the Commission is still working to get established, it is essential to have a dedicated staff member that can assist the Commission in growing the City's historic preservation program.


We have already expressed our concerns to the City's Department of the Human Resources regarding the job description for our staff position. On March 8, 2024, we sent a letter to Director Nola M. Miyasaki advocating that the job description for our staff member be recast to align with our above request.

We are hopeful that you and members of City Council might now reconsider the DPP's budget plans to provide our Commission with a staff member at a Planner V position but instead provide us with a staff member akin to a Planner VI.

Our Commission's ability to fulfill the volunteer roles the Mayor and City Council have charged us with will rest in large part on our ability to have appropriate staff support. We humbly request your support and urge you to reconsider the budget for our staffing to be aligned with our above request.

We would be happy to discuss any of this with you, as desired.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Kēhaunani Abad". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kēhaunani Abad
Chair

cc: Director Dawn Takeuchi Apuna, DPP