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**REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY  
Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 12:30 p.m.**

**Virtual Meeting**

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Todd Apo (Chair), Mahina Paishon (Vice-Chair), Kimberly Agas, David Arakawa, Stephanie Iona, Mufi Hannemann, James McCully, Lisa Paulson, Roy Pfund, James Tokioka (Ex Officio, DBEDT Director), Mike White

**MEMBER NOT PRESENT:**

Chris West

**HTA STAFF PRESENT:**

Caroline Anderson, Kalani Ka'anā'anā, Isaac Choy, Jadie Goo, Amalia Kartika

**LEGAL COUNSEL:**

John Cole

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Apo called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m.

**2. Roll Call to Announce Name of Participating Board Members and to Identify Who Else is Present with Board Member if Location is Nonpublic**

Chair Apo congratulated Ms. Paulson and Mr. West whose senate floor confirmation votes had taken place on that day.

Ms. Kartika conducted the roll call, and members were in attendance except for Mr. West, who was excused. Members who attended via Zoom were by themselves.

**3. Opening Protocol**

Mr. Ka'anā'anā conducted the opening cultural protocol.

#### **4. Report of Permitted Interactions at Informational Meetings or Presentations Not Organized by the Board Under HRS section 92-2.5(e)**

There was no input on permitted interaction at informational meetings or presentations not organized by the Board under HRS section 92-2.5(e).

#### **5. Report and/or Action by the Legislative Permitted Interaction Group**

##### **a. Discussion and/or Action on Current Legislative Policy, including HTA FY 26-27 Budget**

Chair Apo presented a brief update on the Legislative Permitted Interaction Group (PIG), noting that the legislature was moving into the Conference Committee for the final three weeks of the session. The Chair reminded members of the following three items that were the main focus of the HTA:

1. **The HTA Budget.** This was contained in House Bill 300, which provided a \$63 million base budget for the HTA in its current form. The Chair added that, after last-minute hearings in the Ways & Means Committee, a \$17 million appropriation for the HTA had been inserted into House Bill 504 dealing with the Transient Accommodations Tax (TAT). The condition for this appropriation was that the HTA be included in the list of groups required to reach certain benchmarks during the coming years. For the HTA, the first milestone would be in 2030 concerning buying local products and ensuring that their vendors, with particular reference to Hawai'i Convention Center (HCC) and its food service, purchase food products locally.  
Chair Apo noted that the Board had approved an \$80 million budget, but the budget submitted to the legislature was \$70 million. He commented that if the \$63 million and the \$17 million appropriations were approved, this would be consistent with the Board's position on an \$80 million budget.
2. **House Bill 1571.** Chair Apo explained that the HTA hoped for amendments to this bill in the conference. Input by the Finance Committee had proposed making the HTA Board an advisory board and had also proposed that the Governor would appoint the HTA CEO with Senate consent. The Chair explained that the language of this bill changed the appointment from "subject to section" to "subject to HRS," thus impacting the powers and authorities of the Board. The HTA hoped for amendments to this bill in the conference committee.
3. **The HTA CEO's Compensation Package.** The Chair explained that the effective date

had to be corrected, having been entered as the year 3000. He hoped that there would be an amendment in the conference.

Chair Apo added that the HTA had been asked by the Congress to participate in several advisory groups dealing with issues related to the impact of tourism and destination management. The Chair explained that the requirements of these groups were being examined to ensure that they would be consistent with previous Board decisions and policies.

Chair Apo requested additional input from PIG members or questions from Board members.

Mr. Arakawa asked how the HTA would react if the budget were returned at less than \$80 million. He pondered whether all items would be reduced by the same percentage or whether budget priorities would be completely revised. He was aware that this would be an issue for the Budget, Finance, and Convention Center Standing Committee (BFCSC).

Chair Apo responded that if the budget approval were less than \$80 million, it would be necessary to understand which Project ID codes had been included and whether funds were specifically assigned to particular line items within the Project IDs. He reminded Board members that the HTA hoped for, and would continue to advocate for, fewer Project IDs than they currently have. He commented that decisions on the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget would only be possible in light of the parameters placed on the budget by the legislature.

Ms. Anderson reminded the Chair that the HTA was following a bill regarding naming rights and had testified that the HTA understood and recognized the sensitivity of public signage but argued that the sale of naming rights could result in additional revenue to the HCC. The HTA would continue to monitor that bill.

There was no public testimony on this agenda item.

## **6. Discussion and/or Action on the Assignment of Board Members to Committees**

Chair Apo stated that no action on this issue was planned at present, but he requested any Board member with a particular desire to serve on, or to be removed from, a committee or a PIG to inform Ms. Anderson so that necessary changes could be made.

Mr. Arakawa pointed out that the original members of each PIG were locked in, but if members wished to change, a different PIG could be formed. He asked for input from AG Cole.

AG Cole responded that the membership of the investigative PIGs was locked in, but the membership of the legislative PIGs could be changed.

Chair Apo thanked AG Cole for this clarification, which implied that if a member of an investigative PIG wanted to change, the PIG must complete the work it had done so far, and a

new PIG must be created.

The Chair added that when the legislative PIG had been created in November 2024, the intention had been for it to be dissolved after the end of the legislative session. The PIG was to submit its report and be dissolved in May or June 2025. The authority and responsibility for the HTA policy was the purview of the Administrative and Audit Standing Committee (AASC), which would take over from the legislative PIG. A new legislative PIG could be created for the following legislative session.

Mr. McCully suggested that the legislative PIG should submit its report in July 2025. He also asked for a reminder of which members of the legislative PIG were still extant so that a future PIG could include new members. His suggestion of July 2025 for the reporting date was related to the Governor's veto date, which might have some impact on the report.

Chair Apo agreed that it was important to consider the Governor's veto questions and the possibility of a special session, including the possibility of a special legislative session in September 2025 based on events at the federal level. The Chair assured Board members that these issues would all be taken into consideration.

There was no public testimony in this agenda item.

## **7. Discussion and/or Action on HTA Leadership Positions\*\*\***

Chair Apo introduced Agenda Item 7, and pointed out that because it concerned personnel issues, he would request a motion for the Board to move into executive session accompanied only by AG Cole.

Mr. McCully proposed the motion for the Board to enter the executive session. Ms. Paulson seconded the motion.

Chair Apo asked AG Cole to enunciate the reasons for entering the executive session.

AG Cole stated that the Board was meeting under HRS§92-5(a)(2) to consider the hire of officers or employees or consideration of matters affecting privacy and to consult with the Board's attorneys on issues pertaining to the Board's powers, duties, privileges, immunities, and liabilities.

Chair Apo asked for any discussions or questions on the motion. Hearing none, he called for the roll-call vote.

Ms. Kartika conducted the roll-call vote, and the motion was carried unanimously.

The regular BOD meeting entered the executive session at 12:53 p.m.

Chair Apo reported that during the executive session, the Board had voted to approve Ms. Anderson as the Interim CEO for the HTA; the Board had approved and recommended that the Interim CEO name Mr. Choy as the Chief Administrative Officer while remaining in his current role as the VP of Finance; the Board had approved and recommended that the Interim CEO name Ms. Goo as the Chief Branding Officer.

Chair Apo commented that the language used in the last two motions emphasized that the Interim CEO, not the Board, was to appoint the two leadership positions.

## **8. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheillane Reyes".

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Sheillane Reyes  
Recorder