# REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ZONING

**Voting Members:**
Esther Kia'āina, Chair; Tyler Dos Santos-Tam, Vice-Chair;
Radiant Cordero, Val A. Okimoto, Matt Weyer

Committee Meeting Held
February 13, 2025

Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair, City Council
City and County of Honolulu

Mr. Chair:

Your Committee on Zoning, which considered Resolution 25-19 entitled:

"RESOLUTION CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION OF DAWN E. TAKEUCHI APUNA TO SERVE AS THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU,"

introduced on January 2, 2025, reports as follows:

The purpose of Resolution 25-19 is to confirm the nomination of Dawn E. Takeuchi Apuna to serve as the Director of Planning and Permitting ("DPP Director") of the City and County of Honolulu. The Mayor has requested Council confirmation of the nomination of Dawn Takeuchi Apuna through Mayor's Message 1 (2025), dated January 2, 2025.

A public hearing on Dawn Takeuchi Apuna's appointment was held at the Council meeting on January 29, 2025.

At your Committee's meeting on February 13, 2025, Dawn Takeuchi Apuna provided a brief introduction, expressed her willingness to serve as the DPP Director, and responded to questions from Councilmembers, which are summarized below.

Dawn Takeuchi Apuna's past accomplishments include reducing the building permit backlog through efficiencies in the prescreening and code review phases of the process; converting hardcopy building permit plans to electronic plans; upgrading the e-plans system so applicants are able to check on the status of their applications; procuring major software to facilitate the permitting process; increasing monster home



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enforcement efforts; and providing assistance and support to staff, particularly in the aftermath of the federal indictments of five current and former employees of the Department of Planning and Permitting ("DPP") for accepting bribes.

If confirmed, Dawn Takeuchi Apuna's future priorities include executing on procured technology to obtain optimal efficiencies; educating users of the technologies; further streamlining the permitting processes, including launching a pre-approved plans process for accessory dwelling units; and adding personnel capacity and increasing staff training.

Topics of discussion included focusing on people and personnel capacity by hiring, training, retaining, and paying staff a competitive salary; addressing differential shortages and competitive pay scales for plan reviewers, inspectors, and planners; rewriting job descriptions for DPP positions to better align with the necessary skills, duties, and responsibilities for each DPP position; collecting on outstanding civil fines and making an example of substantial violators to send the message that the City is seriously pursuing enforcement efforts and fine collections; consolidating all DPP-related enforcement provisions in one place in the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021; working toward the more timely adoption of administrative rules in response to enacted policy changes, and cooperating to implement the policy changes; addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies by determining what is necessary and what is a temporary or outdated solution that is no longer needed; moving some of the DPP's responsibilities relating to affordable housing to the proposed new Department of Housing and Land Management; and focusing on better dissemination of information and notification of DPP public hearings.

Other areas of discussion evolved around certain automatic approvals of building permit applications after three months, where applicants may proceed with construction at their own risk, subject to satisfaction of all code requirements; plans to phase out nonconforming short-term rental uses, and a possible interim proposal to prohibit the transfer of nonconforming status upon the sale of the property; the next phase of updates to the Land Use Ordinance, which will be Article 2, regarding administration, enforcement, and permit procedures; examples of group living and distance requirements between



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group living facilities; the DPP's opposition to a proposal before the Hawai'i State Legislature to eliminate Council approval of 201H project exemptions; and DPP staffing needs to implement post-construction grants and potential pre-construction subsidies for low-rise affordable rental housing projects.

Your Committee received no verbal or written public testimony on the Resolution.

Your Committee finds that Dawn E. Takeuchi Apuna meets all qualifications required to serve as the Director of Planning and Permitting.

Your Committee on Zoning is in accord with the intent and purpose of Resolution 25-19 and recommends its adoption. (Ayes: Cordero, Dos Santos-Tam, Kia'āina, Okimoto, Weyer – 5; Noes: None.)

Respectfully submitted,

Committee Chair

**HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL**
***Ke Kanihela o ke Kalana o Honolulu***
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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