

2000 APR 28 PM 3 29

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
COUNTY OF HAWAII



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

April 25, 2008

Mr. Christopher J. Yuen
Planning Director
County of Hawaii
101 Pauahi Street, Suite 3
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-4224

Dear Mr. Yuen:

The Department of Education (DOE) has reviewed the draft Puna Community Development Plan and would like to offer some comments and clarification.

A look at the actual enrollments of the seven schools in the Keaau and Pahoa complexes indicates that the schools in the area are no larger and sometimes considerably smaller than statewide school size averages.

The use of school facilities by community groups is guided by a DOE policy on use of facilities. Principals have to weigh school uses first, then they can accommodate outside groups.

The integration of schools into the community is a function of individuals supporting and being involved in the schools. DOE policies have very little to do with the strength of individual relationships developed over time.

In the last 20 years, the DOE has built 27 new schools statewide. Three of those schools are in Puna, including one of only four high schools built in the last 20 years and two of the 17 elementary schools built in that time.

One of the "Objectives" in the plan urges the state to locate school facilities in designated village/town centers and to design them appropriately to those centers. The DOE locates and designs its schools with great effort to involve the community supporting the school. There are site selection studies and community charette exercises to determine the best location and the most appropriate design for new schools. Charettes were used for the design of Keaau High and Keaau Elementary schools.

Mr. Christopher J. Yuen

Page 2

April 25, 2008

Enrollments at all seven public schools in Puna are relatively stable. Most of the schools' enrollments are declining slightly, except for Mountain View and Keonepoko elementary schools which have averaged an annual gain of 11 students in the past five years. We project that enrollments will grow slowly at all schools during the next five years, with only Pahoia High and Intermediate expected to decline by approximately 100 students. All schools currently have an excess in student capacity and they are expected to continue having extra capacity through the next five years.

In the list of "Actions" directed towards the DOE, all of the recommended actions are things DOE has little to no influence over. Only the Legislature could change one school board into many local school boards. The Legislature is also responsible for the cap on the formation of charter schools. Finally the Legislature is the only body that could allow the construction of smaller schools at more dispersed locations by providing a significant amount of additional funding. Without the control of a major source of funding, a Puna or East Hawaii school board could do very little to bring about the goals, objectives and actions outlined in your draft plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft plan. If you have any questions, please call Heidi Meeker of the Facilities Development Branch at (808) 377-8301.

Very truly yours,



Patricia Hamamoto
Superintendent

PH:jmb

cc: Randolph Moore, Assistant Superintendent, OSFSS
Duane Kashiwai, Public Works Administrator, FDB
Mary Correa, CAS, Kau/Keaau/Pahoia Complex Areas