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
April 3, 2025

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

Mr. Chair:

Your Committee on Zoning, to which was referred the review and evaluation of the Oahu Historic Preservation Commission pursuant to Ordinance 17-44 (codified as ROH Chapter 3, Article 15), reports as follows:

The purpose of the review and evaluation is to determine whether the Charter provisions and ordinance establishing the Oahu Historic Preservation Commission should be retained, amended, or repealed. Ordinance 17-44 implements Charter Section 13-103.2, which mandates the periodic review and evaluation of certain City boards and commissions as required by ordinance.

The O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission ("Commission") was initially established in 1993 by Ordinance 93-55, but was never constituted. The Commission was subsequently re-established in 2022 by Resolution 22-279, codified as Section 6-1518, Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu 1973 (Amended 2017 Edition), as amended ("Charter"), and Ordinance 22-33, codified as Chapter 3, Article 10, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021 ("ROH"). Commission members were appointed, and the Commission has been meeting and undertaking its responsibilities.

The purpose of the Commission is to:

1. Protect and preserve historic properties and artifacts in the City and where appropriate, encourage their special emphasis and attention to the cultural resources of the Native Hawaiian people;

2. Encourage the restoration, rehabilitation, and continued functional use of historic properties;

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3. Encourage the identification, preservation, maintenance, development, promotion, and enhancement of those historic properties, which represent or reflect distinctive elements of cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history, and to encourage the designation of historic properties, thereby ensuring that our cultural and historic heritage will be imparted to present and future generations of residents and visitors; and

4. Formulate City-wide comprehensive historic preservation policies, programs, and plans.

The Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. Commission members are appointed from among professionals and persons with special interest in the following disciplines: architecture, history, archaeology, planning, architectural history, Hawaiian culture, anthropology, ethnography, and sociology. The membership of the Commission must include an expert in Native Hawaiian culture issues and in archaeology.

The current Commissioners, and their respective areas of expertise are as follows:

Chair Kehaunani Abad — Archaeologist
Vice Chair Glenn E. Mason — Architect
Kristina Bushnell — Urban Planner
Mahealani Cypher — Native Hawaiian Cultural Historian
Richard D. Davis — Archaeologist
Thomas S. Dye — Archaeologist
Hailama V.K.K. Farden — Native Hawaiian Cultural Historian
N. Mehanaokala Hind — Native Hawaiian Cultural Historian
Kai E. White — Architectural Historian

By Departmental Communication 85 (2025), dated January 31, 2025, the Commission submitted to the Council a report on its accomplishments and activities, as required by Ordinance 17-44 (ROH § 3-15.4).

The Commission's report provides information on the Commission's accomplishments, challenges, transparency efforts, communication efforts, operating costs, and a recommendation that ROH Chapter 3, Article 10, which governs the O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission, be retained without change.

Specifically, the Commission's report highlighted its accomplishment of obtaining Local Government Certification under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which allows the City to qualify for funding under the Federal Historic Preservation Program. This is a significant accomplishment, and it makes Hawaii the first state to have 100 percent county participation in this federal program. With this certification, the Commission is preparing a federal grant application to fund a project in Kailua, on behalf of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs, to identify archaeological sensitive areas and provide better protection for iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains).

In its report, the Commission also requested the establishment of a dedicated full-time staff position to oversee the Commission and manage all of the duties and responsibilities of a historic preservation program. Currently, the Commission is assisted by a Department of Planning and Permitting ("DPP") staff planner, who is supporting the Commission and serving as the Commission's staff archaeologist on a part-time special assignment basis.

At your Committee's meeting on March 6, 2025, the DPP staff planner who assists the Commission provided a brief overview of the Commission's report and recommendation.

The DPP Director responded to questions from Councilmembers relating to the importance of having a dedicated administrative staff position to maintain the City Certified Local Government status, the DPP's efforts to establish the position through a reorganization, and the inclusion of funding for the position in the Mayor's proposed Executive Operating Budget. To reduce the current review backlog at the State Historic Preservation Division ("SHPD"), one of the Commission's objectives is to identify what types of review need to be completed by SHPD, and what types of review could be handled by the Commission. The O'ahu historic property system is being maintained and consistently updated, and there should not be any registered historic properties on the O'ahu system that are not on SHPD system. However, the O'ahu system also includes a short list of properties that may have historic value and are potentially eligible for listing (eligible for nomination but have not yet been registered), or that may have historic value but are not currently eligible for listing. The Commission has started the rulemaking process. The Commission currently uses the DPP's general email mailbox address, but the Councilmembers suggested assigning the Commission a unique email address for public contact purposes.

Commissioner Mahealani Cypher provided insight on the Commission's efforts to enhance the review process to ensure the protection of important legendary and historic places. The Commission has been working to improve communications with SHPD and assist with making SHPD's database easier to navigate. The Commission is also creating an educational brochure that discusses the importance of historic City-owned property, with guidelines on proper maintenance. Ideally, the Commission needs four staff members: a historian, researcher, archaeologist, and architect. The Commission appreciates the support the DPP provides, and acknowledges that government human resources is often challenging. The Department of the Corporation Counsel provides guidance to the Commission at its meetings.

At your Committee's meeting on March 6, 2025, one individual testified in support of the Commission. Your Committee received written testimony in support of the Commission from Community Advocacy Research Education Services (CARES).

At your Committee's meeting on April 3, 2025, the DPP Director testified that the DPP has no objections to the proposed Committee Report. Your Committee received no verbal or written public testimony on the Commission.

Your Committee, after due consideration, finds that the Commission has been dutifully carrying out its duties and responsibilities under ROH § 3-10.7, to among other things:

1. Advise and assist federal, State, and City government agencies, including SHPD, in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities;

2. Provide public information, public advocacy, education, training, and technical assistance relating to the national and State historic preservation programs;

3. Identify historic properties for potential inclusion in the Hawaii or national registers of historic places;

4. Maintain the O'ahu historic property system, and improve the interface with the State historic property system;

5. Qualify for and administer the certified local government program;

6. Prepare administrative rules to administer and enforce the City's historic preservation program; and

7. Assist with the historic preservation of City-owned historic properties;

Based on the foregoing, your Committee recommends that the O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission be retained without change, amendment, or repeal.

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

Your Committee on Zoning recommends that this Committee Report be scheduled for a public hearing and be adopted by the Council as the Council's determination on the review and evaluation of the O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission. (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

ADOPTED ON APR 16 2025

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